
OUTCOMES OF THE 24th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 25 NOVEMBER 2020

PURPOSE

To inform the Scientific Committee (SC) of the decisions and requests made by the Commission at its 24th Session, held from 2-6 November 2020, specifically relating to the IOTC science process.

BACKGROUND

Due to the shortened timeframe of the Commission as well as its virtual format necessitated by the Covid-19 crisis and travel restrictions, at the 24th Session, the Commission **CONSIDERED** and **ADOPTED** 0 proposals as Conservation and Management Measures (consisting of 0 Resolutions and 0 Recommendations):

Resolutions

- None.

The Commission agreed that any current CMM with a reference to 2020 be extended to 2021.

Pursuant to Article IX.4 of the IOTC Agreement, the above-mentioned Conservation and Management Measures shall become binding on Members, 120 days from the date of the notification communicated by the Secretariat.

The updated *Compendium of Active Conservation and Management Measures for the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission* may be downloaded from the IOTC website at the following link:

English: <http://iotc.org/cmms>

French: <http://iotc.org/fr/mcgs>

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As no new CMMs were agreed in 2020, below is a brief description of the CMMs adopted at the 23rd Session of the Commission, which have most relevance to the IOTC science process:

Resolution 19/01 *On an Interim Plan for Rebuilding the Indian Ocean Yellowfin Tuna Stock in the IOTC Area of Competence.* This Resolution requires CPCs to reduce their catch of yellowfin tuna. For Purse seine vessels this signifies that CPCs whose purse seine catches of yellowfin reported for 2014 were above 5000 MT to reduce their purse seine catches of yellowfin by 15 % from the 2014 levels. For gillnet fisheries, CPCs whose Gillnet catches of yellowfin reported for 2014 were above 2000 MT to reduce their Gillnet catches of yellowfin by 10 % from the 2014 levels. CPCs whose Longline catches of yellowfin reported for 2014 were above 5000 MT to reduce their Longline catches of yellowfin by 10 % from the 2014 levels. Lastly for all other gears, CPCs whose catches of yellowfin from other gears reported for 2014 were above 5000 MT to reduce their other gear catches of yellowfin by 5 % from the 2014 levels. Exceptions apply to the aforementioned limits as stipulated in the Resolution. The Resolution further stipulates conditions for over catches of the annual limits, reduction in the number of supply vessels and additional requirements for gillnets.

Resolution 19/02 *Procedures on a Fish Aggregating Devices (FADS) Management Plan.* This Resolution applies to CPCs CPCs having purse seine vessels and fishing on Drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (DFADs), equipped with instrumented buoys for the purpose of aggregating target tuna species, in the IOTC area of competence. Only purse seiners and associated supply or support vessels are allowed to deploy DFADs in the IOTC Area of Competence. This Resolution sets the maximum number of operational buoys followed by any purse seine vessel at 300 at any one time. The number of instrumented buoys that may be acquired annually for each purse seine vessel is set at no more than 500. No purse seine vessel shall have more than 500 instrumented buoys (buoy in stock and operational buoy) at any time. It further provides guidelines for preparation of drifting fish aggregating device (DFAD) management plans, guidelines for preparation of anchored fish aggregating device (AFAD) management plans and principles for design and deployment of FADs including FAD marking, tracking and recovery.

Resolution 19/03: *On the conservation of mobulid rays caught in association with fisheries in the IOTC area of competence.* This Resolution aims to mitigate the interactions between mobulid rays and all fishing vessels flying the flag of a Contracting Party or Cooperating Non-Contracting Party. The Resolution prohibits the targeting of these rays and prohibits all vessels retaining onboard, transshipping, landing, storing, any part or whole carcass of mobulid rays caught in the IOTC Area of Competence apart from subsistence vessels. CPCs shall report the information and data collected on interactions (i.e. number of discards and releases) with mobulid rays by vessels through logbooks and/or through observer programs.

Resolution 19/05: *On a ban on discards of bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna, and non-targeted species caught by purse seine vessels in the IOTC Area of Competence.* This Resolution specifies that all Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties shall require all purse seine vessels to retain on board and then land all bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, and yellowfin tuna caught, except fish considered unfit for human consumption. In addition the Resolution specifies conditions for the retention of Non-Target species captured by all gears including the procedures for full retention under certain circumstances. This Resolution will be revised, according to the advice of the IOTC Scientific Committee resulting from the review of the IOTC Working Party on Tropical Tunas (for bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna and yellowfin tuna) and of the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (for non-target species).

DISCUSSION

The text below is provisional, pending final adoption by the Commission. Text in white has generally been adopted while text highlighted in yellow is still under discussion.

Requests from the Commission

At the 24th Session of the Commission, Members made several comments regarding the recommendations made by the Scientific Committee, which participants are asked to **NOTE** (extracts from IOTC–2020–S24-R):

1. The Commission **SUPPORTED** the ongoing Management Strategy Evaluation work and NOTED the revised workplan endorsed by the Scientific Committee in Appendix 6 of the 2019 Scientific Committee Report. The

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Commission particularly **NOTED** the importance of the work to specify the skipjack tuna harvest control rule as a full Management Procedure (MP) as well as the need to finalise the MP development for yellowfin tuna to provide sound management advice for this species. (Para 20)

2. The Commission **NOTED** the ongoing work of the Ad Hoc Reference Point Working Group and **REQUESTED** that the outcomes of this group are presented to the TCMP for its consideration in 2021. (Para 21)
3. The Commission **NOTED** with concern the current status of some IOTC stocks and in particular yellowfin tuna. The Commission **ACKNOWLEDGED** that several other IOTC species are also listed as being overfished and subject to overfishing and that measures should be taken to address this problem. (Para 23)

The status of tropical and temperate tunas

4. Due to its strong concern regarding the status of the yellowfin tuna stock, the Commission **REITERATED** the urgency for the Scientific Committee to produce an assessment of the yellowfin tuna stock as a priority in 2021. (Para 25)
5. The Commission **NOTED** the considerable use of estimated data in the yellowfin tuna assessment due to the unavailability of data from CPCs, as is the case for all species. The Commission **URGED** all CPCs to improve their data collection and reporting. (Para 26)
6. The Commission **NOTED** that total catches of skipjack in 2018 (607,701 t) were 30% higher than the catch limit generated by the Harvest Control Rule (470,029 t) which applies to the years 2018–2020, and that catches have increased over the past 3 years. The Commission further **NOTED** that a new catch limit for the period 2021–2023 will be established using the Harvesting Control Rule stipulated by the Resolution 16/02. (Para 26)

The status of billfish

7. The Commission **EXPRESSED** concern that catches for several billfish species in both 2017 and 2018 were higher than the limits outlined in Resolution 18/05. The Commission further **NOTED** that several billfish species are assessed to be overfished and subject to overfishing and that measures should be taken to address this problem. (para. 31)

Scientific Committee Recommendations

8. The Commission **ENDORSED** the Scientific Committee's 2019 list of recommendations as its own. The Commission **NOTED** that SC Recommendation 22.22 states that "all purse seine fleets reporting effort as fishing hours or fishing days begin to submit this information as 'number of sets' instead" The Commission however, **UNDERSTOOD** that this reporting requirement is already required under Resolutions 15/01 and 15/02 and therefore stressed the need for CPCs to comply accordingly. The Commission **NOTED** that many of the Recommendations require the Commission to note the advice provided by the Scientific Committee and do not imply a commitment on behalf of the Commission. (Para 32)
9. The Commission **NOTED** that new Chairperson (Dr Toshihide Kitakado, Japan) and Vice-Chairperson (Dr Denham Parker, South Africa) were elected intersessionally after the 2019 Scientific Committee and **ENDORSED** their election. The Commission **THANKED** the out-going Chairperson (Dr Hilario Murua (EU) and vice-Chairperson (Dr Shiham Adam, Maldives) for their four years of contribution. (Para 33)
10. The Commission **ENDORSED** the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons for the subsidiary bodies of the Scientific Committee for the coming years, as listed in Appendix 7 of the 2019 Scientific Committee Report. (Para 34)

Date and place of the 25th Session of the Commission and of its subsidiary bodies for 2021

11. In accordance with Article VI.5 of the IOTC Agreement, the Commission **AGREED** to hold a Special Session (SS4) by video-conference from 8 to 12 March 2021 (Appendix 10). This meeting will be held for 4 hours per day and focus on the sustainability of the yellowfin tuna fishery and addressing deficiencies relating to the harvest control rule for skipjack tuna, in particular paragraph 11 of Resolution 16/02. (para 91)

Report of the 24th Session of the IOTC

The report of the 24th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission is available on the IOTC website.

<http://www.iotc.org/>

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Scientific Committee:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2020–SC23–03 which outlined the main outcomes of the 24th Session of the Commission, specifically related to the IOTC science process and **AGREE** to consider how best to provide the Commission with the information it has requested, throughout the course of the current SC meeting.
- 2) **NOTE** that 0 Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) were adopted at the 24th Session of the Commission.