

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

101st MEETING

Victoria, Canada

7-11 August 2023

PROPOSAL IATTC-101 H-1 REV 1

SUBMITTED BY BELIZE, COSTA RICA, ECUADOR, EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, NICARAGUA, PERU AND PANAMA

RESEARCH FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF DOLPHIN FISH

(Coryphaena hippurus)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

Dolphin Fish (*Coryphaena hippurus*) is a pelagic migratory species widely distributed in tropical and subtropical waters of all oceans. In the eastern Pacific, its range extends from San Diego (California) to Antofagasta (Chile). It is a highly valuable resource for the fisheries in the eastern Pacific Ocean and is exploited as a targeted fishery by several CPCs in the EPO, while by-catches of Dolphin Fish by the purse-seiner fleet is estimated at 2% of total catches in the EPO. It provides substantial benefits to the fishing communities of coastal countries, so its sustainability must be ensured to contribute to the food security of these coastal communities. In addition, this species is closely associated with tuna fishing activities, both in longline and purse-seine fisheries, and can sometimes be considered a target species, exploitable accompanying fauna, or as a bycatch species.

In accordance with the provisions of the Antigua Convention, supported by the essential role played by the IATTC and the ecosystem approach, in the absence of governmental structures dedicated to the management of Dolphin Fish as a highly migratory species, and given the interaction of tuna fisheries with this species, which has doubled in terms of catches in the last year, together with the risk to the sustainability of this resource and as provided by international fisheries legislation, it is essential that the IATTC addresses this species, as is the case for relevant species of sharks and others.

The purpose of this proposal is to formally initiate the collection of relevant information that will allow the reactivation of studies on Dolphin Fish within the framework of the IATTC Scientific Committee, with a view to recommending measures for the management of Dolphin Fish in the Convention Area using a technical approach based on the best available scientific information. It promotes the development of tasks with minimal or no immediate economic impact, while identifying resources for more precise management. Its adoption is conditional on the Commission's reaffirmation of its recognized responsibility in the management of fishery resources and its recognition of the challenge of continuously strengthening the IATTC's duties.

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), on the occasion of its 101st Meeting:

Recognizing that the fish stocks covered by the Convention are understood to be the stocks of tunas and tuna-like species and other species of fish taken by vessels fishing for tunas and tuna-like species in the Convention Area;

Bearing in mind that Article VII, paragraph 1 (f) of the Antigua Convention establishes that the Commission shall "adopt, as necessary, conservation and management measures and recommendations for species belonging to the same ecosystem and that are affected by fishing for, or dependent on or associated with,

the fish stocks covered by this Convention, with a view to maintaining or restoring populations of such species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened”;

Reaffirming the obligations contained in the Antigua Convention, Article VII 1 (a) and (i), the Commission shall adopt, “standards for collection, verification, and timely exchange and reporting of data concerning the fisheries for fish stocks covered by this Convention” and shall establish “a comprehensive program for data collection”;

*Recognizing that Dolphin Fish (*Coryphaena hippurus*) is a species targeted by artisanal and industrial longline fisheries by several CPCs amounting to 98% of the catches in the EPO; and incidentally caught by vessels using purse-seine gear operating in the Convention Area estimated at 2% of total catches of this species; and is within the fish stocks of interest to the Commission;*

Recalling that collaborative research with the IATTC in 2014-2016 showed that the data available for the south eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) were sufficient to conduct an exploratory assessment of the core Dolphin Fish stock and management strategies, however, information from the EPO north was found to be limited;

*Recalling that the IATTC has provided the opportunity for collaborative research, including three technical meetings on the *Coryphaena hippurus* resource between 2014 and 2016; the development of an exploratory assessment of the *C. hippurus* stock in the "core" region; an exploratory management strategy evaluation (MSE) for the EPO south; and an evaluation of potential reference points and harvest control rules for *C. hippurus* in the EPO;*

*Taking into account that, in its 10th meeting, the Scientific Advisory Committee recommended that the IATTC staff continue working with CPCs on research in relation to the stock status of Dolphin Fish (*Coryphaena hippurus*) in the Convention Area;*

Further noting that, at the 12th meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee, the SAC recommended that the Commission encourage Members participating directly or indirectly, as flag States or coastal States, in the Dolphin Fish fishery to consider assessing and managing the Dolphin Fish stock.

*Recalling that, in document IATTC-100-02b *Staff Activities and Research Plan*, the IATTC scientific staff presented the need for future research to improve the analysis of the stock assessment of *C. hippurus* (Dolphin Fish) in the Convention Area;*

*Emphasizing that the objective of the Convention is to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fish stocks in the Convention Area, and that both collaborative studies and exploratory research conducted by the Scientific Advisory Committee show a need for better data to assess the stock of *Coryphaena hippurus* in the Convention Area and research to improve the analysis and assessment of this fish stock.*

Resolves as follows:

~~To start a research program to manage Dolphin Fish (*Coryphaena hippurus*), by implementing the following tasks:~~

1. Members and Cooperating non-Members (CPCs)

CPCs shall collect and submit to the IATTC biological, catch and interaction data, as well as fishing effort data relating to Dolphin Fish from their **fishing vessels operating in the Convention Area**~~fleets targeting species under the mandate of the IATTC~~. This information shall be submitted by 30 June (beginning in 2024) **as part of annual catch reporting in accordance with Resolution C-03-05**~~using a standardized reporting format~~. Artisanal and recreational fleet data may be reported as total annual catches without data on fishing effort in accordance with Resolution C-03-05.

2. IATTC scientific staff

- a) The IATTC scientific staff will work with the CPCs on mechanisms for timely submission of their data ~~develop a proposal to standardize the format for data reporting~~ in accordance with C-03-05 and present it at the meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee in 2024. This ~~format~~ mechanism will be used by the CPCs to submit the information, both in the future and retroactively. ~~according to paragraph 1.~~
- b) On the basis of the data received from the CPCs and taking into account the human and financial resources available, the IATTC scientific staff will:
 - i. Update, to the extent possible, the stock assessment for Dolphin Fish that was conducted by IATTC staff between 2012 and 2016, ~~the result of which should be~~ and presented ~~it~~ to the Scientific Advisory Committee in 2026.
 - ii. As appropriate, update the recommendations for CPCs on harvest control rules for the Dolphin Fish longline fishery, during the 2026 Scientific Advisory Committee.

3. Review

In 2024, SAC should consider and recommend the Commission as appropriate, the creation of an ad hoc working group to identify the information available on the Dolphin Fish (*Coryphaena hippurus*) resource in the various fisheries of interest to the IATTC. It should also identify information gaps that must be solved in order to know the status of this resource, either as target or bycatch, and possibly recommend management measures.

This Resolution shall be reviewed by the scientific staff and at the meeting of the SAC in 2026, to evaluate the adequacy of the measures of this Resolution and provide a recommendation to the Commission.