

CATCH LIMITS FOR INDIAN OCEAN TROPICAL TUNAS

Author: [IOTC Secretariat](#)

Purpose

To inform participants at the 21st Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics (WPDCS21) of the status of catches for the three tropical tuna species under the mandate of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), relative to the Total Allowable Catches (TAC) and associated catch limits established in IOTC Conservation and Management Measures.

Bigeye Tuna

Resolutions [23/04](#) and [25/04](#) established bigeye tuna TACs of 80,583 t and 92,670 t for 2024-2025 and 2026-2028, in accordance with the Management Procedure (MP) set out under Resolution [22/03](#). The Resolutions also introduced catch limits for the main fleets targeting bigeye tuna, while encouraging other CPCs to maintain their catch and effort at their recent average levels, without prejudice to the development aspirations of those CPCs, in particular developing coastal States (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Catch limits (t) that shall be applied in 2024-2025 and 2026-2028 for the main fleets targeting Indian Ocean bigeye tuna. Difference = difference between the catches reported for 2024 and the limit set in Resolution 23/04 for that year. N/A = not applicable

Fleet code	Fleet	Limit 2024-2025	Limit 2026-2027	Catch 2020-2024	Catch 2024	Difference
CHN	China	3,785	4,353	4,506	4,295	510
EUR	European Union	17,010	19,562	18,369	14,000	-3,010
IDN	Indonesia	18,605	21,396	17,183	16,744	-1,861
IRN	I.R. Iran	2,105	2,421	1,255	1,739	-366
JPN	Japan	3,684	4,237	3,635	3,290	-394
LKA	Sri Lanka	4,772	5,488	5,648	5,348	576
MUS	Mauritius	N/A	2,482	2,967	4,852	N/A
SYC	Seychelles	11,882	13,664	13,902	10,506	-1,376
TWN	Taiwan,China	11,488	13,211	13,132	10,999	-489
	All fleets	73,331	86,814	80,597	71,772	-1,559

As of November 2025, the total catch reported for bigeye tuna for 2024 was 87,040 t, exceeding the limit of 80,583 t established in the Resolution by 6,457 t. Although the main fleets listed in **Table 1** complied with their respective limits (collectively reporting 1,559 t below their allocation, including

Mauritius for which no limit was established for 2024-2025), the combined reported catch from all other fleets reached 15,269 t in 2024. This represents more than double the difference between the TAC and the total limit allocated to the main fleets. The excess was primarily attributable to increased reporting of catches by Somalia, Tanzania, and Oman, the latter linked to the expansion of its purse seine fishery.

Skipjack Tuna

Resolution [25/03](#) established a TAC of 628,606 t for skipjack tuna for the period in 2025 and 2026, in accordance with the Management Procedure (MP) set out under Resolution [24/07](#). The Resolution also introduced catch limits for the main fleets targeting skipjack tuna based on their average catch levels of the years 2021-2023 (**Table 2**).

Paragraph 6 of the Resolution states that these fleets shall progressively reduce their current catches to the limits specified in **Table 2** by 2028, with a reduction of one-third (1/3) of the total required reduction in the first year, two-thirds (2/3) in the second year, and the full reduction achieved in the third year.

Table 2. Catch limits (t) that shall be applied in 2025 and 2026 for the main fleets targeting skipjack tuna in the Indian Ocean. India and Korea not included in the table as they objected to Resolution 25/03. Difference = difference between the catches reported for 2024 and the limits set in Resolution 25/03 for 2025 and 2026

Fleet code	Fleet	Limit 2025-2026	Catch 2020-2024	Catch 2024	Difference
EUR	European Union	125,000	123,906	106,912	-18,088
IDN	Indonesia	138,000	139,830	144,325	6,325
IRN	I.R. Iran	68,000	66,682	69,510	1,510
LKA	Sri Lanka	38,000	38,145	48,713	10,713
MDV	Maldives	121,000	111,687	80,293	-40,707
MUS	Mauritius	13,908	13,936	16,990	3,082
SYC	Seychelles	76,725	78,627	77,883	1,158
	All fleets	580,633	572,813	544,626	-36,007

As of November 2025, the total reported catch for skipjack tuna for 2024 was 624,609 t, approximately 4,000 t below the limit established in the Resolution for 2025-2026. Although the 2024 catches of several main CPCs harvesting skipjack tuna in the Indian Ocean exceeded their individual 2025 limits, the aggregate catch for these fleets in 2024 remained more than 35,000 t below their combined allocation (**Table 2**). This shortfall was primarily due to the exceptionally low skipjack catch reported by Maldives in 2024. Catch from the remaining fleets amounted to 79,983 t, representing 12.8% of the total skipjack tuna catch in 2024.

Yellowfin Tuna

At its 20th Session, the Commission adopted Resolution [16/01](#) *On interim plan for rebuilding the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock in the IOTC area of competence*, which required IOTC CPCs with longline

and surface fisheries to reduce their catches of yellowfin tuna on a gear-specific basis. Resolution 16/01 was subsequently superseded by Resolutions [17/01](#), [18/01](#), and [19/01](#) which modified the procedures used to determine per-gear catch reductions and introduced mechanisms to penalise CPCs that exceeded maximum catch levels for one or more consecutive years. These measures were further superseded by Resolution [21/01](#), which entered into force on 17 December 2021 and extended catch limits to coastal fisheries, while establishing CPC-level catch limits based on historical catch volumes, including additional flexibility in baselines for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

Following objections from certain CPCs, Resolution 18/01 remains binding for India, while Resolution 19/01 continues to apply to the Islamic Republic of Iran, Madagascar, the Sultanate of Oman, and Somalia.

Table 3. Annual catch limits for yellowfin tuna computed for 2025 and estimated for 2026, assuming catches for 2025 are identical to the limit set for the year. N/A = not applicable

CPC code	CPC	Based allocation catch limit	Limit for 2025	Limit for 2026
AUS	Australia	2,000	2,000	2,000
BGD	Bangladesh	2,000	2,000	2,000
CHN	China	10,557	-2,423	3,083
COM	Comoros	5,279	5,279	5,279
EUR	European Union	73,078	73,078	73,078
FRAT	France OT	500	500	500
GBR	United Kingdom	500	500	500
IDN	Indonesia	45,426	45,426	45,426
IND	India	N/A	N/A	N/A
IRN	I.R. Iran	N/A	N/A	N/A
JPN	Japan	4,003	4,003	4,003
KEN	Kenya	3,654	3,654	3,654
KOR	Korea	9,056	9,056	9,056
LKA	Sri Lanka	33,245	32,958	33,123
MDG	Madagascar	N/A	N/A	N/A
MDV	Maldives	47,195	47,195	47,195
MOZ	Mozambique	2,000	2,000	2,000
MUS	Mauritius	10,490	10,490	10,490
MYS	Malaysia	2,000	2,000	2,000
OMN	Oman	N/A	N/A	N/A
PAK	Pakistan	14,468	14,468	14,468

CPC code	CPC	Based allocation catch limit	Limit for 2025	Limit for 2026
PHL	Philippines	700	700	700
SDN	Sudan	2,000	2,000	2,000
SOM	Somalia	N/A	N/A	N/A
SYC	Seychelles	39,577	39,577	39,577
THA	Thailand	2,000	2,000	2,000
TZA	Tanzania	3,905	3,872	3,872
YEM	Yemen	26,262	10,685	16,474
ZAF	South Africa	2,000	2,000	2,000
	All CPCs	341,896	313,019	324,479

Details on the computation and estimation of yellowfin tuna catch limits are provided in the MS Excel files circulated for the WPDCS meeting ([IOTC-2025-WPCS21-DATA01](#)). Under Resolution 19/01, only the Iranian gillnet fishery was subject to a catch limit for 2025. The total reported catch for this fishery in 2024 was 25,579 t, below the base annual limit of 32,623 t. Consequently, the limit was set at 32,623 t for both 2025 and 2026, on the assumption that the 2025 catch would remain below the limit for that year.

The annual catch limits for yellowfin tuna calculated for 2025 and estimated for 2026 are below the total reference catch limit of 341,896 t established for the stock (**Table 3**). Owing to overcatches in previous years, the limits for China and Yemen are substantially below their respective annual allocations, slightly reduced for Sri Lanka and Tanzania, and equal to the reference limits for all remaining CPCs.

Conclusions

CPCs are invited to review the procedures applied to generate the outputs presented in **Table 3**, confirm the validity of the results, and, where possible, provide provisional estimates of their 2025 yellowfin tuna catches (which are not yet available to the Secretariat) to support the update of catch limit estimates for 2026.

All CPCs are further requested to consider appropriate measures to ensure that yellowfin tuna catches in 2025 are effectively monitored and do not exceed the limits established under the relevant Resolutions to which they are bound.

