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Mauritius National Report to the Scientific Committee of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, 2016

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Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands

INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH AND STATISTICS

In accordance with IOTC Resolution 15/02, final	YES
scientific data for the previous year was provided	
to the IOTC Secretariat by 30 June of the current	
year, for all fleets other than longline [e.g. for a	30/06/16
National Report submitted to the IOTC Secretariat	
in 2016, final data for the 2015 calendar year must	
be provided to the Secretariat by 30 June 2016)	
In accordance with IOTC Resolution 15/02,	YES
provisional longline data for the previous year	
was provided to the IOTC Secretariat by 30 June	
of the current year [e.g. for a National Report	
submitted to the IOTC Secretariat in 2016,	
preliminary data for the 2015 calendar year was	
provided to the IOTC Secretariat by 30 June	
2016).	
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REMINDER: Final longline data for the previous	
year is due to the IOTC Secretariat by 30 Dec of	
the current year [e.g. for a National Report	
submitted to the IOTC Secretariat in 2016, final	
data for the 2015 calendar year must be provided	
to the Secretariat by 30 December 2016).	<u> </u>
If no, please indicate the reason(s) and intended act	IOIIS:





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Executive Summary [Mandatory]

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There were seven purse seiners registered under the national flag in 2015. However, only four purse seiners were in operation during that year with a catch of 9670.9 tonnes of tuna comprising of yellowfin tuna as the predominant species (56.0%) followed by skipjack tuna (29.30%) and bigeye tuna (14.70%). The zones of operation of the purse seiners were spread between quadrant 1 (latitudes 0°-5N° and longitudes 48°E -67°E) and quadrant 2 (latitudes 0°-9 S° and longitudes 40°E -69°E) with a total deployment of 490 sets. 5 longliners undertook 23 trips in 2015 and their fishing operations extended from latitudes 15°S-20°S and longitudes 55°E -61°E. These vessels unloaded a total catch of 102.9 tonnes out of which 27.40 % and 12.91% was represented by yellowfin and bigeye respectively). The proportion of sharks in the total catch has been very low varying between 0.21% -1.26 % for the five year period. Only one species of shark namely the shortfin mako (Isurus oxyrhinchus) is obtained in this fishery. A total of 195850 hooks were deployed by the semi industrial longliners in 2015. Sampling exercises were undertaken on the catch unloaded by the foreign flagged and local flagged purse seiners and longliners. The fork lengths of a total of 1625 yellowfin, 2318 albacore, 618 bigeye and 613 skipjack tuna were measured. The operculum to keel length of 1007 swordfish was also measured. The observer programme was not implemented for the longliners as the latter are less than 24m and operate only inside the EEZ. However, a total of 3 observers were deployed on the purse seiners in The zone of operation of the longliners does not include area south of 25 degrees South latitude since it is restricted between latitude 15-20 and longitude 55-61; therefore the probability of encounter with seabirds is nil.



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1. BACKGROUND/GENERAL FISHERY INFORMATION

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Mauritius has a very vast Exclusive Economic Zone with a surface area of 2.3 million km². There are many foreign longliners and purse seiners that are authorised to carry out fishing activities in the EEZ of Mauritius. Although tuna fishing is mostly practiced by foreign longliners operating under a fishing licence, there are some national vessels that are engaged in this fishery.

In 2015 the national fleet consisted of 5 small longliners and 7 purse seiners. The catch of the longliners was mainly exported, and the rest was used for local consumption while the catch of the purse seiners was directed to the cannery for processing or exported. The semi industrial vessels carried out small trips inside the EEZ and the catch was in the chilled form. The gear used by these vessels was surface longline and the fishing operations were carried out at night. All the catches were retained in the gilled and gutted form and were preserved on ice (chilled).

Mauritius-flagged vessels have not been operating in the purse seine fishery since the year 2000. However, in October 2013, one Mauritius-flagged purse seiners started operating and in 2014 there were seven Mauritius-flagged purse seiners in operation. Although the fleet consisted of seven purse seiners in 2015, there were only four vessels that carried out fishing operations and submitted logbooks. The fishing operations of the four purse seiners were mostly concentrated on log associated schools.

The fishing operations of both foreign and local vessels are regularly monitored through the vessel monitoring system (VMS). Moreover, the catch is monitored by checking the logbooks that are submitted by the vessels' masters. It is obligatory for both national and foreign vessels to submit logbooks and if a vessel fails to submit its logbook, it is subjected to penalties. The catch of the vessels are also monitored during landing at port and this is done by the officers based at the Port State Control Unit.



2. FLEET STRUCTURE [MANDATORY]

The national fleet is composed of both surface longliners and purse seiners. The surface longliners are boats with overall length in the range 13.50-22.80 metres and are engaged in the semi-industrial fishery. These boats have onboard engines and their gross tonnage is in the range 32-97.4 tonnes. The purse seine fleet has increased from one in 2013 to seven in 2014 and 2015. The purse seine fleet in 2015 consisted of two large purse seiners with overall length (LOA) of 79.7 m and gross tonnage (GT) of 2667 tonnes. The 2015 purse seine fleet also consisted of small purse seiners with LOA 49.56 meters and GT 678 tonnes.

Table 1: Number of vessels operating in the IOTC area of competence, by gear type and size

Year	Gear	Number of	Number of fishing days	GT	LOA (m)	Preservation Methods
		vessels				
2011	Surface longline	4	316	38.4-99.4	13.50-22.80	Chilled
2012	Surface longline	5	238	38.4-90.4	13.50-22.80	Chilled
2013	Surface longline	3	196	38.4-90.4	13.50-22.80	Chilled
	Purse seine	1	81	2660	89.4	Frozen
2014	Surface longline	3	131	38.4-90.4	13.50-22.80	Chilled
2014	Purse seine	7	386	678-2660	49.56-89.4	Frozen
2015	Surface longline	5	191	32-97.4	13.50-22.80	Chilled
2013	Purse seine	7	357	678-2667	49.56-79.7	Frozen

3. CATCH AND EFFORT (BY SPECIES AND GEAR) [Mandatory]

The semi industrial longliners carry out fishing trips with a duration not exceeding ten days and the catch is in the chilled state. These longliners operate inside the EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone) of Mauritius and they target swordfish. All the fish are landed in the gilled and gutted form, however, swordfish is landed gilled, gutted, headed and without tail. The range of areas that are covered by the fishing operation of the semi industrial longliners extended from latitudes 15°S-20°S and longitudes 55°E -61°E. A total of 5 longliners undertook 23 trips in 2015. These vessels unloaded a total catch of 102.9 tonnes out of which 27.4 % and 12.91% was represented by yellowfin and bigeye respectively. The catch unloaded also consisted of albacore and other minor by-catch such as dolphinfish (*Coryphaena hippurus*), followed by wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*) and oilfish (*Ruvettus pretiosus*).



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The annual trend shows that yellowfin is the predominating species in the tuna group with the exception of year 2013 where bigeye predominated as by-catch representing a percentage of 25.28% as compared to yellowfin (16.57%).

The zones of operation of the purse seiners were in quadrant 1 (latitudes 0°-5N° and longitudes 48°E -67°E) and quadrant 2 (latitudes 0°-9 S° and longitudes 40°E -69°E) with a total deployment of 490 sets. The purse seiners carried out a total of 26 trips in 2015. The annual catch of the purse seiners has been increasing for the period 2013-2015. With only one purse seine in operation in 2013, the catch was lowest (855 Tonnes) comprising of skipjack tuna (51.0%) followed by yellowfin tuna (41.0%) and bigeye tuna (3.0%). However in the year 2014, seven purse seiners were operational and the catch composition included yellowfin (51.7%) as the dominant species, followed by skipjack tuna (39.0%) and bigeye tuna (7.0%). The catch trend for 2015 showed that yellowfin is still being the dominant species caught by the purse seiners with a percentage of 56.0%. Moreover the percentage composition for yellowfin is higher in 2015 (56.1%) compared to 2014 where yellowfin accounted for 51.7% in the total catch. In 2014, the majority of the total catch was made from log associated fishery (58.8%) where 77.8% of the log associated catch were derived from artificial logs (drifting FADs) and 22.2 % from natural logs. The same trend was observed for 2015 whereby the majority of the total catch was made from log associated fishery (61.0%) with 55.0 % of the log associated catch from artificial logs (drifting FADs) and 6.0 % from natural logs.

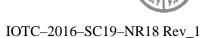
Table 2 a. Annual catch (Kg) and effort of semi industrial longliners and their primary species in the IOTC area of competence.

Species	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Yellowfin	1 6476	5 715	11 265	11 265	28 270
Bigeye	10 826	2 960	17 185	7 955	13 284
Albacore	8 415	5 555	6 215	6 451	12 075
Swordfish	43 999	17 065	28 320	14 015	42 175
Other billfishes	3 531	1 810	2 053	1 055	3 885
Sharks	740	455	680	90	485
NEI	5 407	2 561	2 255	1 789	2 695
Effort (hooks)	252 480	182 300	150 560	105 120	195 850
Total	89 394	36 121	67 973	42 620	102 869

Table 2 b .Annual catch (tonnes) and effort of purse seiners and their primary species in the IOTC area of competence

Species	2013	2014	2015
Yellowfin	352	4 025	5 417
Bigeye	27	540	1 421
Skipjack	476	3 032	2 832

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Effort (no. of			
sets)	53	482	490
Total	855	7 597	9 671

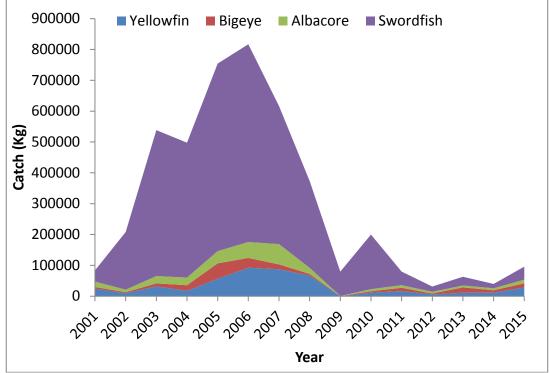


Figure 1.Historical annual catch for the national fleet, by gear and primary species, for the IOTC area of competence for the entire history of the fishery/fleet

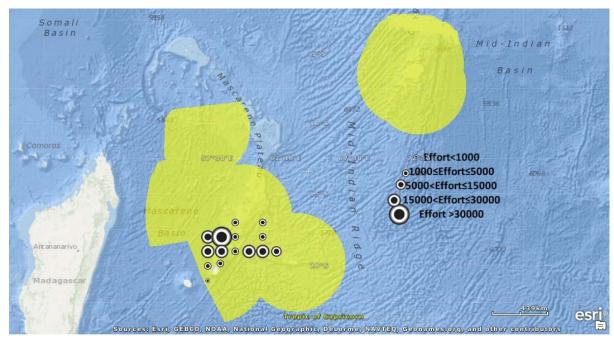


Figure 2a: Map of the distribution of fishing effort (no. of hooks) of Mauritius-flagged longliner in the IOTC area of competence for the year 2015



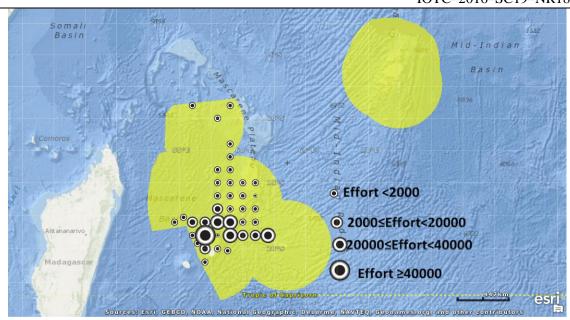


Figure 2b. Map of the distribution of fishing effort (No. of hooks) of Mauritius-flagged longliner in the IOTC area of competence for the period 2011-2015

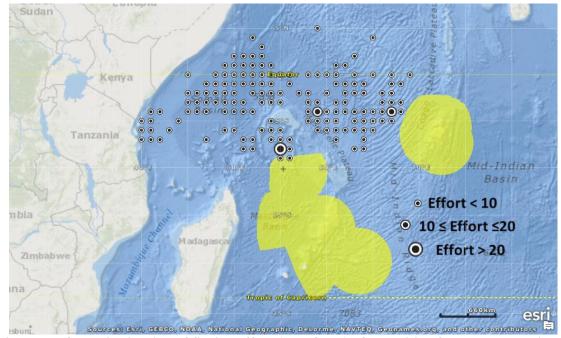


Figure 2c. Map of the distribution of fishing effort (no. of sets) of Mauritius-flagged purse seiners in the IOTC area of competence for the year 2015



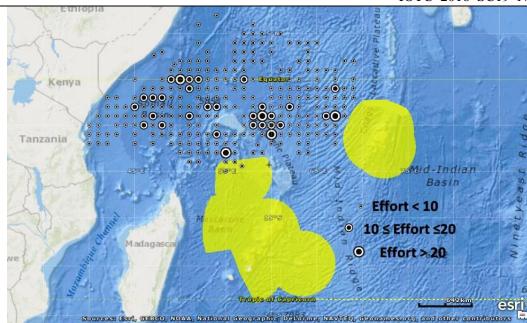


Figure 2d. Map of the distribution of average fishing effort (no. of sets) of Mauritius-flagged purse seiners in the IOTC area of competence for the period 2013-2015

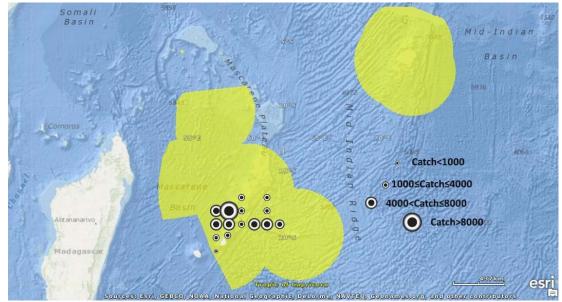


Figure 3a. Map of distribution of swordfish catch (Kg) of the Mauritius-flagged longliners in the IOTC area of competence for 2015



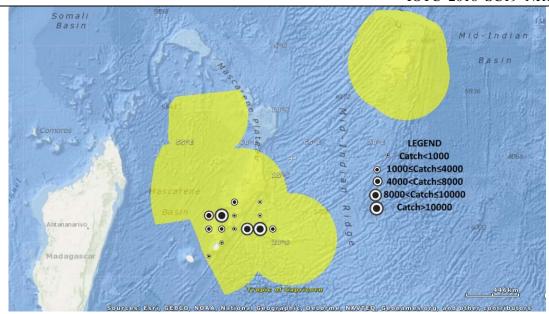


Figure 3b. Map of distribution of tuna catch (Kg) of the Mauritius-flagged longliners in the IOTC area of competence for 2015

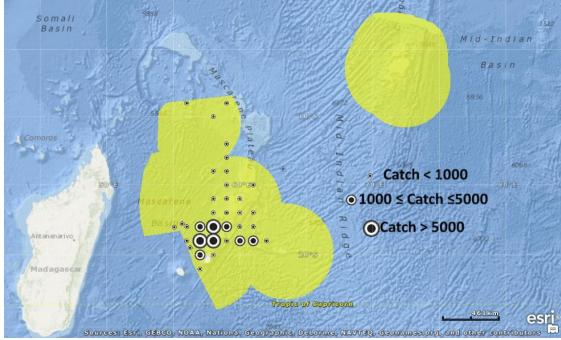


Figure 3c. Map of distribution of average swordfish catch (Kg) by the Mauritius-flagged longliners in the IOTC area of competence for the period 2011-2015



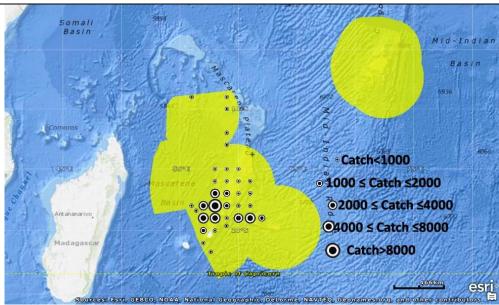


Figure 3d. Map of distribution of average tuna catch (Kg) by the Mauritius-flagged longliners in the IOTC area of competence for the period 2011-2015

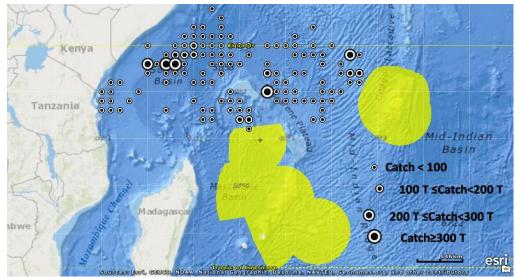


Figure 3e. Map of distribution of yellowfin tuna catch (tonnes) by the Mauritius-flagged purse seiners in the IOTC area of competence for the 2015



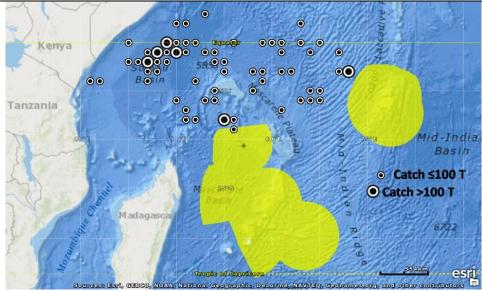


Figure 3f. Map of distribution of bigeye tuna catch (tonnes) by the Mauritius-flagged purse seiners in the IOTC area of competence for the 2015

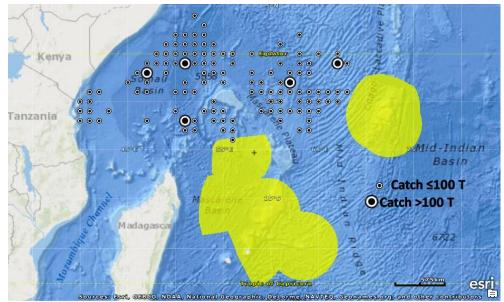


Figure 3f. Map of distribution of skipjack tuna catch (tonnes) by the Mauritius-flagged purse seiners in the IOTC area of competence for the 2015



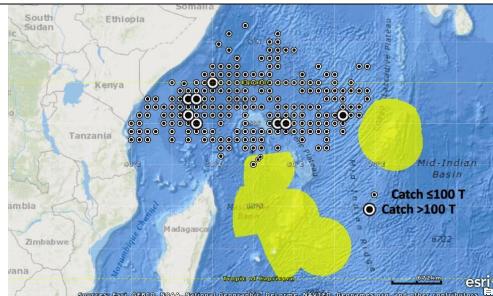


Figure 3g. Map of distribution of average yellowfin tuna catch (tonnes) by the Mauritius-flagged purse seiners in the IOTC area of competence for the period 2013-2015

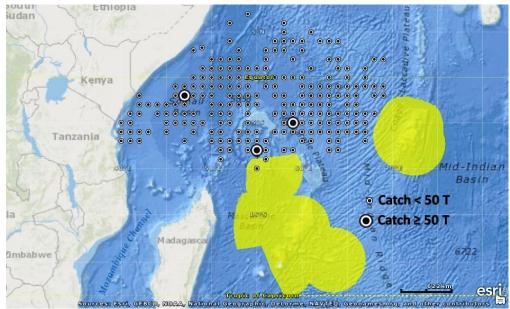


Figure 3h. Map of distribution of average bigeye tuna catch (tonnes) by the Mauritius-flagged purse seiners in the IOTC area of competence for the period 2013-2015



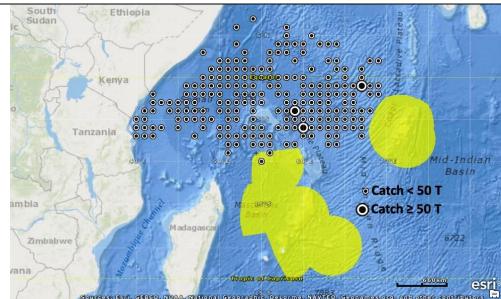


Figure 3g. Map of distribution of average skipjack tuna catch (tonnes) by the Mauritius-flagged purse seiners in the IOTC area of competence for the period 2013-2015

The sports/recreational fishing is an important activity for the tourism industry and local recreational fishermen. International big game fishing competitions are held annually. Around 60 sports/recreational fishing boats are involved in this fishery. The main fishing gear is trolling and the fishery supplies the local market with an additional estimated amount of about 350 tonnes. The main species comprises marlins, sailfish, tuna, common dolphinfish and wahoo. A data collection system is presently being planned for the proper monitoring of the sports fishery.

4. ECOSYSTEM AND BYCATCH ISSUES [Mandatory]

5.1 Sharks [Mandatory]

Skippers, masters and agents of vessels have been sensitised on the conservations and management measures related to sharks; namely Resolutions 05/05, 12/09, 13/05 and 13/06. Furthermore, identification guides on pelagic sharks have been distributed to the masters of the national-flagged vessels. Also, the NPOA-sharks has been finalised; it focuses on actions needed to exercise influence on foreign fishing through the IOTC process and licence conditions, as well as improving the national legislation and the skills and data handling systems available for managing sharks.

Only shortfin make sharks (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) are caught by the national-flagged longliners, as reported in Form 3CE to the Secretariat.

Table 3: Total number and weight of sharks, by species, retained by the national fleet in the IOTC area of competence (for the most recent five years at a minimum, e.g. 2011–2015).



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Year	No. of sharks	Species	Weight (Kg)
2013	17	Isurus oxyrhinchus	680
2014	3	Isurus oxyrhinchus	90
2015	12	Isurus oxyrhinchus	485

Table 4: Total number of sharks, by species, released/discarded by the national fleet in the IOTC area of competence (for the most recent five years at a minimum, e.g. 2011–2015). Where available, include life status upon released/discard.

There was no indication of any release or discard of sharks in the fishing logbooks received from the licensed vessels.

5.2 Seabirds [Mandatory]

As per the fishing logbooks submitted by the masters of the licensed vessels, nil encounters with seabirds have been recorded during the fishing campaigns. The zone of operation of the longliners does not include area south of 25 degrees South latitude since it is restricted between latitude 15-20 and longitude 55-61; therefore a very low probability of encounter with seabirds.

Furthermore, 'Seabirds Identification cards for fishing vessels operating in the Indian Ocean' have been provided to the masters and agents of national-flagged vessels which include techniques to identify the common seabird species and brief explanations on mitigation measures.

Observer seabird interaction data sheet for the IOTC longline fleet[Desirable]						
Name of member state:	_;					
Reporting period* or calendar year						
Species						

Fishery	Fishery Observed			Estimate			
Area ¹ Total effort ²		Total observed effort ²	Observer coverage ³	Captures (number)	Mortalities (number)	Live releases (number)	Mortality estimate (number)
Total							

^{*}This field can be used to specify a temporal stratification to the data e.g. season

- 1. How many vessels operated south of 25°S in the period covered by this report?
- 2. How many of those vessels used bird scaring lines (as a proportion of total effort)?
- 3. How many of those vessels used line weighting (as a proportion of total effort)?
- 4. How many of those vessels used night setting (as a proportion of total effort)?

No observers have been deployed on the longline fleet since all longliners are less than 24m and are operating only within the EEZ of Mauritius.

¹Spatial stratification (5x5, 10x10 or other – to be determined)

²Number of hooks observed hauled

³Percentage of all hooks set that were observed hauled



5.3 Marine Turtles [Mandatory]

The protection of marine turtles and eggs of marine turtles is ensured under Sections 16 (1) (c) and 17 (1) (c) of the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act 2007.

Furthermore, vessels' agents and masters have been provided with the 'Marine Turtle Identification Cards – for Indian Ocean Fisheries' depicting different species of turtles, techniques of releasing hooked turtles as well as some literature related to the ecology of marine turtles, threats of marine turtles; amongst others.

Also, the license conditions of Mauritius make provision for compliance to resolution 12/04.

Other measures taken by Mauritius related to the conservation of marine turtles have been included in the 'Reporting of progress of implementation of the FAO Guideline to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operation and on the implementation of resolution 12/04 on marine turtles' already submitted to the Secretariat on the 16/03/16.

5.4 Other ecologically related species (e.g. marine mammals, whale sharks) [Desirable]

Section 17 (1) (d) of the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act 2007 provides that: "no person shall land or cause any person to land, sell or have in his possession in Mauritius or in the maritime zones any marine mammal".

Table 5.Observed annual catches of species of special interest by species (seabirds, marine turtles and marine mammals) by gear for the national fleet, in the IOTC area of competence (for the most recent five years at a minimum, e.g. 2011–2015 or to the extent available).[Mandatory]

5. NATIONAL DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING SYSTEMS [Mandatory]

6.1. Logsheet data collection and verification

The use of fishing logbooks as a means of collecting fishing data started in 2001 and is ongoing. As per the conditions in the fishing licenses issued by Mauritius, it is mandatory that all fishing logbooks should be properly filled in and submitted to the Ministry upon arrival at port.

A total of 198 fishing logbooks were received from foreign-flagged licensed longliners and purse seiners. As for the local-flagged vessels, 28 logbooks were processed for the purse seiners and 46 logbooks for the longliners.

The fishing positions obtained from the logbooks are verified against Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data and landing and landing data from the Port State Control Unit (PSCU).

6.2. Vessel Monitoring System



The Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) is located in the Fisheries Monitoring Center (FMC) which was set up in 2005. The VMS network consists of a server which holds five workstations, out of which three are located at the Fisheries Monitoring Centre and the remaining two at the National Coast Guard.

The VMS network regularly receives information such as geographical positions of vessels and their corresponding date and time. A set of regulations was prescribed to provide the legal framework to support the VMS. All licensed fishing vessels are required to be equipped with the VMS system and to report to the FMC every two hours on fishing positions, speed and directions. A total of 200 vessels have been monitored during the year 2015

6.3. Observer programme (including date commenced and status; number of observer, include percentage coverage by gear type)

Table 6. Annual observer coverage by operation, e.g. longline hooks, purse seine sets (for the most recent five years at a minimum, e.g. 2011–2015 or to the extent available).[

Year	Gear Period		Number of Days
		26/02/15 - 03/05/15	69
2015	Purse seine	06/04/15 - 17/06/15	71
		06/05/15 - 15/07/15	70

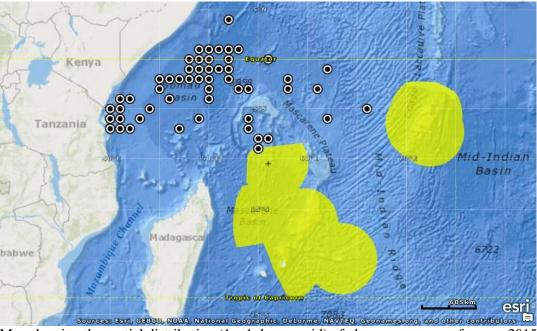


Figure 4. Map showing the spatial distribution (1 x 1 degree grid) of observer coverage for year 2015.

6.4. Port sampling programme

The sampling programme has been always been integrated within the Ministry.

The programme consists of sampling exercises that are undertaken upon unloading at the port of licensed boats and licensed vessels, of national and foreign flag. The lengths and weights of the fish are recorded. Using a diameter calliper, the fork length is taken for the tuna species while the operculum to keel is taken for the swordfish. The information of the sampling is recorded on data collection sheets which make provision



for information such as date of sampling, name of vessel, length and weight per specie of fish. Table 7 gives an overview of the number of fish sampled specie-wise.

Table 7. Number of individuals measured, by species and gear]

Species	Number of individual measured				
	Longline	Purse seine			
Swordfish	1007	-			
Yellowfin tuna	734	891			
Albacore tuna	2314	4			
Bigeye tuna	326	292			
Skipjack tuna	-	613			

6.5. Unloading/Transhipment [including date commenced and status of implementation][Mandatory]

6. NATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS [Desirable]

No national research programme is presently in place.

Table 8.Summary table of national research programs, including dates.

Project title	Period	Countries involved	Budget total	Funding source	Objectives	Short description
-	-	-	-	-	-	-

7. IMPLEMENTATION OF SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE IOTC RELEVANT TO THE SC. [Mandatory]

Table 9. Scientific requirements contained in Resolutions of the Commission, adopted between 2005 and 2016.

Res. No.	Resolution	Scientific requirement	CPC progress
15/01	On the recording of catch and effort by fishing vessels in the IOTC area of competence	Paragraphs 1–10	The template of the fishing logbook was submitted to the IOTC on the 22/01/16. Furthermore, as per the license conditions, it is mandatory for the vessels to keep on board a copy of the logbook which should be duly filled in by the master of the vessel.
15/02	Mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs)	Paragraphs 1–7	All statistical pertaining to Resolution 15/02 has been duly submitted to the Secretariat by the 30/06/16 as per the reporting requirements of the submission templates. Also, the final catch data for the foreign-licensed longliners shall be submitted to the Secretariat by the 30/12/16.
15/05	On conservation measures for striped marlin, black marlin and blue marlin	Paragraph 4	The catch of the different marlin species for the Mauritius-flagged longliners is being reported under Resolution 15/02. Furthermore, the operators of fishing vessels have been advised to release any of the three marlin species brought alive onboard or alongside the vessel.
13/04	On the conservation of cetaceans	Paragraphs 7– 9	As per the logbooks of the fishing vessels, there has been no encirclement of cetaceans by the Mauritius-flagged purse seiners. Also, the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act 2007, Act No. 27 of 2007 has prohibited the fishing of marine mammals, under Section 17.





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Res. No.	Resolution	Scientific requirement	CPC progress
13/05	On the conservation of whale sharks (Rhincodon typus)	Paragraphs 7– 9	All vessels have reported nil encounters with whale sharks. Also, the masters and agents of the Mauritius-flagged vessels have already been sensitised on the importance to comply with RES 13/05.
13/06	On a scientific and management framework on the conservation of shark species caught in association with IOTC managed fisheries	Paragraph 5–6	There has been no encounter with oceanic whitetip sharks during the year 2015. All fishers have been informed on the need to comply with Resolution 13/06. Furthermore, the NPOA Sharks of Mauritius has made provisions for the conservation of the oceanic whitetip shark.
12/09	On the conservation of thresher sharks (family alopiidae) caught in association with fisheries in the IOTC area of competence	Paragraphs 4–8	Skippers of national flagged vessels have been trained in the identification of thresher sharks and have been informed to release live specimens of thresher sharks caught. No vessel has reported any encounter with thresher sharks.
12/06	On reducing the incidental bycatch of seabirds in longline fisheries.	Paragraphs 3–7	No encounter with seabirds has been reported by foreign flagged and local-flagged vessels. All vessels have been advised on the application of the seabird mitigation measures. Furthermore, 'Seabird Identification Cards' provided by the IOTC, have been distributed to the agents of the Mauritius-flagged vessels.
12/04	On the conservation of marine turtles	Paragraphs 3, 4, 6–10	Licensed fishing vessels have been notified about the mitigation measures proposed under this resolution. Furthermore, marine turtles and their eggs are protected by the Mauritian law as specified in Sections 16 and 17 of the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act 2007, Act no. 27 of 2007. Also, information for Resolution 12/04 has already been submitted to the IOTC as per the FAO Guidelines on the 16/03/16.
11/04	On a regional observer scheme	Paragraph 9	Observers have been deployed on board national-flagged purse seiners and 3 of the purse seine operations have been covered in 2015.
05/05	Concerning the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by IOTC	Paragraphs 1–12	Mauritius is not a shark-fishing nation and does not issue licenses to foreign vessels targeting sharks. However, guides related to the shark identification have been distributed among the agents of the Mauritius-flagged vessels to avoid the retention of endangered shark species under the IOTC mandate onboard. Moreover, the NPOA-sharks of Mauritius highlights the conservation of sharks caught as by catch. Hence, Mauritius has planned to hold a forthcoming workshop on the 'Identification of sharks and sharks' fins with the aim to sensitise all relevant stakeholders.
16/06	On measures applicable in case of non-fulfilment of reporting obligations in the IOTC	Paragraph 1	The Implementation Report was submitted to the Secretariat on the 16/03/16 and includes all measures taken for the reporting obligations regarding the mentioned resolutions in the different sections of the report.

8. LITERATURE CITED [Mandatory]

- 1. National report 2014 (Mauritius).
- 2. National report 2015 (Mauritius).
- 3. The Fisheries and Marine Resources Act 2007, Act No. 27 of 2007 (Mauritius).