



2022 IOTC Position Statement

GLOBAL TUNA ALLIANCE

TOP LEVEL ASKS

Yellowfin Rebuilding

IOTC agrees a resolution that specifies how the yellowfin stock could be rebuilt within two generations

Harvest Strategies

Accelerate development and implementation of a comprehensive, precautionary Harvest Strategies, including precautionary Reference Points and Harvest Control Rules.

Observer Coverage

1. Where lacking, adopt minimum standards for Electronic Monitoring (EM) data, and a work plan with milestones and deadlines for the implementation of best practice EM and e-reporting, with necessary mechanisms to ensure compliance.
2. 100% observer coverage requirement (human and/or electronic) in industrial tuna fisheries, including all those engaged in at sea transshipment, by 2024.

Port State Measures Agreement

IOTC adopts port state measures (PSMs) that are aligned with PSMA requirements.

YELLOWFIN REBUILDING

What is the issue?

- Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna is overfished with overfishing occurring.
- At the 25th Session of the IOTC, delegates agreed an interim rebuilding plan for overfished yellowfin tuna. The agreed measure set a total catch limit of 401,011mt.
- Six countries formally objected, and these put the interim rebuilding plan at serious risk of failure.
- A new stock assessment was published in October 2021 and Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) estimate for the Indian Ocean stock was recalculated as 349,000t.
- The scientific advice noted that catches need to be significantly reduced:
 - If catches are reduced to 60% of 2020 levels* there is >50% probability of being above Bmsy levels by 2023.
 - If catches are reduced to <80% of 2020 levels there is a >50% probability of being above BMSY in 2030.
 - If catches are reduced to less than 80% of 2020 levels there would be a >50% probability of ending overfishing ($F < F_{msy}$) by 2023 and also by 2030.

What are we calling for?

- We request the IOTC secretariat schedules adequate time to discuss yellowfin rebuilding proposals.
- CPCs should agree a resolution that specifies how the yellowfin stock could be rebuilt in two generations
- The resolution should apply to all fishing vessels targeting tuna and tuna like species in the Indian Ocean regardless of the length of the vessel and area of operation.
- We encourage CPCs to discuss proposals in advance of the meeting.
- If catches are reduced to <70% of 2020 levels there is a >67% probability of being above BMSY in 2030.
- If catches are reduced to <70% of 2020 levels there would be a >67% probability of ending overfishing ($F < F_{msy}$) by 2023 and also by 2030.
- Accordingly, reduce yellowfin catches to below 302,837t.
- In addition to the reduction in catch as set out above, the IOTC must ensure that all CPCs must comply with the resolution.
- GTA recognises that as far as possible, all CPCs and gear types are now required to play their part in delivering catch reductions going forwards.

HARVEST STRATEGIES

What is the issue?

- Harvest strategies (or management procedures) provide a pre-agreed framework to facilitate efficient, science-based decision-making to achieve a long-term vision for the stock and fishery.
- Although the IOTC has been slowly progressing the development of management procedures, it has not yet agreed on a complete management procedure for any of the key IOTC species.
- In addition, the skipjack catch limit based on the harvest control rule (HCR) has been exceeded in every year since its adoption.

What are we calling for?

- Adopt a comprehensive, precautionary harvest strategy for bigeye tuna.
- Adopt additional measures to prevent continued exceedance of the HCR-derived TAC for skipjack tuna.



OBSERVER COVERAGE

What is the issue?

- Comprehensive observer coverage is critical to effective fisheries management, compliance monitoring, and independent verification of catch, effort and species interactions.
- Low levels of observer coverage limit the availability of independent catch and operational data, reducing the accuracy of stock assessments and effectiveness of conservation management measures.
- The IOTC currently requires only 5% observer coverage for longline vessels larger than 24 meters operating within the Convention Area.
- While the IOTC has endorsed minimum electronic monitoring (EM) standards for purse seine vessels, it has not yet adopted them for all gear types or carrier vessels.
- At-sea transshipment continues to rise in the IOTC area and has been linked to IUU fishing activities and labour abuses when monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures are insufficient.

What are we calling for?

- In 2022 develop EM program minimum standards.
- Require 100% observer coverage (human and/or electronic) in industrial tuna fisheries, including all those engaged in at sea transshipment, by 2024.



PORT STATE MEASURES AGREEMENT

What is the issue?

- The PSMA, adopted in 2009 by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), requires parties to place tighter controls on foreign-flagged vessels seeking to enter and use their ports to land or transship fish.
- Tuna RFMOs also regulate member nations' port State controls as part of their management measures. This ensures that these governments have minimum standards in place, regardless of whether they are a party to the PSMA.
- The IOTC adopted a Resolution on Port State Measures in 2010, which was amended in 2016.
- However, the exclusion of ports by CPCs that are outside of the IOTC Convention Area undermine the global reach of Port State measures and provide potential safe havens for IUU vessels, operators and vessels that support IUU fishing activities.

What are we calling for?

- Amend Res. 16/11 to prioritize vessels for inspection in port and expand the measure to include ports of CPCs that are outside of the IOTC Convention Area.



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GTA Response to the IOTC 26th Session Proposals

2022

GLOBAL TUNA ALLIANCE

Introduction

The 26th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) takes place from 16th-20th May in the Seychelles.

The agenda includes proposals for Conservation and Management Measures for rebuilding overfished yellowfin, harvest control rules for skipjack, electronic monitoring, transshipment and a management procedure for bigeye.

These are all areas the Global Tuna Alliance (GTA) is seeking action on. All the proposals are available on the IOTC website.

The GTA applauds the leadership shown by the CPCs who have submitted proposals.

YELLOWFIN TUNA

- In October 2021, a new stock assessment was published which confirmed that Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna remains overfished with overfishing continuing to occur.
- If the 2020 catch levels are reduced by 30% there is a >67% probability of rebuilding the stock by 2030.
- Accordingly, the GTA is calling for the IOTC to reduce yellowfin catches to below 302,837t.
- There are three proposals: [EU](#), [Maldives](#) and [Seychelles](#).

The EU Proposal

- The EU proposal notes that yellowfin tuna in the Indian Ocean remains overfished with overfishing occurring but focuses on the ‘uncertainty’ of the latest scientific assessment. The EU proposes a “sub-commission” be established to prepare a proposal for 2023 IOTC Meeting (to apply from Jan 1st 2024). This would allow adequate time for discussion while areas of uncertainty in the assessment can be followed-up. Meanwhile, the existing measure (Resolution 21/01) would be rolled-over into 2023.
- The GTA is not against the principle of a sub-commission to focus on addressing the long-term success of yellowfin management – but we are against rolling-over 21/01.
- This is because the new scientific assessment reveals that MSY has been recalculated from 403,000 tonnes to 349,000 tonnes – while the current measure (21/01) has limited catch at just over 400K. However, 6 countries objected to this measure and if they catch what they caught in 2020, the total catch in 2022 will be more like 445,613t – much higher than MSY.
- So, we really can’t afford to roll-over.
- Furthermore, any discussions regarding this issue should include all CPCs and not a small group led by the EU.

The Maldives Proposal

- The Maldives proposal proposes a catch reduction “at least greater than 20% of 2020 levels” to rebuild the stock with a greater than 50% probability by 2030
- This is very close to the GTA position which seeks a 30% cut of 2020 levels to give the stock a >67% probability of being above MSY in 2030.

The Seychelles Proposal

- The Seychelles proposal aims to clarify and simplify the text on over-catch reductions but also proposes rolling-over 21/01 in 2023.
- It does, however, urge all CPCs to cooperate, fully adhering to the measure, to ensure the long-term sustainability of the stock of yellowfin tuna.
- Which the GTA supports.



SKIPJACK TUNA

- The skipjack catch limit based on the harvest control rule (HCR) has been exceeded in every year since its adoption.
- While the stock is not overfished nor subject to overfishing, the catches of skipjack tuna in 2020 reached 555,211t, exceeding the annual catch limit calculated applying the HCR for the period 2021-2023 of 513,572t by more than 41,000t.
- The GTA is calling for the IOTC to adopt additional measures to prevent continued exceedance of the HCR-derived TAC for skipjack.
- Two proposals have been received on this topic: from the [EU](#) and [Maldives](#).
- Both proposals seek the same objective - to develop a measure to ensure that catches of skipjack tuna are within the catch limit established by the HCR.

The EU Proposal

- The EU proposal seeks to do this through allocating the needed catch reduction of 41,000t among the CPCs harvesting the highest quantities of skipjack, on the basis of their respective level of catches.
- In order to limit the socio-economic impact of catch reductions for Developing Coastal States and Small Island Developing States, those may implement their catch reduction in 2023 and 2024.

The Maldives Proposal

- The Maldives proposal seeks to do this through weighting the needed catch reduction on the (i) volume of skipjack harvested and (ii) development state of the CPC.
 - A developed CPC catching more than 50,000t would be subjected to a 20% catch reduction, while a small-island developing state catching 5,000-10,000t would be subject to a 1% catch reduction.
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- The GTA does not take a position on allocations, but we support the aims of both proposals.



PROPOSALS ON OTHER ISSUES

Electronic Monitoring

- The GTA is calling for the IOTC in 2022 to develop electronic monitoring (EM) program minimum standards and require 100% observer coverage (human and/or electronic) in industrial tuna fisheries, including all those engaged in at sea transshipment, by 2024.
- Both the [EU](#) and the [Seychelles](#) have submitted proposals on the regional observer scheme that propose the IOTC Scientific Committee to develop and agree on minimum standards for the use of EM on-board fishing vessels.
- While neither proposal seeks to extend required observer coverage to 100% (nor even raise it significantly), we welcome the proposals to develop much-needed standards.

Transshipment

- ICCAT recently adopted revised measures on transshipment including the introduction of 'supply declaration' to ensure transparency of interactions other than transshipment between carrier vessels and fishing vessels, and the introduction of a more efficient and effective in-port inspection scheme.
- [Japan](#) is proposing these improvements be reflected in the IOTC resolution.
- The GTA both welcomes and supports this ambition.

Bigeye Tuna

- Noting that the IOTC Scientific Committee has agreed that the scientific work carried out to date on bigeye tuna has progressed sufficiently to enable the Commission to make a decision on a management procedure for this stock, [Australia](#) has submitted a proposal to adopt a bigeye management procedure.
- The proposal explains that there are two main decisions left for the Commission to make in order to adopt a bigeye management procedure (also known as a harvest strategy):
 - To select one of two candidate management procedures.
 - To select the probability that the bigeye tuna spawning stock biomass achieves the target reference point by 2034-2038.
- The GTA is asking the IOTC to adopt a comprehensive harvest strategy for bigeye tuna so we welcome and support the Australian proposal.
- The GTA has no view on which procedure or probability to adopt. However, 3 years for a management response (as per the current wording) is too long in opinion.



Conclusion

The 26th session of the IOTC has a real opportunity to advance tuna fisheries management and sustainability.

All CPCs need to play their part for the greater good of the fisheries.

The market will be watching the outcomes with interest.



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