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Ministry of Fisheries, Agriculture and Ocean Resources
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Maldives National Report to the Scientific Committee of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, 2026

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INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH AND STATISTICS

In accordance with IOTC Resolution 15/02 (and other data related CMMs as noted below), final scientific data for the previous year were provided to the IOTC Secretariat by 30 June of the current year, **for all fleets other than longline** [e.g., for a National Report submitted to the IOTC Secretariat in 2026, final data for the 2025 calendar year must be provided to the Secretariat by 30 June 2026)	YES 30/06/2026
In accordance with IOTC Resolution 15/02, 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 2026, preliminary data for the 2025 calendar year were provided to the IOTC Secretariat by 30 June 2026). **REMINDER:** Final longline data for the previous year are due to the IOTC Secretariat by 30 Dec of the current year [e.g., for a National Report submitted to the IOTC Secretariat in 2026, final data for the 2025 calendar year must be provided to the Secretariat by 30 December 2024).	NA Maldives did not have longline fishing in 2025
If no, please indicate the reason(s) and intended actions:	

Executive Summary

In the Maldives, pole-and-line and handline fisheries are the predominant fishing methods, with pole-and-line fishery primarily targeting skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*) and the handline fishery targeting yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*). Pole-and-line gear accounted for 99% (117,218 t) and 57% (18,139 t) of skipjack tuna and yellowfin tuna caught in 2025, respectively. The handline fishery targets large yellowfin tuna and contributed 56% of yellowfin tuna landings over the past 5 years, making it the most important gear for this species. Total tuna landings in 2025 were 149,299 t, with skipjack tuna and yellowfin tuna contributing 78% and 21% of the total catch, respectively. The combined catches of neritic tunas, kawakawa (*Euthynnus affinis*) and frigate tuna (*Auxis thazard*) was 92 t across all fishing gears in 2025. In 2025, pole-and-line fishing effort was 27,668 days, which is a 37% increase compared to 2024. In contrast, handline fishing effort decreased by 4% compared with 2024, with a total of 7,015 days. The Maldivian tuna fishing fleet consists of 419 vessels, of which 89% fall within the 12.5 to 32.5 m length range. Species-level data has been collected in the Maldives since 1970, while vessel-specific catch and effort data have been available since 1995. Logbooks were introduced by the Ministry of Fishery in 2010. Since October 2026, the Ministry of Fisheries, Agriculture and Ocean Resources has made the submission of electronic logbooks through the "*Keyolhu*" mobile application mandatory. Furthermore, the Maldives National Fishery Observer Programme, which is aligned with the IOTC Regional Observer Scheme was re-initiated in 2025, with an initial focus on pole-and-line fishing vessels.

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1. BACKGROUND/GENERAL FISHERY INFORMATION

For centuries, tuna fishery has been an integral part of the economy and the Maldivian culture. Prior to the development of tourism sector, it was the mainstay of the country's economy and continues to play an important role in supporting employment and income to a substantial proportion of the Maldivian population. Tuna has remained as the primary source of protein for Maldivians and continues to be the single most important export commodity, earning a significant portion of foreign income from fishery exports.

The Fisheries Act of the Maldives (14/2019) which supersedes the previous Fisheries Act of 1987 (5/87), provides the legislative framework for the management and development of the fisheries sector. The Act is structured as a framework law that encompasses various multidisciplinary aspects of the fisheries sector and serves as the legislative backbone, while leaving more detailed codification to the regulations and management plans developed pursuant to the Act. The Act requires development and implementation of management plans for all commercial fisheries, including those for tunas and tuna-like species. The Act applies to all Maldivian fishing vessels, as well as foreign fishing and fishing-related vessels entering the maritime zones of the Maldives. It also covers vessels flagged to the Maldives operating beyond the maritime zones, if applicable. Additionally, the act pertains to all fishing and fishing-related activities of such vessels, including those involving Maldivian and foreign nationals onboard. The tuna fishing fleets of the Maldives operate exclusively within the EEZ of the Maldives. However, operations of the longline fleet were not restricted and operated on the high seas until its suspension in 2019.

The Act was amended in August 2026. It retains the overall legislative framework and the principal management measures applicable to the tuna fishery while strengthening provisions on enforcement, fishing and aquaculture in protected areas, and the development and management of fishing harbours. The amendment also expands the provisions governing the leasing of areas for aquaculture and establishes procedures for their allocation and use.

The enforcement provisions establish a framework for addressing flag State responsibilities when administrative action is taken against foreign fishing vessels engaged in illegal fishing in Maldivian waters. The amendment also revises the classification of offences and sets out how penalties and fines are determined for violations of the Act and its regulations.

The most important component of the Maldivian tuna fishery is the pole-and-line fishery. The fishery targets, in order of importance, skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*), frigate tuna (*Auxis thazard*), and kawakawa (*Euthynnus affinis*). Although the majority of fishing trips occur within 100 miles from the shore, these mechanized vessels have the capacity to venture further. To assist the pole-and-line fishers, particularly small-scale pole-and-line fishing vessels, Maldivian government maintains a network of 60 Anchored Fish Aggregating Devices (AFADs) located approximately 12-20 miles from the coast. These AFADs are strictly designated for pole-and-line fishing. Pole-and-line fishing trips generally last 1-2

days, however, with the advancement of the vessels and ability to stay at sea longer, fishing trips have become multi-day operations, especially during times of low bait and tuna fishing.

The multi-day handline fishery for yellowfin tuna (>70 cm FL) is a significant part of the tuna fishery, primarily targeting yellowfin tuna from the surface waters (<10m deep) (Adam and Jauharee, 2009, Adam et al., 2015, Ahusan et al., 2016). The export oriented commercial fishery emerged in the late 1990s or early 2000s, building on seasonal fisheries that had previously targeted large yellowfin tuna in various regions of the country (refer to MRS, 1996). Handline fishing requires minimal modifications to pole-and-line vessels, mainly the addition of handline gear and facilities for fresh-storage of catch. The fishery has been boosted by the ease of operation, the ready availability of ice and the high market price for yellowfin tuna. The troll fishery is the smallest component of the tuna fisheries and targets neritic species of kawakawa and frigate tuna. The importance of the fleet, which landed substantial proportions of these species in the past, has significantly declined due to the mechanization of the fishing fleet during 1970s and 80s. Trolling activity peaked during the transition period of mechanizing of pole-and-line fleet (1975-1982) (Anderson et al., 1996), however trolling has mostly been very limited with its use being very sparse.

2. FLEET STRUCTURE

The fishing fleet in the Maldives have evolved significantly since the mechanization of the vessels that began in 1974. Currently, it features a blend of wooden-hulled and fibre-reinforced plastic (FRP) vessels. These vessels typically have long, open decks at the stern and a high-rise superstructure at the front. Most Maldivian tuna fishing vessels range from 12.5 to 32.5 meters. Unlike earlier models, modern vessels can accommodate up to 30 crew members and can operate at sea for several days or weeks. However, the duration of trips is primarily constrained by the amount of live-bait, vital for tuna fishing operations, that can be held onboard the vessels. Typically, pole-and-line fishing trips last from a single day up to a week, while handline trips tend to extend from 10 to 15 days, depending on the catch and bait availability (Adam, Jauharee and Miller, 2015).

Historically, Maldivian tuna vessels were gear specific. Pole-and-line fishery was conducted on mechanized tuna vessels (*masdhoni*) while troll fishing was conducted from smaller versions of the pole-and-line tuna vessels, locally called a *vadhu dhoni*. The introduction of the handline yellowfin tuna fishery allowed mechanized tuna vessels to adapt with minor modifications and minimal additional costs. In majority of cases, these mechanized tuna vessels are used exclusively for pole-and-line or handline operations. Occasionally, vessels may switch between pole-and-line and handline operations during high abundance of catch. However, this is not common practice as both fisheries require different types and sizes of bait.

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

Year	Vessel type	Length Range (LoA, meters)							
		< 07.5	> 07.5 < 12.5	> 12.5 < 17.5	> 17.5 < 22.5	> 22.5 < 27.5	> 27.5 < 32.5	> 32.5 < 37.5	> 37.5
2013	Engine row boat	4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
2013	Longline vessel	--	1	5	2	--	--	--	7
2013	Mechanized masdhoani	--	23	117	141	224	68	11	--
2013	Mechanized vadhu dhoani	1	6	--	--	--	--	--	--
2014	Engine row boat	2	2	1	1	1	3	--	--
2014	Longline vessel	7	34	10	9	2	--	--	9
2014	Mechanized masdhoani	--	--	132	163	277	94	12	--
2014	Mechanized vadhu dhoani	1	2	1	2	--	--	--	--
2015	Mechanized masdhoani	11	50	161	182	302	108	14	1
2015	Longline vessels	-	-	9	17	2	-	-	-
2016	Mechanized masdhoani	9	43	116	155	273	93	16	-
2016	Longline vessel	-	-	14	21	3	-	-	4
2017	Mechanized masdhoani	-	66	140	170	320	104	17	1
2017	Longline vessel	-	1	13	23	3	-	-	4
2018	Mechanized masdhoani	11	38	94	134	297	95	19	-
2018	Longline vessel	-	-	6	20	1	-	-	-
2019	Mechanised masdhoani	14	47	132	155	320	102	20	-
2019	Longline vessel	-	-	6	21	1	-	-	-
2020	Mechanised masdhoani	11	47	134	152	322	107	21	-
2021	Mechanised masdhoani	12	50	124	150	314	108	22	1
2022	Mechanised masdhoani	10	39	99	143	315	107	22	1
2023	Mechanised masdhoani	5	27	84	119	286	107	22	-
2024	Mechanised masdhoani	2	27	65	98	252	104	25	-
2025	Mechanised masdhoni	1	18	45	55	192	83	25	-

3. CATCH AND EFFORT (BY SPECIES AND FISHERY)

Total tuna landings (skipjack, yellowfin, bigeye, Kawakawa and frigate tuna) in 2025 were 149,299 t by all gears. Tuna catches reached an all-time high of about 167,000 t in 2006 (Figures 1A). Catches then declined by 53% by 2010 (101,800 t). Total tuna catches have since recovered from this decline, despite a notable decrease in 2024, followed by a subsequent increase in 2025. In terms of species, skipjack and yellowfin tuna are the two most important species in the Maldives tuna fisheries, contributing 78% and 21% to the total catch, respectively, in 2025. The average catch of skipjack tuna in the recent five years (2021-2025) has been around 114,359 t, with lowest 80,299 t in 2024. The average catch of yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna was 28,332 t and 262 t in the past five years.

Pole-and-line gear contributed 99% of skipjack tuna (117,218 t) landed in 2025, which is the same trend observed over the past five years (2021-2025). Pole-and-line also contributes 57

% of the yellowfin tuna (18,139 t) landed in 2025. Neritic tunas (frigate tuna and kawakawa) used to be a reasonable component in the pole-and-line catches in the past. However, as neritic tunas are of little value and not purchased by the large processors, targeting neritic tunas by the PL fleet is uncommon. Nevertheless, PL remains the main gear for frigate tuna and kawakawa, with almost all being landed by the PL gear. Handline remains to be the most important gear for yellowfin tuna in the Maldives, with 56 % of yellowfin tuna being landed by the handline fishery over the last 5 years.

Both pole-and-line and handline fisheries operate quite close to the atolls, although there is a difference in the predominant fishing regions of the two fisheries. Most of the pole-and-line catch is taken from the south of the country while the handline catch is mainly taken from the north and central regions. Small-scale trolling operates in the coastal areas and atoll lagoons. The main trolling fleet effectively died in the late 1980s following socioeconomic changes. Currently, kawakawa and frigate tuna catches come mainly from pole-and-line vessels, with a combined catch of 92 t across all gears in 2025.

Combined fishing effort for pole-and-line, handline and trolling fisheries fluctuated between about 27,559 and 48,096 days during the most recent five-year period (2021-2025) (Table 2). In 2025, pole-and-line fishing effort increased by 37%, while handline effort decreased by 4% compared with 2024.

Table 2. Annual catch and effort by fishery and primary species in the IOTC area of competence for the period 2021 – 2025

Year	Gear	Effort (days)	SKJ (t)	YFT (t)	BET (t)	KAW (t)	FRI (t)
2021	PL	26,960	118,517	10,167	207	3	58
	HL	18,227	159	14,370	17	10	3
	TR	147	7	11	0	2	0.4
2022	PL	33,616	126,362	9,089	223	2.55	47.69
	HL	14,472	23	18,993	0.89	0.02	0.25
	TR	8	0	0.11	0	0	0
2023	PL	25,817	129,024	11,235	379	13	100
	HL	11,301	165	19,540	17	0	0
	TR	4	12	0.56	0	0	0
2024	PL	20,229	80,282	14,239	271	14	95
	HL	7,329	4.8	12,238	0.5	0	0
	TR	1	12	0.56	0	0	0
2025	PL	27,668	117,218	18,139	196	11	82
	HL	7,015	15	13,639	0.03	0	0

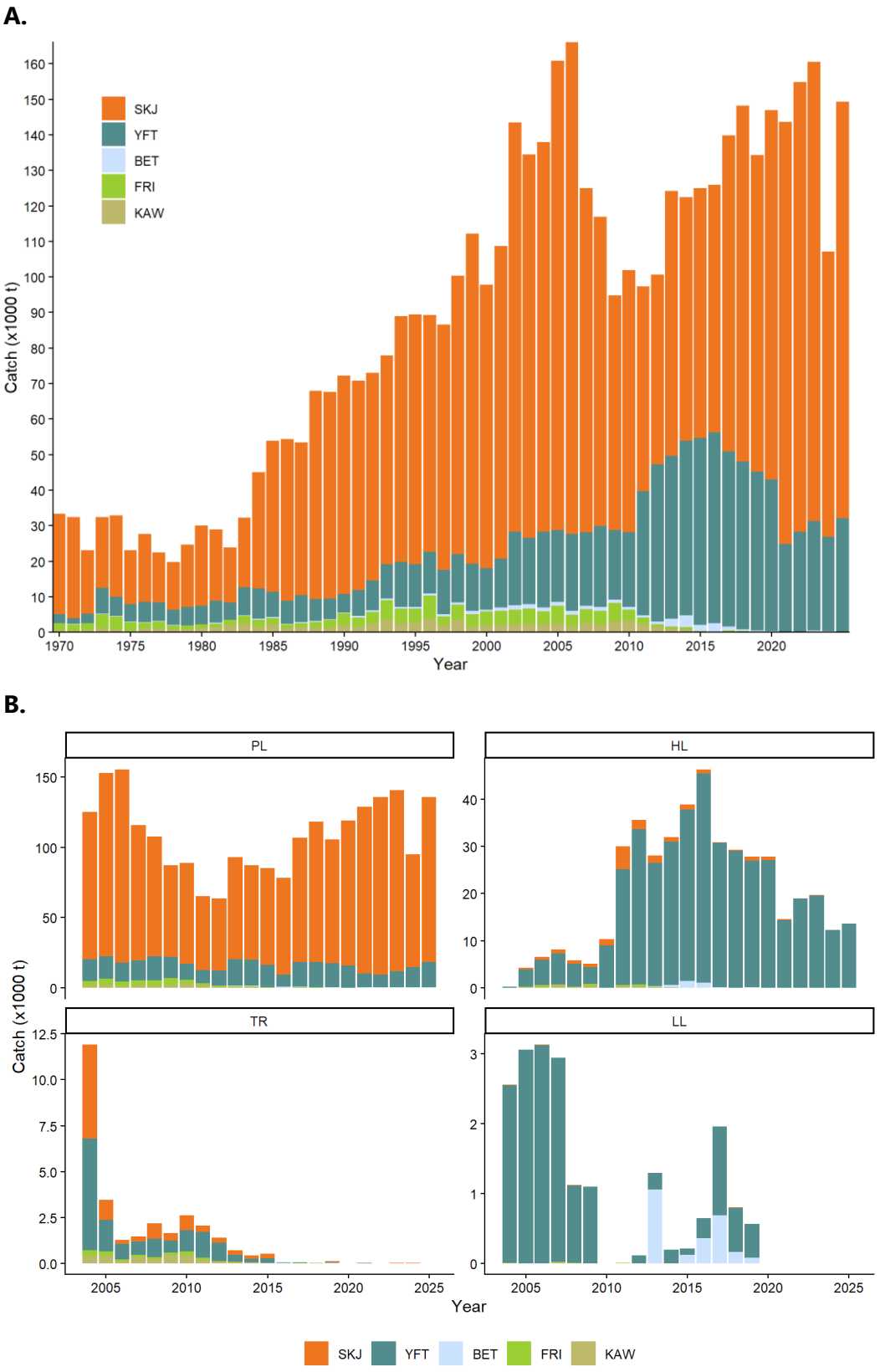


Figure 1. Historical annual catch for the national fisheries by primary species, for the IOTC area of competence **(A)** for the entire history of the fisheries and **(B)** by main gears (2004-2025).

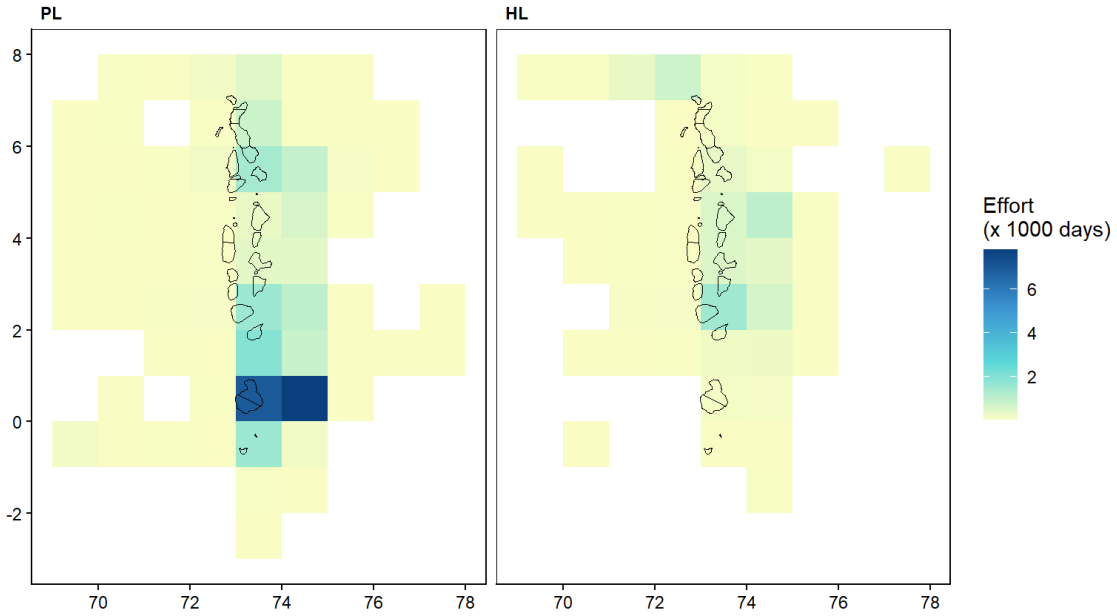


Figure 2a. Map of the distribution of fishing effort, of Pole-and-line (PL)and Handline (HL) gears for 2025.

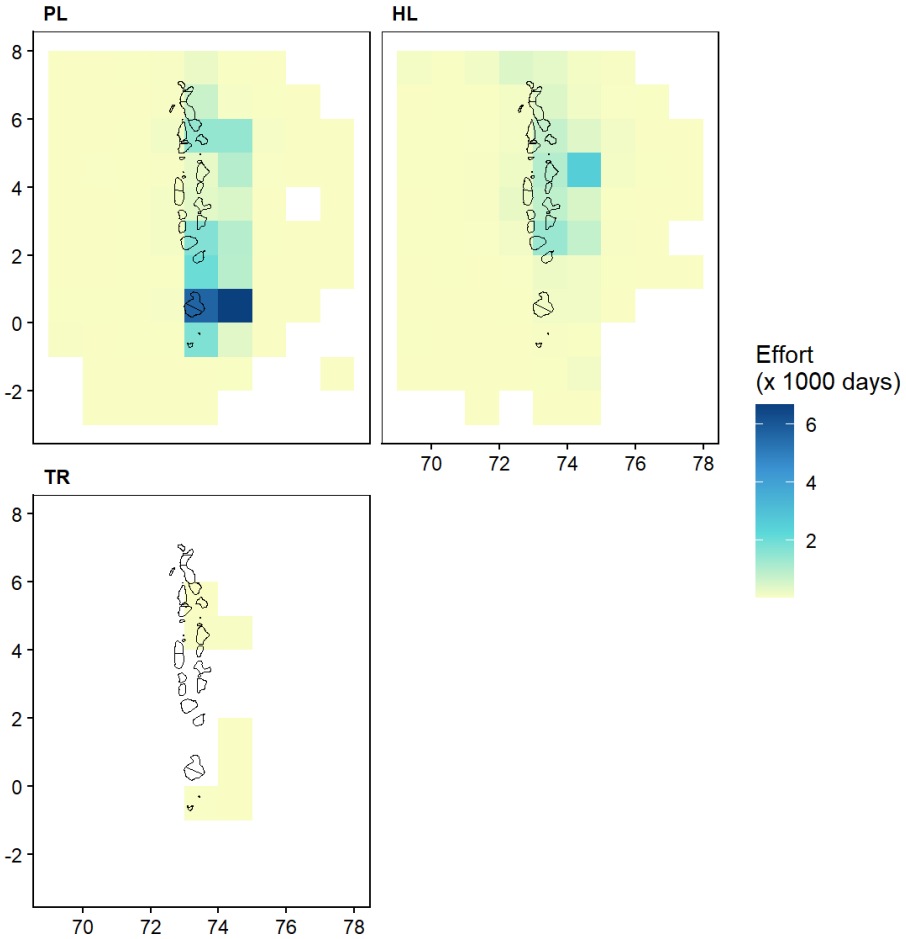
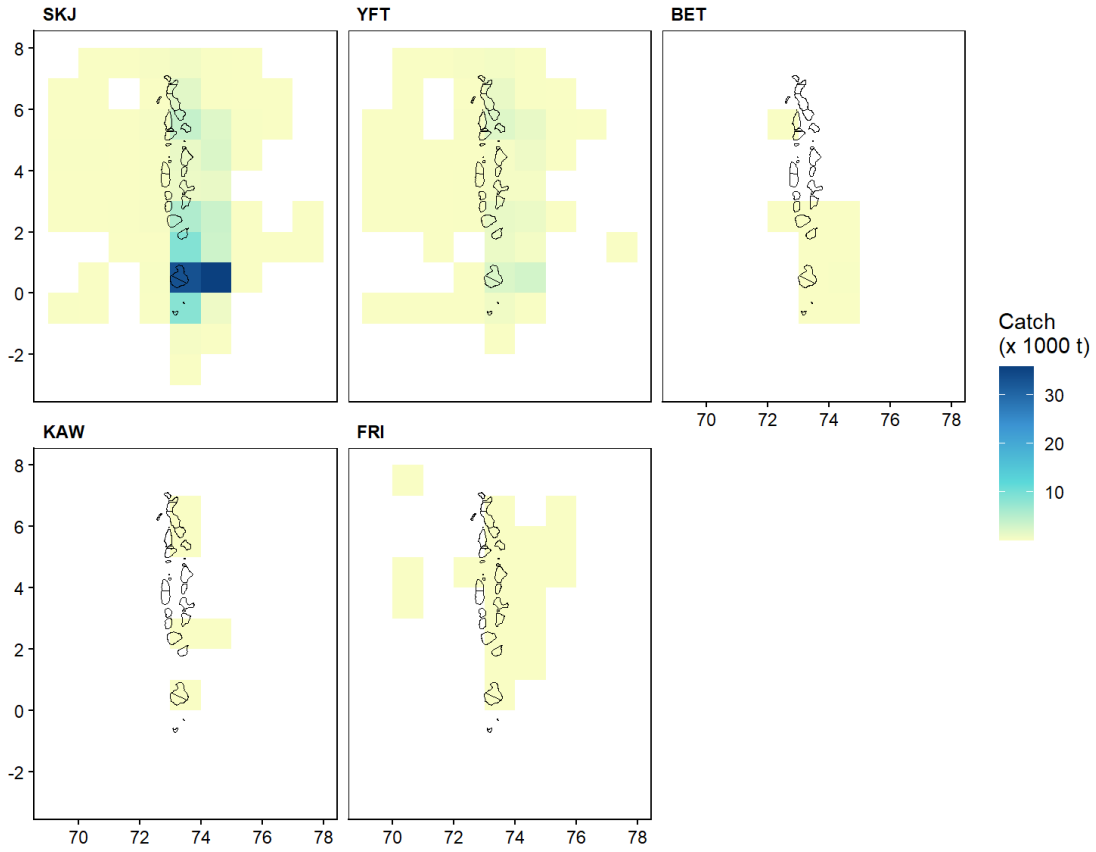


Figure 2b. Map of the distribution of average fishing effort of Pole-and-line (PL), Handline (HL) and Trolling (TR) gears for the period 2020-2025.

A. Pole-and-line



B. Handline

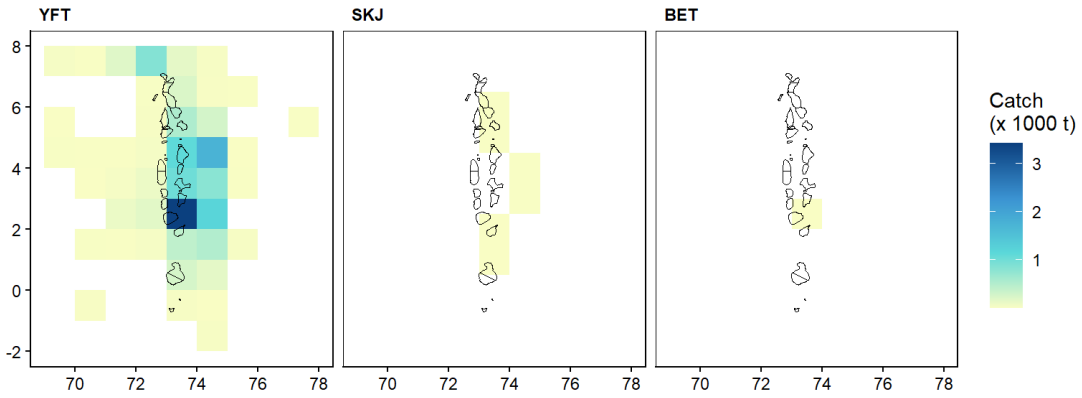
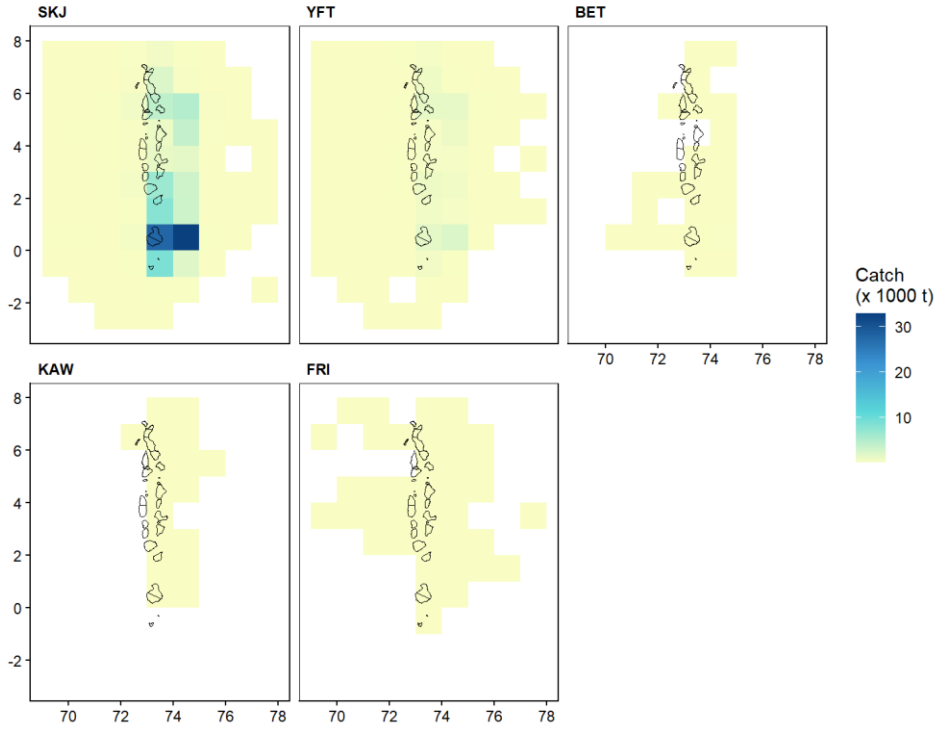
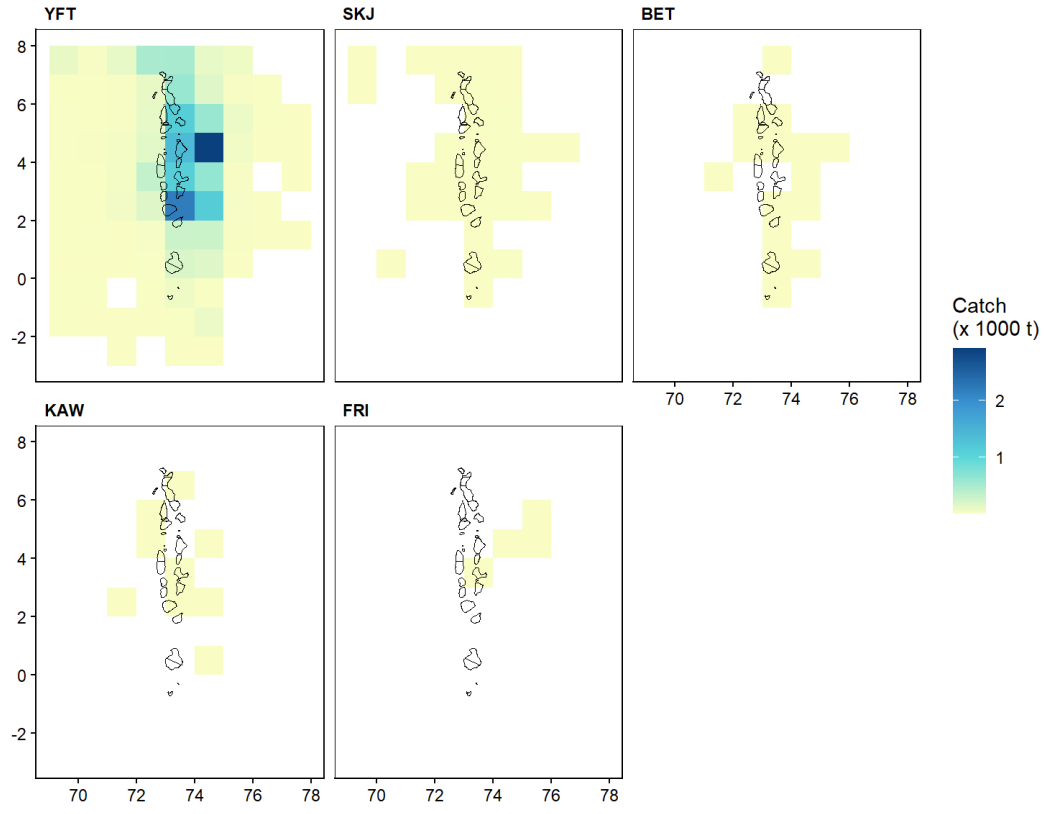


Figure 3a. Map of distribution of fishing catch, by species for (A) pole-and-line and (B) handline gears for 2025.

A. Pole-and-line



B. Handline



C. Trolling

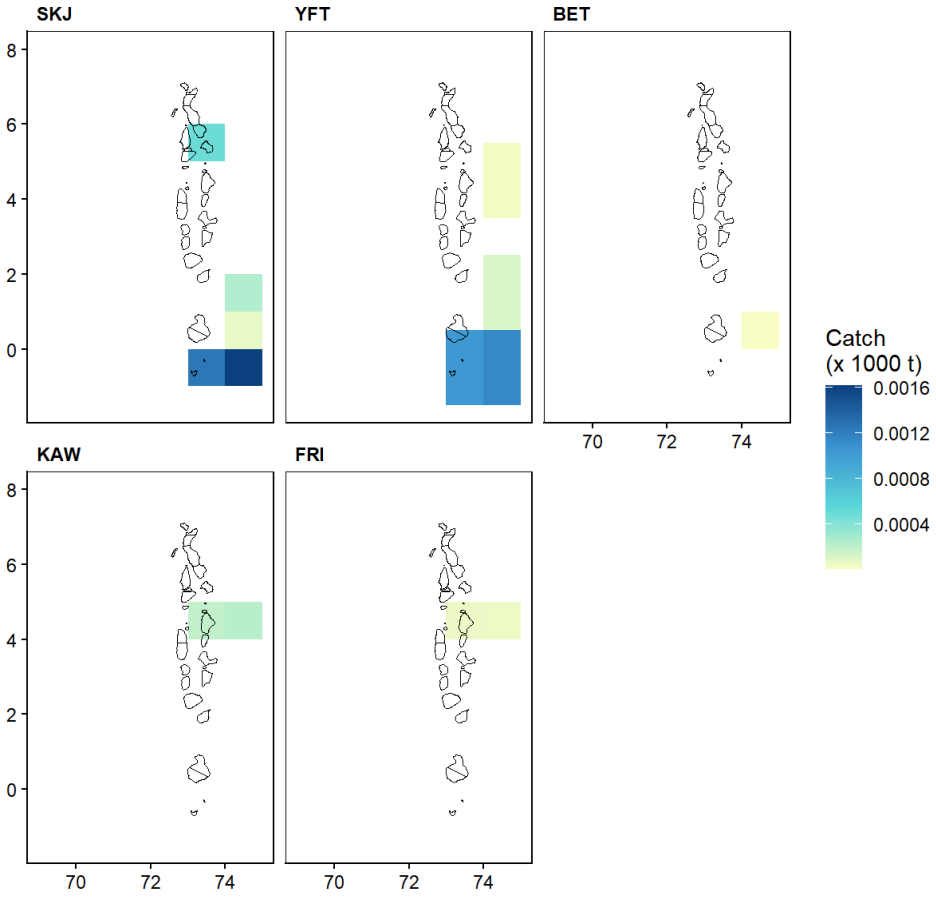


Figure 3b. Map of distribution of fishing catch, by species for **(A)** pole-and-line, **(B)** handline, and **(C)** Trolling gears for the period 2021-2025.

4. RECREATIONAL FISHERY

Big game fishing is popular among tourists and locals. Common target species are Indo-pacific Sailfish (*Istiophorus platypterus*), marlins and wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*) but also large yellowfin to some extent. Casting using poppers, rod and reel is also a popular game fishing activity targeting mainly large jacks, snappers and other similar fish off the reef and seamounts. Maldives also maintains a network of 40 AFADs for recreational and sports fishing. These AFADs are located closer to the islands, generally less than 10 miles from the coast. These AFADs are also deployed and maintained exclusively by the Government of Maldives.

5. ECOSYSTEM AND BYCATCH ISSUES

Maldives has a highly selective form of fishing with virtually no by-catch and no discards. The pole-and-line method alone contributed close to 91 % of the total tunas caught in 2025.

Similarly, handline and troll fishing methods are also highly selective with almost no bycatch and discards. This has resulted in minimal impacts from the Maldives tuna fisheries on non-targeted, associated and dependent species and the ecosystem. Live-bait is critical for the tuna pole-and-line and handline fishery. The species harvested by tuna fleet are characterized by short generation times and high intrinsic rates of population growth. These are species that are not easily overexploited. Maldives has recently intensified monitoring and conducted a review of the live-bait fishery.

5.1 Sharks

Shark fishing had been prohibited in Maldivian waters since March 2010. In late 2025, a limited exception was introduced for a strongly regulated, targeted gulper shark fishery under Regulation No. R-112/2025. Alongside measures relevant to licensing and designated fishing and landing areas, the regulation prohibits the retention of any protected species. To date, no vessels have been licensed, and no fishing has taken place under this exception. With the absence of a longline fishery, shark bycatch in the active Maldivian tuna fisheries remains negligible.

5.1.1 NPOA Sharks

Maldives' National Plan of Action on the Conservation and Management of Sharks (NPOA-Sharks) was formulated and presented to the stakeholders in April 2014. It was subsequently endorsed by the Ministry in April 2015. With the aim to ensure the implementation and observation of the shark fishery ban, the NPOA-Sharks addresses six key areas: mitigating the impacts of shark fishery ban; improving data collection and handling of shark by-catch; improving scientific research on shark populations; raising awareness on life-history characteristics of sharks; improving coordination, consultation and monitoring of shark ban; and cooperating on international agreements pertaining to sharks and with relevant RFMOs on research and management of shark species.

5.1.2 Blue shark

The pole-and-line, handline and trolling fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species do not catch blue sharks. The longline fishery that had shark bycatch was suspended in June 2019. Since none of the current gears catch blue sharks, the paragraph 4 of Resolution 18/02 that requires CPCs to monitor the blue shark catches do not apply to Maldives.

5.2 Seabirds

The interaction with seabirds is minimal in handline, pole-and-line and troll fisheries. Current logbook data collection system allows the fishermen to report such interactions. All seabirds of the Maldives are protected by the Regulation 2020/R-25. Regulation 2014/R-169 protects all migratory and seasonal birds, including seabirds. An action plan to protect and manage seabird nesting sites have been developed.

5.3 Marine Turtles

Maldives imposed a 10-year moratorium on catching or harming of turtles in 1995. The moratorium was renewed in 2005 extending further 10 years with a ban on egg-harvesting from 14 turtle nesting islands (Ali & Shimal, 2016). With the termination of the second ten-year moratorium in 2016, a new legislation on marine turtles under the Environment Protection and Preservation Act (4/93) came into effect in April 2016, declaring all species of marine turtles as protected and prohibiting harvest of turtle eggs throughout the Maldivian archipelago. Maldives is also a signatory to the IOSEA Marine Turtles MoU, signed on April 2010. With the suspension of the longline fishery in June 2019, Maldives tuna fisheries do not interact with marine turtles anymore.

5.4 Other ecologically related species

Whale sharks, cetaceans and all rays are protected by the fisheries law in the Maldives. Even though handline fishermen target yellowfin tuna from dolphin associated schools, the interactions are minimal, and fishermen avoid hooking dolphins as there is no value in it.

6. NATIONAL DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING SYSTEMS

Data collection from the tuna fishery in the Maldives began in 1959. Species-level data gas been collected since 1970, while vessel-specific catch and effort data have been available from 1995 onwards. The system relied on total enumeration of catches, which required conversion factors to estimate weight. Vessels reported their catch by species and effort data (number of days fished) to the island offices where they were registered. This data was then aggregated by vessel and month, providing catch information by species or species groups and effort measured in number of days fished.

In 2010, the Ministry of Fisheries introduced logbooks for the tuna fisheries to improve reporting requirements and address challenges in the data reporting system at the time. The logbooks were revised based on the experience of the initial few years. By the end of 2017, the previous reporting system was completely phased out.

6.1 Logsheet data collection and verification

Logbooks were introduced to the tuna fisheries in 2010 and refined twice, with the most recent revision in 2012 and the revised logbooks being introduced in January 2013. Following the successful establishment of the logbooks, the enumerated system of data reporting was ceased on December 31st, 2017, having been gradually phased out since 2010. The introduction of logbook data collection enabled the Maldives to report data at the required spatial resolution, thereby improving compliance with the data reporting requirements.

A major challenge was to increase the coverage of logbook submission rates. To address this issue, changes were made to the regulatory framework and fishing license conditions, making it mandatory for completed logbooks to be returned to processing or purchase facilities prior to unloading operations. This change was put into effect on March 1st, 2019, and the return rates have improved considerably since.

A web-enabled fishery information system, "*Keyolhu*" is now fully functional, and all catch data are recorded and analysed through the system. This is a major improvement compared to the old database for data recording. The system facilitates vessel registration, issuance of fishing licenses and fish processing licenses, data entry of fish purchase (by the commercial companies) and logbook data, providing a comprehensive system for compilation and reporting. The system is also designed to automate the process of issuing catch documentation required for the export of all forms of tuna from the Maldives.

Logbook data can be verified through different mechanisms. Observer data collected by the Maldives Marine Research Institute, with donor funding, allow for the verification of all aspects of the logbook reported data. Additionally, landings data obtained from the tuna exporting companies are used to verify the logbook data. The Fisheries Information System (FIS), *Keyolhu*, enables near real-time tracking of landings, purchases and licensing.

Starting on 20 October 2026, the Ministry implemented mandatory submission of electronic logbooks through the "*Keyolhu*" mobile application. This has ensured full logbook coverage for all fishing trips where catches are landed at processing facilities and enabled the Ministry to ensure that all fish purchases recorded by processing facilities are linked to the corresponding electronic logbook for each fishing trip. To enhance the accuracy and reliability of the data received, the system incorporates several validation features to ensure that electronic logbooks are submitted with all required fields completed and the necessary information provided.

6.2 Vessel Monitoring System

The current Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) project was initiated in 2019 under the World Bank-funded Sustainable Fisheries Resources Development Project and is being continued under the World Bank-funded TransFORM Project. Currently, all fishing vessels over 18 metres in length overall (LOA) are covered under the project, in accordance with the requirements of the Tuna Fisheries Regulation.

6.3 Observer scheme

The National Observer program was established in 2015. The program has proven to be costly, and due to frequent staff turnover, consistent implementation has been challenging. Given the

nature of the fishery and the size of the fleet, achieving the mandatory 5% observer coverage has been a further challenge.

To complement the National Observer program, the Ministry initiated a World Bank (WB) funded project to implement Electronic Monitoring (EM) in 2019. Electronic Observer Systems were installed on 14 fishing vessels. This project experienced numerous hurdles, the most significant of which is the high cost associated with the EM. The Ministry is currently working with different service providers to find cost-effective EM solutions for the Maldivian tuna fleet.

The observer trips by MMRI and partners began in 2014, and several observer datasets have previously been submitted to IOTC. The objective of the programme is to take part on fishing trips to and collect operational and biological data. A sampling protocol is established for the observers on sampling and recording of catch and bycatch.

The Maldives Marine Research Institute, in collaboration with World Bank funded TransFORM project implemented by Ministry of Fisheries, Agriculture and Ocean Resources, introduced the Maldives National Fishery Observer Programme in 2025, focusing on pole-and-line tuna fishery. This programme is aligned with the with Regional Observer Scheme of the IOTC. Under this programme, 14 observer trips that fall within the ROS criteria were conducted in 2025 on pole-and-line tuna fishing vessels.

Table 3. Annual observer coverage by operation, e.g., longline hooks, purse seine sets (for the most recent five years at a minimum, e.g., 2021–2025 or to the extent available).

Year	**Fishery**	**Number of trips observed**
2017	Pole-and-line	1
2018	Pole-and-line	2
2019	Pole-and-line	54
2020	-	0
2021	-	0
2022	-	0
2023	-	0
2024	-	0
2025	Pole-and-line	14[1]

[1] The reported observer trips for 2025 refer to vessels covered by the observer requirements under IOTC Resolution 25/06.

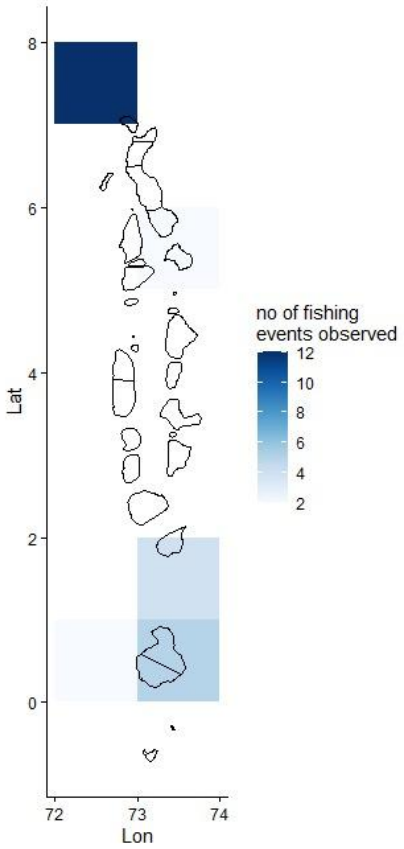


Figure 4. Map showing the spatial distribution of observer coverage.

6.4 Port sampling programme

A systematic port-sampling programme to monitor artisanal landings is not in place yet. However, size sampling of catches landed at the ports is conducted regularly through samplers at PL tuna landing ports, scientific observers and MMRI staff.

All fish processing and purchasing facilities are required to obtain a processing license to process fish for the export market, as stipulated by the licensing regulation (2020/R-92). Changes have been made to the license conditions and data reporting requirements, making it mandatory for all licensed fish processing facilities to record and report size frequency data. This will ensure that the Maldives complies with length frequency data reporting requirements to the IOTC in the future.

Table 4. Number of vessel trips or vessels active monitored, by species and fishery

	SKJ	**YFT**
PL	13,052	3,372
HL	-	17,728

Table 5. Number of fish measured, by species and fishery

	Number of trips
PL	382
HL	678

6.5 Actions taken to monitor catches & manage fisheries for Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo-pacific Sailfish

The Maldives Billfish Fishery Management Plan published in 2020 include provisions to manage billfish fishery including measures related to data collection and monitoring of all billfish species.

6.6 Gillnet observer coverage and monitoring

[NOT APPLICABLE]

6.7 Sampling plans for mobulid rays

The Maldives tuna fisheries have minimal bycatch and interactions with non-targeted, endangered and threatened species and mobulid rays are protected in the Maldives. As such, the pole and line, handline and trolling fisheries do not catch mobulid rays. Miller et., (2017), after monitoring 106 pole and line fishing trips, did not record bycatch of mobulid rays. Additional observer data since shows zero interactions with mobulid rays in the Maldives tuna fisheries. The longline fishery, which has the potential for interaction has been suspended in 2019. Due to the non-interaction of Maldives tuna fisheries with mobulid rays, a sampling plan as stipulated in Paragraph 11 of Resolution 19/03 is not required.

6.8 Electronic Monitoring Standards

The Maldives piloted an Electronic Monitoring Program in 2019 on 14 pole-and-line fishing vessels. However, due to financial constraints, the program was temporarily paused.

7. NATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS

The Maldives Marine Research Institute (MMRI) is the national agency mandated to conduct research on marine resources, including fishery resources and the marine environment. Various programs exist that are of relevance to IOTC. These include fishery and ecosystem monitoring and research activities. In addition to national activities, MMRI collaborates with regional and international agencies that would contribute to better understanding of the stocks of tuna and tuna-like species

7.1 National research programs on blue shark

The pole and line, handline and trolling fisheries that target tunas and tuna-like species do not have blue shark as by-catch.

7.2 National research programs on Striped Marlin, Black Marlin, Blue Marlin and Indo-pacific Sailfish

The Maldives Billfish Fishery Management Plan published in 2020 include provisions to manage billfish fishery including measures related to data collection and reporting on billfish species.

7.3 National research programs on sharks

Baited Remote Underwater Video (BRUV) studies to understand the population of sharks are part of the ecosystem research activities conducted by MMRI. The study has been ongoing since 2018. Since 2022, BRUV surveys are carried out to assess local populations of reef-associated shark. Given that the tuna fisheries in the Maldives have minimal interactions with sharks, research on aspects such as post-release survival, safe release and fishing practices are not conducted.

7.4 National research programs on oceanic whitetip sharks

The pole and line, handline and trolling fisheries that target tunas and tuna-like species do not have oceanic whitetip shark by-catch.

7.5 National research programs on marine turtles

The pole-and-line, handline and trolling fisheries that target tunas and tuna-like species do not have turtle by-catch. Furthermore, the Anchored FADs used in the Maldives are of non-entangling designs. It is noted that under the Environment Protection and Preservation Act (4/93), marine turtles are fully protected in the Maldives

7.6 National research programs on thresher sharks

Maldives does not currently implement a research program on thresher sharks that would contribute to the requirements of Resolution 12/09 paragraph 6 (CPCs shall, where possible, implement research on sharks of the species *Alopias* spp in the IOTC area of competence, in

order to identify potential nursery areas). The surface fisheries (pole-and-line, handline and trolling) do not interact with thresher sharks.

8. IMPLEMENTATION OF SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE IOTC RELEVANT TO THE SC.

Table 9. Scientific requirements contained in Resolutions of the Commission, adopted between 2012 and 2025.

Res. No.	Resolution	Scientific requirement	CPC progress
12/04	On the conservation of marine turtles	Paragraphs 3, 4, 6–10	With the termination of the second ten-year turtle moratorium in 2016, a new legislation on marine turtles under the Environment Protection and Preservation Act (4/93) came into effect in April 2016 which fully protects marine turtles in the Maldives. The Strategic Action Plan of the Maldives (2019-2023) pledges to protect from each atoll, representative sites of reefs, wetlands, islands and sandbanks. These sites include areas important for marine turtles among other things. Logbooks for all the tuna fisheries have provisions to report interactions with non-targeted protected species, including marine turtles. The data is reported regularly to IOTC.
12/09	On the conservation of thresher sharks (family Alopiidae) caught in association with fisheries in the IOTC area of competence	Paragraphs 4–8	All thresher shark (family Alopiidae) species are protected in the Maldives. Incidental catch of sharks is reported from all tuna fisheries through the logbooks. All data relating to shark interactions and catch is reported to IOTC.

Res. No.	Resolution	Scientific requirement	CPC progress
13/04	On the conservation of cetaceans	Paragraphs 7–9	Maldives is part of the International Whaling Commission's Indian Ocean Sanctuary established in 1979. Furthermore, all whales and dolphins are protected by law in the Maldives and their interactions with the fisheries are minimal. The observer & bycatch sampling programme records all interactions with cetaceans during fishing trips. Reports from the observer program will present all, if any, interactions with cetaceans. Maldives recently completed the progress report on List of Foreign Fisheries and Marine Mammals to comply with US Marine Mammal Protection Act's Import Provisions. MMPA requires exporting countries to maintain risks of mortality to cetaceans in par with US regulation by 2023.
13/05	On the conservation of whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*)	Paragraphs 7–9	Whale sharks are protected in the Maldives. None of fisheries of the Maldives are known to harm the whale sharks. The logbooks which are mandatory, do have provisions to report interactions with non-targeted and bycatch species.
13/06	On a scientific and management framework on the conservation of shark species caught in association with IOTC managed fisheries	Paragraph 5–6	The intentional catch, harm and retention of sharks is prohibited across all fisheries in the Maldives. Observer data suggests that interactions with sharks in the pole-and-line fisheries are minimal. Shark interactions are recorded in detail in the logbooks of all fisheries targeting tunas (PL and HL) and information on shark interactions has been reported to the IOTC as required.
15/01	On the recording of catch and effort by fishing vessels	Paragraphs 1–10	It has been made mandatory for the completed logbooks to be returned to the processing or purchase facilities prior to the unloading operations which has improved

Res. No.	Resolution	Scientific requirement	CPC progress
	in the IOTC area of competence		the submission of logbook data. Furthermore, starting on 20 October 2026, the Ministry implemented mandatory submission of electronic logbooks through the "*Keyolhu*" mobile application. This has ensured full logbook coverage for all fishing trips where catches are landed at processing facilities and enabled the Ministry to ensure that all fish purchases recorded by processing facilities are linked to the corresponding electronic logbook for each fishing trip. To enhance the accuracy and reliability of the data received, the system incorporates several validation features to ensure that electronic logbooks are submitted with all required fields completed and the necessary information provided.
15/02	Mandatory statistical reporting requirements for IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPCs)	Paragraphs 1–7	Maldives implements a size sampling programme at key commercial landing sites that are operated by the major fish processors and exporters in the country. Additionally, scientific observers and MMRI staff also contribute data from observer trips and visits to landing sites.
17/05	On the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by IOTC	Paragraphs 6, 9, 11	The General Fishery Regulation (2020/R-75) prohibits the intentional catch and removal of sharks across all fisheries and prohibits their sale, display, import and export. Any shark caught incidentally by tuna fishing gears must be released immediately. The tuna fishery logbook has provisions to report any incidental catch of shark. The data are reported to IOTC regularly. As there is virtually zero catch of sharks in Maldivian tuna fisheries, the provisions on reducing shark bycatch, safe release, post release survival, improve gear selectivity

Res. No.	Resolution	Scientific requirement	CPC progress
			and handling practices do not apply to the Maldives.
18/02	On management measures for the conservation of blue shark caught in association with IOTC fisheries	Paragraphs 2-5	The intentional catch and removal of blue sharks is prohibited in the Maldivian waters (the entire EEZ) under the General Fishery Regulation (2020/R-75). The regulation also prohibits the sale, display, import and export of blue sharks and its products. Hence, any incidental catch of blue sharks must be released immediately. As blue sharks are neither targeted nor caught incidentally by Maldivian tuna fisheries, the paragraph 2-5 does not apply to the Maldives.
18/05	On management measures for the conservation of the Billfishes: Striped marlin, black marlin, blue marlin and Indo-Pacific sailfish	Paragraphs 7 – 11	The Maldives Billfish Fishery Management Plan published in 2020 include provisions to manage billfish fishery including measures related to data collection data reporting of all species of billfishes. Further, with funding from the World Bank, the Maldives Marine Research Institute is to begin scientific data collection of billfish landings. It is expected that this effort will produce a better understanding of the fishery in the Maldives.
18/07	On measures applicable in case of non-fulfilment of reporting obligations in the IOTC	Paragraphs 1, 4	Maldives has taken measures to strengthen implementation of logbook scheme in tuna fishing fleet by strengthening enforcement at the landing centres. Landing centres are now required to confirm the submission of electronic logbook prior to the offloading of the catch. As electronic logbooks are linked to purchase data reported by processors, this ensures full coverage of logbooks where catches are landed at processing sites. All data related to tuna fisheries including fishing license, logbook, landing data are electronically logged into

Res. No.	Resolution	Scientific requirement	CPC progress
			Fisheries Information System. Maldives reports its actions taken to implement the reporting obligations as well as report the zero-catch matrix in accordance with Paragraphs 1 and 4.
19/01	On an Interim Plan for Rebuilding the Indian Ocean Yellowfin Tuna Stock in the IOTC Area of Competence (*If not provided under Res 21/01 below*)	Paragraph 22	The use of Gillnets is banned in the Maldives. Therefore, the paragraph 22 (CPCs are encouraged to increase their observer coverage or field sampling in gillnet fishing vessels by 10% using alternative data collection methodologies (electronic or human) verified by the IOTC Scientific Committee by 2023) does not apply.
19/03	On the Conservation of Mobulid Rays Caught in Association with Fisheries in the IOTC Area of Competence	Paragraph 11	The Maldives tuna fisheries have negligible bycatch and interactions with non-targeted, endangered, and threatened species and mobulid rays are protected in the Maldives. As such, the pole and line, handline and trolling fisheries do not catch mobulid rays. Therefore, Paragraph 11 of the Resolution 19/03 does not apply to Maldives.
21/01	On an Interim Plan for Rebuilding the Indian Ocean Yellowfin Tuna Stock in the IOTC Area of Competence (*If not provided under Res 19/01 above*)	Paragraph 23	Not Applicable. Maldives does not have a gillnet fishery; it is banned by law.
23/07	On reducing the incidental bycatch	Paragraphs 3–7	Longline fishery is not conducted in the Maldives; hence these provisions are not applicable.

Res. No.	Resolution	Scientific requirement	CPC progress
	of seabirds in longline fisheries.		
23/08	On electronic monitoring standards for IOTC fisheries	Paragraphs 3c	Ministry initiated an Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS) in 2019, and EM units were installed in 14 vessels. Maldives is currently working in addressing the challenges and gaps in EM program.
25/06	On a regional observer scheme	Paragraph 12	Maldives initiated an observer program in 2015. Recruiting observers and their high turnover rate proved to be challenging. Ministry initiated an Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS) in 2019, and EM units were installed in 14 vessels. Maldives is currently working in addressing the challenges and gaps in EM program. The Maldives Marine Research Institute, in collaboration with World Bank funded TransFORM project implemented by Ministry of Fisheries, Agriculture and Ocean Resources introduced the Maldives National Fishery Observer Programme in 2025, focusing on pole-and-line tuna fishery, in line with requirements of Regional Observer Scheme of the IOTC.

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