

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION (IATTC) 93RD MEETING, AUGUST 24-30, 2018

Tuna Conservation

YELLOWFIN & BIGEYE TUNA

What are the issues?

Last year, the IATTC adopted a three-year tuna conservation measure that will avoid an increase in fishing mortality for yellowfin and bigeye tuna stocks. The measures for 2018-2020 include a 72-day fishery closure, which is consistent with the scientific advice to offset a recent increase in fishing capacity. In addition, the fishery closure for 2017 was extended by 10 days (to 72 days) for fleets fishing with FADs.

The 2018 stock assessments suggest that bigeye is subject to overfishing and that yellowfin is also being overfished slightly. Noting considerable uncertainties in the bigeye assessment, the IATTC Scientific Staff recommended that no changes be made to the length of the closure. However, there are concerns that the number of FAD sets has been growing more rapidly than capacity in recent years. Therefore, the IATTC Staff recommended that the number of FAD sets be limited. For South Pacific Albacore, which is assessed by SPC (the science provider to WCPFC), the SAC noted that not all of the data for fisheries in the EPO are included in the assessment. Thus, part of the stock is effectively unassessed.

Our Top Asks for IATTC in 2018

- 1** Develop harvest strategies for all key tuna species.
- 2** Strengthen monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures to support data collection, including addressing the possible use of small class purse seine vessels as supply and tender vessels.
- 3** Strengthen FAD management through science-based measures.
- 4** Increase the observer coverage requirement for longline vessels and adopt a binding measure for the safety of human observers.
- 5** Strengthen the IATTC compliance assessment process.

Why are we concerned?

ISSF is concerned that simply limiting the number of active FADs as in C-17-02 may be insufficient to cap the fishing efficiency of the purse seine fleet. The increasing number of FAD sets has been accompanied by an increasing number of active vessels, which is leading to increased fishing pressure on the tropical tuna stocks.

ISSF is also concerned that the EPO catches and catch rates are not included in the South Pacific albacore assessments. Since IATTC is jointly responsible with WCPFC for the assessment and management of this stock, both organizations should work together to ensure that the whole stock is assessed.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

The Commission should consider additional measures to limit the fishing pressure by the purse seine fleet, such as limiting FAD deployments or further limiting the number of active FADs per vessel or limiting FAD sets, as recommended by the staff, or other management measures with similar conservation benefits, accompanied by the potential options to implement such conservation measures (limits based on CPC, fleets, etc.).

For South Pacific albacore, IATTC should ensure that fisheries data from the EPO are included in future assessments.

FULL RETENTION OF TUNAS

What are the issues?

The full retention of tunas and subsequent use of non-target fish in coastal community marketplaces can greatly reduce the waste associated with fish being discarded at sea – contributing to food security in such communities. All four of the tropical tuna RFMOs have such a measure—something we have been advocating for over many years. C-17-02 requires that tropical tunas be retained except if unfit for human consumption or due to insufficient well space during the last set of a trip, but this measure does not precisely define what “final set of a trip” means.

Why are we concerned?

ISSF understands that some purse seine vessels dedicate well space to store fuel and, if after the near-end of a trip one of these wells is freed up and cleaned, another set can be made - resulting in two discard events. A lack of clarity regarding what the “final set of a trip” means can result in misinterpretations, weakened implementation, and uneven compliance with C-17-02. In contrast, the IOTC and ICCAT full tuna retention measures define the “final set of a trip.”

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

Amend C-17-02 to clearly define the “final set of a trip,” following the examples of the IOTC and ICCAT, to ensure clarity in implementation of and compliance with C-17-02. The ICCAT text (Rec.17-01) is as follows:

“When the vessel master determines that the tunas (bigeye, skipjack or yellowfin tuna) have been caught during the last set of a trip and there is not enough storage capacity to store the tunas (bigeye, skipjack or yellowfin tuna) caught during this set, these fish may only be discarded if:

*- the master or the crew attempt to release the tuna alive (bigeye, skipjack or yellowfin tuna) as quickly as possible;
and*

- no other fishing operation is conducted following the discarding, until such time as the tunas (bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin tuna) onboard the vessel are landed or transhipped.”

Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)

MONITORING & MANAGEMENT

What are the issues?

More data needs to be collected on FAD type, usage, and catch per effort in the EPO to better understand fishing capacity changes and likely impacts on IATTC-managed stocks. That data should be used to develop science-based FAD management measures. ISSF is pleased that in 2017 the IATTC required the use of non-entangling FAD designs starting in 2019. ISSF also applauds the IATTC for adopting other management measures for FADs for 2018-2020, including limits on FAD number per vessel, as well as new requirements for FAD deployments and reporting.

In 2018, the IATTC Staff and SAC made recommendations to improve the submission of those FAD data required by Resolution 16-01 to the Secretariat, including requiring submission of data after each trip, modifying the Flotsam Information Record used by observers, and providing the same raw buoy data received by vessel operators. ISSF endorses any improvements in FAD data reporting that can lead to improved science-based management.

In addition, the Staff and FAD Working Group recommended defining or clarifying terms and concepts related to FADs and FAD use. ISSF agrees that it is very important to have utmost clarity in the Resolutions so that they can be complied with by CPCs and vessel operators.

Why are we concerned?

Worldwide, FAD sets account for nearly 40% of all tuna catches — and 50% of skipjack catches. It's time for a concerted global effort to better monitor and manage FAD usage in every ocean region. Shark mortality and other FAD-fishing ecosystem impacts in the EPO need to be reduced; using non-entangling FAD designs and moving towards biodegradable FADs are critical steps. FAD management needs to be based on science. For this reason, ISSF supports reporting of data on FAD use, FAD tracks, and FAD other buoy information that can lead to improved monitoring and understanding of the impacts of FADs.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

- (1) CPCs must ensure their flagged vessels comply with Resolution 16-01 and report all required FAD data in a timely fashion.
- (2) The IATTC Staff should provide a definitive reporting format as soon as possible so that harmonized data on FADs is collected.
- (3) The Commission should adopt measures to improve data reporting on FADs, including through ensuring the definition of FAD related terms are clear so that FAD management measures are effectively and fairly monitored and enforced, as recommended by the IATTC Scientific Staff and the FAD Working Group.

Supply and Tender Vessels

What are the issues?

Supply vessels are used in many oceans by purse seine vessels fishing with drifting fish aggregating devices (dFADs). These supply vessels range from 40 to 50 meters in length and are operated by a crew of around 6 persons. These vessels can be small purse seiners, vessels refurbished from other fisheries, or be built specifically to serve as dFAD maintenance boats with deck characteristics designed to manipulate dFADs. The primary use of supply vessel is for maintaining a purse seine vessel's network of dFADs at sea in good condition and in the appropriate areas.

Why are we concerned?

Although the IATTC adopted [Resolution C-99-07](#) on Fish-Aggregating Devices in 1999 that prohibits the use of supply/tender vessels operating in support of vessels fishing on FADs in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, there is some evidence ([Lennert-Cody et al., 2018](#)) that small class purse seine vessels and other types of vessels – that are not required to carry observers – are being used as supply and tender vessels to deploy and service FADs in the EPO. This is a concern because supply and tender vessel activities related to drifting FADs increases the efficiency of the purse seiner by reducing the time needed by the purse seiner to search for or maintain FADs, and there is no data collection on monitoring of this activity. Further, if small purse seine vessels are being used as supply and tender vessels, this is a compliance issue that must be addressed by the Commission. In 2018, the staff recommended to establish an observer program for purse seine vessels less than 363 t carrying capacity with a target 20% coverage so that these vessels are better monitored.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

- (1) Investigate the possible use of small class purse seine vessels as supply and tender vessels that are deploying and/or servicing FADs in contravention of C-99-07 and address such non-compliance through the Review Committee.
- (2) Establish an observer program for purse seine vessels of less than 363 t carrying capacity and continue to examine the feasibility of using electronic monitoring systems aboard small purse seine vessels.

Harvest Strategies

What are the issues?

In 2016, IATTC adopted a more complete interim harvest control rule (HCR) for yellowfin, skipjack and bigeye tuna in accordance with two years of scientific advice. This action paves the way for IATTC to implement a comprehensive harvest strategy that fisheries can follow to ensure stocks are maintained at an optimal level.

Why are we concerned?

Harvest Strategies — which include target and limit reference points together with harvest control rules — provide pre-agreed rules for managing fisheries resources and acting in response to stock status changes. It is important to ensure that these pre-agreed rules are robust because these rules and strategies help to rebuild stocks or avoid overfishing. And they reduce the need for protracted negotiations and delays that can lead to further stock declines. However, IATTC lacks a dedicated working group to foster the dialogue between managers, scientists and other stakeholders that would facilitate the development and adoption of comprehensive harvest strategies. In 2018, the SAC recommended the creation of such a group.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

ISSF urges the Commission to create a dedicated working group to facilitate dialogue on harvest strategies between managers, scientists and other stakeholders, as recommended by the SAC.

Bycatch and Sharks

SHARKS, MOBULID RAYS, SEA TURTLES & SEA BIRDS

What are the issues?

IATTC needs to improve measures and strengthen efforts to mitigate the bycatch of vulnerable species in both purse seine and longline fisheries. In addition, science-based conservation and management measures to limit fishing mortality on sharks must be adopted and implemented. Data collection and reporting is essential.

Why are we concerned?

In 2018, the IATTC Scientific Staff, the Bycatch Working Group and IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) made bycatch-mitigation and bycatch-reporting recommendations for both purse seine and longline fisheries. Similar recommendations have been made in recent years but have not been adopted by the Commission. Also in 2016, proposals from seven IATTC parties to require sharks to be landed with fins naturally attached, and to strengthen measures to conserve shark populations, were not adopted.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

- (1) Adopt measures to mitigate the incidental catch and maximize the release survival of sharks, mobulid rays, sea turtles and sea birds.
- (2) Improve monitoring in all tuna fisheries without adequate observer coverage, such as small and medium-size purse seiners and longline vessels. Adequate monitoring of all fisheries, including coastal ones, is required to ensure implementation.
- (3) Take immediate steps to enforce the existing shark-finning resolution, and strengthen it by requiring that all sharks be landed with fins naturally attached.
- (4) Approve the IATTC Staff recommendations to:
 - Prohibit the use of steel leaders for longline vessels that do not target sharks as per Resolution C-16-06.
 - Adopt and implement a sampling program for coastal longline and gillnet fisheries.

Monitoring, Control and Surveillance

OBSERVER COVERAGE AND ELECTRONIC MONITORING

What are the issues?

Comprehensive observer coverage is a critical component of monitoring and management for sustainable tropical tuna fisheries. For large-scale purse seiners, IATTC implemented a 100% observer coverage requirement. Yet the requirement for longline fisheries is only 5%. If human onboard observers are not possible for certain fleets or vessel sizes, including longliners, then guidelines for using electronic monitoring should be adopted.

Why are we concerned?

Available data on observer coverage in longline fisheries indicates some fleets are not even meeting the 5% mandatory

minimum requirement. Observer data can be used for monitoring vessel compliance with management measures. The paucity of data on longline catches and interactions with non-target species prevents assessments — hindering scientific input on effective conservation measures. Further, to ensure RFMOs receive quality data from observer programs, it is essential that these observers can do their jobs in a safe and professional environment.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

- (1) Increase the level of longline observer coverage to 20%, consistent with the recommendation from scientific staff and which has been recommended by the IATTC by-catch working group, in order to provide reasonable estimates of bycatch and to improve overall monitoring of the fishery.
- (2) Develop electronic monitoring and reporting standards for both longline and purse seine so that electronic monitoring can be used to ultimately achieve 100% observer coverage in the longline fishery, and in the purse seine fishery for all vessel classes; and
- (3) At the same time, identify and sanction vessel non-compliance through the Review Committee with the existing 5% longline observer coverage requirement.
- (4) Follow the example of the WCPFC and develop binding measures to ensure the safety of human observers, including those on carrier vessels.

TRANSSHIPMENT

What are the issues?

Transshipment at sea presents risks for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and other illicit activities if not well-managed and transparent. To better manage transshipment, ensure complete data collection and timely reporting, and to combat IUU fishing activities, deficiencies and loopholes in Resolution C-12-07 must be addressed.

Why are we concerned?

Transshipment at sea can pose a high IUU risk if monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures are insufficient. The IATTC transshipment resolution is not consistent with best practices, such as with respect to the time-frames for seeking authorization to transship at sea from the flag State, as well as the criteria for granting such authorization, and deadlines for submitting completed transshipment declarations.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

- (1) Amend Resolution C-12-07 to explicitly define large-scale tuna longline vessels as those 20m or greater LOA.
- (2) Amend Resolution C-11-05 to define large-scale tuna longline vessels that must be listed as those >20m LOA.
- (3) Amend Resolution C-12-07 to increase the advance notification of transshipment requirement to at least 48 hours and require the submission of transshipment declarations by the fishing vessel to the IATTC Secretariat and Flag State in near real-time, but no more than 7 days after the transshipment event.
- (4) Develop electronic reporting standards for receiving vessels.

PORT STATE MEASURES

What are the issues?

Effective port State measures form an important component of a suite of MCS tools essential to combatting addressing IUU fishing.

Why are we concerned?

Port State measures will be most effective if implemented on a regional basis by all those engaged in the fishery, and consistent with the standards prescribed in the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

- (1) For all Members that have not yet done so to ratify the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing; and
- (2) Adopt a measure to give effect to it at a regional level as has been done in CCSBT, IOTC, ICCAT and WCPFC.

MCS TOOLS

What are the issues?

MCS tools are an essential component of sustainable fisheries management. For example, satellite Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) strengthen vessel compliance on the water, combat IUU fishing, and improve fisheries management by reducing uncertainty.

Why are we concerned?

IATTC's MSC tools, such as its vessel monitoring system (VMS) measure, must be strengthened and aligned with best-practice standards.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

Amend C-14-02 to ensure that VMS data can be available to the Secretariat and used for scientific or compliance purposes.

TRANSPARENCY IN CATCH OR EFFORT LIMITS

What are the issues?

IATTC has adopted catch or effort limits for bigeye, yellowfin, skipjack and Pacific Bluefin tunas. In 2017 the IATTC did require weekly reports from purse seine fishing that were available to members of the Commission, but this is not required in C-17-02. Therefore, during a given year, there is no transparent mechanism for CPC reporting when the total and/or allocated catch or effort limits are being approached and if CPCs are within the prescribed limits. This mechanism would allow CPCs and markets to make necessary conservation decisions during a given year if quotas are being achieved more quickly than anticipated. Such a mechanism will also strengthen compliance monitoring, and will be important for the implementation of future harvest strategies through catch or effort controls. In addition, scientifically designed projections useful for predicting when an overall limit could be achieved may be able to be developed by using historical patterns informed by in-season data.

Why are we concerned?

A lack of monitoring how CPCs are approaching, or possibly exceeding, annual individual catch or effort limits for particular tuna stocks, or a total allowable catch or total allowable effort for a specific tuna stocks, prevents rapid and precautionary conservation, management and purchasing decisions within a given year. It also undermines rapid detection of non-compliance with catch or effort controls.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

- (1) Consider requiring CPCs to report their in-season catch or effort status with respect to their Individual catch or effort limits and/or annual TACs or TAEs, where specified; and
- (2) If an in-season reporting requirement is adopted, request the Scientific Staff to develop quality assurance mechanisms for verification of in-season reports, including through the use of electronic reporting technologies, to minimize the risk of misreporting.

Compliance

COMPLIANCE PROCESSES

What are the issues?

IATTC has a transparent compliance process but it can be strengthened. Members must recognize that a strong compliance process improves fisheries management.

Why are we concerned?

While observers are allowed to participate in the IATTC Review Committee, the IATTC's final Compliance Report is not transparent about members' individual compliance with their obligations to the Commission, and the IATTC does not have a scheme of responses to non-compliance.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

- (1) Require members to submit a compliance action plan for identified infractions.
- (2) Begin discussing how to respond to repeated, significant non-compliance.
- (3) Adopt amendments to C-11-07 to increase transparency by (i) making public members' responses to non-compliance and (ii) detailing in the Review Committee report specific areas where members and cooperating non-members are non-compliant — and making specific recommendations to address such non-compliance.

Capacity Management

VESSEL REGISTRIES & FLEET CAPACITY

What are the issues?

Although IATTC is the only tuna RFMO with a closed vessel registry, its current capacity is well in excess of resource productivity.

Why are we concerned?

Operative purse seine capacity is estimated to be continuing to increase since 2015 due to latent capacity being activated.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

- (1) Implement the 2014 Technical Experts Workshop on the Capacity of the Tuna-fishing Fleet in the EPO recommendations to strengthen the 2005 Plan for the Regional Management of Fishing Capacity and reduce the current capacity in excess of resource productivity.
- (2) Consider the 2014 ISSF workshop on the transfer of fishing capacity from developed to developing countries outcomes in any regional capacity management scheme.

ISSF Global Priorities for Tuna RFMOs

Implementation of rigorous harvest strategies, including harvest control rules and reference points

Effective management of fleet capacity, including developing mechanisms that support developing coastal state engagement in the fishery

Science-based FAD management & non-entangling FAD designs

Increased member compliance with all adopted measures adopted, and greater transparency of processes reviewing member compliance with measures

Strengthened Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) measures and increased observer coverage, including through modern technologies such as electronic monitoring and e-reporting

Adoption of best-practice bycatch mitigation and shark conservation and management measures

Did you know?

ISSF is leading research on biodegradable FADs in collaboration with fleets operating in the EPO, coastal nations, and other stakeholders.

ISSF develops resources for the vessel community, including skippers guidebooks on bycatch-mitigation techniques and as well as reports on electronic monitoring and vessel monitoring systems.

ISSF offers guidelines for implementing non-entangling FADs.

Three ISSF conservation measures focus on shark bycatch mitigation.



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