

DRAFT RESOURCE STOCK STATUS SUMMARY

BULLET TUNA (BLT: *Auxis rochei*)

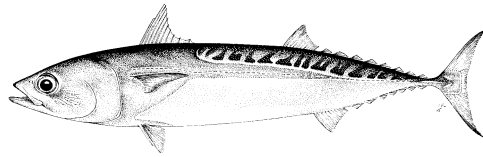


Table 1. Status of bullet tuna (*Auxis rochei*) in the Indian Ocean

Area ¹	Indicators		2020 stock status determination
Indian Ocean	Catch 2019 ² (MT)	22,245	
	Average catch 2015–2019 (MT)	18,878	
	MSY (MT) (80% CI)	unknown	
	F _{MSY} (80% CI)	unknown	
	B _{MSY} (MT) (80% CI)	unknown	
	F _{current} /F _{MSY} (80% CI)	unknown	
B _{current} /B _{MSY} (80% CI)	unknown		
	B _{current} /B ₀ (80% CI)	unknown	

¹ Boundaries for the Indian Ocean stock assessment are defined as the IOTC area of competence

² Proportion of 2019 catch estimated or partially estimated by the IOTC Secretariat: 23%

Colour key	Stock overfished ($SB_{year}/SB_{MSY} < 1$)	Stock not overfished ($SB_{year}/SB_{MSY} \geq 1$)
Stock subject to overfishing ($F_{year}/F_{MSY} > 1$)		
Stock not subject to overfishing ($F_{year}/F_{MSY} \leq 1$)		
Not assessed/Uncertain		

INDIAN OCEAN STOCK – MANAGEMENT ADVICE

Stock status. No quantitative stock assessment is currently available for bullet tuna in the Indian Ocean, and due to a lack of fishery data for several gears, only preliminary stock status indicators can be used. Aspects of the fisheries for bullet tuna combined with the lack of data on which to base an assessment of the stock are a cause for concern. Stock status in relation to the Commission's B_{MSY} and F_{MSY} reference points remains unknown (**Table 1**).

Outlook. Until recently annual catches for bullet tuna have fluctuated but remained around 9,000 t. However, catches in 2018 increased from around 16,000 MT to 31,000 MT – mostly due to an increase in catches reported by Indonesia purse seine fisheries (**Fig.1**). There is insufficient information to evaluate the effect that these levels of catches, or an increase in catches, may have on the resource. Research emphasis should be focused on collating catch per unit effort (CPUE) time series for the main fleets, size compositions and life trait history parameters (e.g. estimates of growth, natural mortality, maturity, etc.).

Management advice. For assessed species of neritic tunas in Indian Ocean (longtail tuna, kawakawa and narrow barred Spanish mackerel), the MSY was estimated to have been reached between 2009 and 2011

and both F_{MSY} and B_{MSY} were breached thereafter. Therefore, in the absence of a stock assessment of bullet tuna a limit to the catches should be considered by the Commission, by ensuring that future catches do not exceed the average catches estimated between 2009 and 2011 (8,870 MT). The reference period (2009-2011) was chosen based on the most recent assessments of those neritic species in the Indian Ocean for which an assessment is available under the assumption that also for bullet tuna MSY was reached between 2009 and 2011. This catch advice should be maintained until an assessment of bullet tuna is available. Considering that MSY-based reference points for assessed species can change over time, the stock should be closely monitored. Mechanisms need to be developed by the Commission to improve current statistics by encouraging CPCs to comply with their recording and reporting requirements, so as to better inform scientific advice.

The following should be also noted:

- The Maximum Sustainable Yield estimate for the Indian Ocean stock is unknown.
- Limit reference points: The Commission has not adopted limit reference points for any of the neritic tunas under its mandate.
- Further work is needed to improve the reliability of the catch series. Reported catches should be verified or estimated, based on expert knowledge of the history of the various fisheries or through statistical extrapolation methods.
- Research emphasis should be focused on collating catch per unit effort (CPUE) time series for the main fleets, size compositions and life trait history parameters (e.g. estimates of growth, natural mortality, maturity, etc.).
- Species identification, data collection and reporting urgently need to be improved.
- There is limited information submitted by CPCs on total catches, catch and effort and size data for neritic tunas, despite their mandatory reporting status. In the case of 2019 catches (reference year 2018), 10% of the total catches were either fully or partially estimated by the IOTC Secretariat, which increases the uncertainty of the stock assessments using these data. Therefore the management advice to the Commission includes the need for CPCs to comply with IOTC data requirements per Resolution 15/01 and 15/02.
- **Main fishing gear (average catches 2015-19):** bullet tuna is mainly caught using purse seine (~48%), handlines and trolling (~26%), and gillnets (~17%) (**Fig. 1**).
- **Main fleets (average catches 2015-19):** Catches are highly concentrated: in recent years over 90% of catches in the Indian Ocean have been accounted for by fisheries in India, Indonesia. Thailand and Sri Lanka.



Fig. 1. Annual time series of (a) cumulative and (b) individual nominal catches (MT) by gear group for bullet tuna during 1950–2019. Purse seine: coastal purse seine, purse seine, ring net; Line: coastal longline, hand line, troll line; Gillnet: coastal and offshore gillnets, driftnet; Other: all remaining fishing gears