

REPORT FROM THE WPTT ON THE DATA SITUATION FOR TROPICAL TUNAS

EXISTING PROBLEM AREAS

The Fourth Meeting of the WPTT identified a number of problem areas in the data situation for tropical tunas. These included:

- Poor knowledge of the catches, effort and size-frequency from fresh tuna longline vessels, especially from Taiwan, China and several non-reporting fleets.
- Poor knowledge of the catches, effort and size-frequency from non-reporting fleets of deep-freezing tuna longliners, especially since the mid-eighties.
- Lack of accurate catch, effort and size-frequency data for the Indonesian longline fishery in recent years.
- Poor knowledge of the catches and lack of effort and size-frequency data for ex-Soviet purse seine boats flying flags of convenience in recent years.
- A discrepancy between the nominal catches and catch/effort data has been detected in IOTC's database for the early years (1952-1970) of the Japanese longline fishery. The current figures in the nominal catches database are lower than those calculated from the catch and effort database. It has been recommended that the erroneous nominal catches (not only for yellowfin, but for all species) be replaced with corrected data provided by Japan.

IMPROVEMENTS SINCE LAST MEETING

Improvements have taken place in a number of areas. These include:

A better level of reporting: NC, CE and SF information have been obtained for Omani vessels for some years and species. Sets of CE and SF statistics provided by Korea were integrated to the IOTC databases, although their quality is thought low.

Revision of the IOTC databases: Several revisions have been conducted during the last year on the IOTC databases. This has led to new datasets being input, especially regarding CE and SF statistics and to new series of NC data for some countries.

An improved Vessel Record: More information has been obtained on the number and type of vessels operating under flags of non-reporting parties. This information comes mostly from various licensing schemes in the Indian Ocean and has become an important element in the estimation of the catches of non reporting fleets.

Improved estimation of catches of non-reporting fleets: The collection of historical and current information on the landings of small fresh tuna longliners in ports in the Indian Ocean has improved the accuracy of earlier estimates. The more complete Vessel Record also permitted the estimation by flag of the catches of deep-freezing longliners.

Recovery of historical activity and size data from

processing plants: The collection of historical information from operators in different ports of the Indian Ocean has continued since last year. Some 200,000 individual fish weight records by species have been retrieved to date for 1998 to 2002.

IOTC sampling programmes: The collection of information on the activities of fresh tuna longliners landing in Phuket and Penang has continued during 2002. This has led to more complete and accurate estimates of catches of these fleets. Other valuable data collected in the scope of these programmes refer to length frequencies which will allow length-length, length-weight and weight-length relationships to be established. Sampling is also carried out in Sri Lanka since March 2002; fresh tuna longliners have been operating in this country since the early nineties.

Plan of Action in Indonesia: A large scale operation involving several local and foreign institutions was initiated in June 2002 in Indonesia. The primary objective of this multi-lateral cooperation is building the necessary capabilities in the country, so as to allow Indonesia to generate good quality statistics in the near future. The data retrieved during the first trips to Indonesia, in the scope of this cooperation, permitted to conduct more accurate estimates on the catches and crafts operating in this country since 1970. Sampling of landings of fresh tuna longliners operating in this country is scheduled to start by July this year and will allow raising more precise estimates.

Korean CE and SF: The series 1990-2000 of SF for yellowfin and bigeye tunas and 1999-2000 CE statistics reported last year by Korea was input to the corresponding IOTC databases after removal of inconsistent data.

Oman CE and SF data: Oman has submitted CE statistics of vessels operating gillnets from 1987 to 2000 and SF statistics of yellowfin tuna from 1986 to 1994. The recovery of more information is expected in the near future.

Mauritius SF data: New size frequency statistics retrieved for the Mauritius purse seine fleet were input to the database completing the series from 1989 to 2000.

CURRENT STATUS OF DATABASES

The status of the current data situation for each of the species can be summarised as follows:

YELLOWFIN AND BIGEYE TUNA

NC data: Relatively well known for most purse-seine fisheries and the main longline fleets (Japan, Korea and Taiwan, China). Catches of non-reporting longline and purse seine fleets are still uncertain, although they are believed more accurate than past catches estimated. Artisanal catches are uncertain, although they are not considered large, with the possible exception of gillnet/longline and other coastal fleets where the catches are reported under "other species" groups, especially for early years. It has been recommended that apparently erroneous nominal catches (not only for

yellowfin, but for all species) for the early (1950's) Japanese longline fleet should be replaced with corrected data provided by Japan.

CE data: Well known in the purse-seine fisheries and the main longline operations (Japan, Korea and Taiwan, China). Nevertheless, the Korean data are thought inaccurate. No catch-and-effort statistics are available for non-reporting longline and purse seine vessels.

SF data: Data for the period 1997-2000 from the EU PS sampling is considered less accurate. Sampling coverage from Japan and Korea is low in recent years. The only data available regarding non-reporting fleets are from sampling

in Phuket and Penang. No SF data are available from Taiwanese vessels since 1989. Little information is available on important artisanal catches (e.g. Oman, Pakistan, Yemen and Comoros).

SKIPJACK TUNA

NC, CE and SF data: Relatively well known for most purse-seine fisheries. Data are available for the important artisanal fishery in Maldives. Artisanal components (not well known) are important for this species. In several coastal countries the catches are not reported by gear.