



International Game Fish Association

Fishing Hall of Fame & Museum

300 Gulf Stream Way, Dania Beach, Florida, 33004 U.S.A.

Phone: (954) 927-2628 • Fax: (954) 924-4299 • Museum Fax (954) 924-4220

The International Game Fish Association (IGFA) is a non-profit organization that represents recreational anglers throughout the world. IGFA was established in 1939, has active members in 157 countries, is the governing body for international recreational fishing, and provides rules for ethical angling practices. Many of IGFA's members target the highly migratory species managed by IOTC, especially marlin, sailfish and spearfish (i.e. billfish) which are primarily caught and released.

IGFA has great concern about how highly migratory species are being managed on a global level for recreational anglers. The lack of data and accurate reporting on billfish catch is of particular concern. As an organization that is committed to the conservation of game fishes, IGFA has deployed 114 pop-up satellite archival tags in marlin around the world in the last three years, most of which have been in waters under this organization's purview. The information gained from this exercise is available to your scientific committee.

The following are IGFA's recommendations for the 18th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission

Billfish

- Although primarily a commercial bycatch species, billfish are highly sought after recreational species that are primarily caught and released. IGFA urges the IOTC to manage all billfish at higher abundance levels than B_{MSY} for recreational anglers.
- The 2013 stock assessment of striped marlin is determined to be overfished and experiencing overfishing. IGFA recommends further decrease in longline catch and effort on the Indian Ocean stock and improvement in data collection and reporting to further assess the stock.
- Although Blue marlin are not currently overfished or experiencing overfishing, IGFA recommends that fishing mortality not be increased so that the stock can rebound to levels in excess of MSY (13,855 t) and improvement in data collection and reporting to further assess the stock.
- No formal stock assessments exist for Indo-Pacific sailfish and black marlin and stock status remain uncertain. Better data collection is necessary for these species so that their true abundance can be accurately estimated.
- IGFA further recommends implementing a prohibition on billfish entering into international trade. Similar legislation has recently been passed, at the request of IGFA, in the United States that now bans importation of marlin, sailfish and spearfish into the continental United States.
- IGFA recommends all countries be required to report dead discards and use circle hooks in their longline fisheries.

Tuna

- The 2012 Albacore assessment indicated that the stock is subject to overfishing, but not overfished. The 2012 catch (33,960 t) slightly exceeded the MSY level of 33,300 t. If current level of fishing continues or increases in the future, further declines in biomass and catch rates are expected. IGFA recommends limiting albacore catches to at or below the MSY level (30,000 t or less).

Sharks

- IGFA recommends that IOTC prohibit the removal of shark fins at sea to improve the enforcement of the shark finning ban.
- IGFA recommends banning wire traces on all longlines.

IUU

- IGFA recommends that IOTC strengthen the controls against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

General

- Recreational angling is an established and important economic entity in developed countries and a growing one in many developing nations. As such, IGFA wishes that IOTC recognize both its relevance and that it may necessitate alternate management objectives than those used in commercial fisheries. IGFA kindly offers its consultation to IOTC on recreational fisheries issues.
- Managing fisheries on the basis of MSY is an excessively risk-prone approach. As such, IGFA suggests that IOTC adopt a target objective below MSY to compensate for biological, environmental and data uncertainties. Many recreational fisheries are catch and release in nature, where anglers prefer to catch more and bigger fish than to necessarily harvest fish. Managing stocks on the level of MSY not only reduces the abundance of fish but also their average size. Maintaining stocks at higher abundances (i.e., Maximum Economic Yield) also benefits recreational anglers that release their fish and also contributes to the substantial economic value of these fisheries. IGFA feels this is especially true with bycatch species such as marlin and sailfish that have little commercial value but great economic value to recreational anglers.
- The prevalence and importance of artisanal fisheries within the IOTC's purview must be taken into consideration. Better catch data from these fisheries is necessary to evaluate their impact on HMS fisheries.