



GTA Response to the IATTC 101st Session Proposals

2023

GLOBAL TUNA ALLIANCE

Introduction

The 101st Session of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) takes place from 7th-11th August in Victoria, Canada

The agenda includes an amendment to the North Pacific albacore harvest strategy, a measure for South Pacific albacore and proposals on electronic monitoring, FADs, and harvest control rules and a Vessel Monitoring System.

These are all areas the Global Tuna Alliance (GTA) is seeking action on. All the proposals are available on the [IATTC website](#).

The GTA applauds the leadership shown by the CPCs who have submitted proposals.

NORTH PACIFIC ALBACORE

- In 2022, the IATTC revised its harvest strategy for North Pacific (NP) albacore fisheries and committed to adopting harvest control rules (HCRs) in 2023.
- Recently, during July 6-7, 2023, the Northern Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) approved an amendment to the WCPFC harvest strategy for North Pacific albacore.

The Canada, Japan & U.S. Proposal



Revisions to Resolution C-21-05 for North Pacific albacore fishery

- This proposal is an amendment to the resolution and defines the scope of the HCRs.
- Also, prescribed parameters will determine the level of fishing intensity allowed based on stock status relative to adopted reference points.
- Changes to catch and effort limits will be limited to 20% from the previous 3-year management period to ensure stability.
- Changes to fishing intensity will apply from the year after the stock assessment is completed until the year following the next stock assessment.
- Additionally, states that the Commission will be tasked with recommending any necessary changes to the Resolution to align with recommended fishing intensity levels.

The GTA's Verdict

The GTA supports the amendments to the NP albacore resolution. These amendments are crucial steps towards ensuring the sustainable management of the fishery and protecting the health of the albacore stock.



SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE

- Recent collaborations between the scientific staff of the IATTC Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community resulted in a comprehensive Pacific-wide stock assessment of South Pacific (SP) albacore tuna.
- Fishing controls for SP albacore tuna are currently implemented exclusively in the waters of the WCPFC Convention Area south of 20°S.
- However, no controls are presently in effect in the IATTC Convention Area outside the overlapping region.

The Ecuador Proposal

- The proposal establishes that CPCs shall not increase their active tuna longline vessels fishing for SP albacore tuna south of 10°S beyond the highest reported level from 2012-2021.
- New CPCs may enter the fishery upon review.
- Cooperation is required for long-term sustainability and data reporting.
- The resolution aims for compatibility with WCPFC measures.
- It takes effect on January 1, 2024, subject to annual review.

The GTA's Verdict

The GTA wholeheartedly supports this proposal as an essential first step towards adopting a harvest strategy for SP albacore, one of our main asks. By taking this initial measure, CPCs demonstrate their commitment to sustainable fisheries management of SP Albacore for the benefit of present and future generations.



HARVEST CONTROL RULES FOR TROPICAL TUNAS

- The IATTC has made significant strides in developing new scientific documentation to support amendments to Resolution C-16-02 concerning the definitions and adoption of proxy reference points.
- This research is in line with the Commission's commitment to achieving the long-term conservation and sustainable utilization of tropical tuna stocks in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO).
- The Scientific Advisory Council (14th Meeting) has recommended that the Commission consider and adopt interim reference points for skipjack tuna, based on the proposed methodology by the staff (SAC-14-09).
- The meeting also provided support for ongoing work and funding of Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) tasks for tropical tunas beyond 2024, following resolutions C-16-02 and C-19-07. Recognizing the significance of MSE in evaluating harvest control rules and establishing management reference points, the use of interim and proxy reference points for skipjack until the MSE is completed (SAC-14 INF-F) is deemed beneficial.

The Ecuador Proposal



- The proposal aims to define alternative HCRs for consideration, encompassing both hard and soft limit reference points based on biomass.
- These well-defined scientific management recommendations provide a clear course of action if the reference points are exceeded.
- By adopting these alternative HCRs, the management of the subject can be strengthened, leading to more effective and sustainable fisheries practices.

The GTA's Verdict

The GTA supports the ongoing effort to explore new alternatives for establishing reference points, particularly when dealing with uncertainty surrounding the reliability of stock assessment models. Embracing innovative approaches is crucial for enhancing fisheries management practices and ensuring the long-term sustainability of resources. By addressing these uncertainties, we can make informed decisions that benefit both the marine ecosystem and the fishing industry.



OBSERVER AND ELECTRONIC MONITORING

- IATTC Resolution C-19-08 mandates a 5% observer coverage for the fleet of longline fishing vessels greater than 20 meters in length overall for each CPC.
- The SAC recommends extending the Electronic Monitoring (EM) initiatives, which have shown promise in improving data collection for purse seiners (both Classes 1-5 and Class 6), to also be tested in the longline fleet.
- Currently, 100% of the large purse-seine vessels in the Convention Area are required to carry 100% scientific observers onboard.
- By exploring the implementation of EM in the longline fleet, we can further enhance data accuracy and coverage, contributing to more effective fisheries management and conservation efforts.

The Ecuador Proposal



Proposed amendment to Resolution C-19-08 on scientific observers for longline vessels

- The proposal establishes that each Member and Cooperating non-Member (CPC) is required to ensure that active longline vessels greater than 20 meters in length carry human observers or electronic monitoring systems, following the timeline below:
 - By 1st January 2024: 10% of vessels
 - By 1st January 2025: 20% of vessels
 - By 1st January 2026: 50% of vessels
 - By 1st January 2027: 100% of vessels
- Also, the proposal clearly defines the tasks of the observers, outlining their responsibilities for data collection and reporting.
- It specifies the information they are required to record, such as catches of targeted fish species, species composition, interactions with non-target species (e.g., sea turtles, seabirds, and sharks), and application of mitigation measures.
- The reporting requirements are well-defined, including submitting reports to flag CPC authorities within 30 days after each fishing trip and providing an annual report to the Scientific Advisory Committee by March 31.
- This measure aims to enhance data collection and monitoring in the longline fleet, contributing to better fisheries management and sustainability.

The GTA's Verdict

The GTA strongly supports Ecuador's proposal. We appreciate the clear definition of observer tasks, data collection responsibilities, and reporting requirements, which will enhance data accuracy and promote responsible fishing practices.



VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEM

- The Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) is a vital tool for safeguarding the long-term conservation of fish stocks and effective management by the IATTC.
- It plays a crucial role in promoting compliance and combatting IUU fishing.
- While the use of VMS is mandatory for commercial vessels flagged to CPCs of 24 meters or more in length operating in the EPO, the provisions concerning manual transmission of reports in case of VMS failure, as outlined in Resolution C-14-02, have not been developed yet.

The European Union Proposal



To amend resolution C-14-02 On The Establishment Of A Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)

- The proposal outlines the minimum requirements for initiating manual transmission in cases of technical failure or non-functioning of the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), where two consecutive transmissions are not received.
- It mandates the obligation to provide manual reporting at least every 6 hours, utilizing suitable telecommunication means.
- These provisions ensure timely and reliable reporting even in the event of VMS system issues, contributing to effective fisheries management and compliance efforts.

The GTA's Verdict

The GTA wholeheartedly supports the implementation of VMS as outlined in the above proposal. We recognize the importance of VMS in promoting responsible and sustainable fishing practices, safeguarding marine resources, and combatting illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities.



FAD MANAGEMENT

- The recommendations proposed by the IATTC Ad Hoc Working Group on FADs, endorsed by the Scientific Advisory Committee during its 2023 meeting, and further supported by the IATTC staff, represent a crucial step towards sustainable fishing practices and marine conservation. To ensure their successful implementation, several key aspects have been identified:
 - **Gradual Implementation Process:** The adoption of a gradual and stepwise approach is essential in transitioning to fully biodegradable FADs. This method allows for careful evaluation of progress and allows adjustments to be made based on the current state of material availability and technological advancements.
 - **Clear Timeline:** Developing a well-defined timeline is imperative to ensure the successful implementation of fully biodegradable FADs. By setting milestones and specific targets, stakeholders can work collectively towards achieving a sustainable fishing future.
 - **Reduce Non-Biodegradable Components:** Within the process of implementing biodegradable FADs, it is crucial to minimize the use of non-biodegradable materials. By reducing these components while ensuring fishing efficiency remains uncompromized, we can significantly reduce environmental impacts and marine debris.
 - **Promote No Netting Materials:** Emphasizing the use of no netting materials in FAD construction is a crucial measure in mitigating entanglement risks for sea turtles and other marine species. The overlap of FADs with oceanic and coastal habitats underscores the importance of addressing potential hazards.
 - **Consider Impacts on Oceanic and Coastal Habitats:** It is vital to recognize the potential impacts of FADs on oceanic and coastal habitats. By adhering to the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group and scientific staff, we can ensure that fishing practices do not harm marine ecosystems and their delicate balance.

The Ecuador Proposal



Amendment to resolution C-99-07 On Fish Aggregating Devices

- Urges Parties and non-parties operating in the EPO to:
 - Reaffirm their commitment to banning transshipment of tuna by purse-seine vessels in the EPO, except in port.
 - Prohibit the use of tender vessels supporting fishing on FADs in the EPO, while acknowledging other global practices.
- Establish a scientific working group, in collaboration with the IATTC staff, to conduct extensive research.
- Initiate recovery programs for drifting fish-aggregating devices (FADs) through collaborative efforts among fishing vessels.



The European Union Proposal



Design And Biodegradability Of Drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (dFADs) In The IATTC Area Of Competence

- This proposal aligns with the Ecuadorian proposal but is more specific, addressing the use of materials in Drifting Fish-Aggregating Devices (dFADs) and aims to promote sustainable fishing practices and reduce marine debris. Key points include:
 - Definitions for "Biodegradable" and "Non-entangling FADs"
 - Entanglement Reduction
 - Biodegradability Requirements
 - Temporary Use of Non-Biodegradable Materials
 - Information Collection
 - Reporting and Analysis
 - BioFAD Designs
 - Annual Review and Recommendations
 - Also includes Assistance to Developing CPCs

The United States Proposal



Amendment to resolution C-19-01 On The Collection And Analyses Of Data On Fish Aggregating Devices and amendment to resolution C-21-04 On Conservation Measures For Tropical Tunas In The Eastern Pacific Ocean During 2022-2024

- They propose that starting from January 1, 2024, CPCs must adhere to specific design and construction specifications for Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) to reduce entanglement risks to sharks, sea turtles, and other species within the Convention Area.
- Also, ask to agree on the requirements on the recommendations from the FAD Working Group and the scientific staff, and continuously review research results on non-entangling and biodegradable materials, providing specific recommendations.

The Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama Proposal



Amendment to resolution C-21-04

- This proposal aims to specify the circumstances under which a satellite buoy attached to a FAD may be deactivated.
- The amended paragraph allows deactivation in situations such as signal loss, beaching, appropriation by a third party, selected closure periods, and when the FAD is outside specified geographic areas.
- Additionally, during the last two weeks of December each year, vessel owners can deactivate buoys to adjust the number of active buoys based on the maximum allowed, but these deactivated buoys cannot be reactivated remotely.
- CPCs must report such deactivations to the Secretariat using specific data fields, with monthly intervals and a time delay of 60 to 90 days.

The GTA's Verdict

The GTA acknowledges the importance of implementing the recommendations from the FAD Working Group and the scientific staff. We strongly encourage CPCs that have presented proposals to collaborate closely and strive to reach a mutually beneficial agreement. By working together in a cooperative manner, we can ensure the most effective and sustainable implementation of these recommendations.



SHARKS

- This year, multiple proposals concerning shark conservation have been put forward by various nations in the IATTC Convention Area. These proposals collectively reflect a significant commitment to shark conservation and sustainable management, highlighting the importance of collaboration and research for the protection of these vital marine species.

The United States Proposal

- Focuses on enhancing data collection and conservation efforts for silky sharks. It includes measures to prohibit retaining silky shark carcasses, data reporting requirements, and prioritizing scientific research.
- The effective date for implementation is January 1, 2024, with a review scheduled for 2023-2025.

The Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama Proposal

- Jointly propose guidelines for the safe handling and release of sharks in different fishing scenarios.
- Their resolution emphasizes the prohibition of shark finning, the importance of fully utilizing shark catches, and the implementation of national plans for shark conservation and management. Specific practices for safe shark handling in longline and purse-seine fisheries are also outlined.

The Canada Proposal

- Establishes a comprehensive resolution for the conservation and sustainable use of sharks in the IATTC Convention Area. The resolution aims to prohibit shark finning, promote full utilization of shark catches, and implement safe release practices to ensure the long-term preservation of shark populations.
- It also emphasizes the significance of research and data collection on shark stocks and mandates reporting by CPCs.
- This resolution would replace and repeal previous Resolutions C-05-03, C-16-04, and C-16-05, coming into effect on January 1, 2024.

The Colombia Proposals

- Colombia's two resolutions outline measures for shark stock conservation and safe handling in the Convention Area:
 1. The first resolution emphasizes the establishment of national plans of action, research on stock status, and the full utilization of retained shark catches. It also promotes the safe release of live sharks incidentally caught in tuna fisheries and encourages research to enhance fishing gear selectivity and handling practices.
 2. The second resolution mandates work plans for stock assessments of silky and hammerhead sharks, along with data collection and reporting requirements. It sets guidelines for safe shark handling and prohibits the use of harmful tools for shark handling, particularly in purse-seine and longline fisheries.

The European Union Proposal

- Proposes comprehensive measures for shark conservation and management within the IATTC Convention Area. Their resolution requires CPCs to establish national plans of action for shark conservation and mandates stock assessments and research on key shark species.
- The resolution encourages the full utilization of retained shark catches and prohibits the removal of fins onboard. While shark fins may be partially sliced for storage, they must remain attached to the body until the first point of landing.
- The resolution also prohibits trading in illegally harvested fins.
- Additionally, CPCs are encouraged to promote the release of live sharks and conduct research to enhance fishing gear selectivity.
- Data reporting and research on key biological aspects of sharks are also mandated, and the Commission will receive advice from the Scientific Advisory Committee.
- This resolution would replace Resolution C-05-03.

The GTA's Verdict

The GTA acknowledges the importance of sharks in marine ecosystems and biodiversity. We urge all CPCs with proposals to collaborate closely for effective and sustainable measures, particularly in combating shark finning, aligned with our 5-year strategy. Together, we can ensure the long-term protection of these vital marine species.



CLIMATE CHANGE

- Recognizing the significance of addressing climate change impacts on fisheries, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Committee on Fisheries (COFI) emphasized the need for guidance on climate resilient fisheries management.
- Climate change is causing shifts in fish distribution, affecting ecosystems, livelihoods, and global food security. In light of this, the inclusion of climate change as a standing agenda item in fisheries management organizations has been recommended.

The United States Proposal

- The Working Group on Ecosystem and Bycatch (EBWG) and the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) will include climate change as an agenda item in their annual meetings starting from 2024. They will assess climate change impacts on fisheries and propose resolutions if needed.
- The Commission will also include climate change in its annual meeting agenda, considering SAC and EBWG recommendations and the impacts on species and economies of member nations.
- In 2024 and onwards, the Director and Commission will explore options to reduce the environmental and climate impacts of the Commission's activities.
- This Resolution would take effect on January 1, 2024.

The GTA's Verdict

The GTA supports and advocates for the inclusion of the climate change agenda in the IATTC meetings. Recognizing the critical role of climate change in shaping the future of global fisheries, we believe it is imperative to address this pressing issue at the highest level of fisheries management.



Conclusion

The 101st session of the IATTC has a real opportunity to advance tuna fisheries management and sustainability.

All CPCs need to play their part for the greater good of the fisheries.

The market will be watching the outcomes with interest.



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