

Preliminary catch estimates of tuna and tuna-like species from NARA / IOTC / OFCF sampling program in Sri Lanka

NARA¹, IOTC², OFCF³

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Abstract

The offshore fishery in Sri Lanka has targeted tuna and billfish since early 1960's. In 2004, the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and the Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation of Japan (OFCF) agreed to supply technical and financial support to improve the large pelagic data collection programme in Sri Lanka. A new sampling scheme was implemented in late December 2004. The project will end in 2007. The objective of this collaborative project involving NARA, IOTC and OFCF is to strengthen data collection and processing systems on Sri Lankan billfish and tuna fisheries and increase the amount and quality of size frequency data for these species. This paper describes the current sampling regime and the problems encountered during its implementation. It also highlights the complexity of this fishery. Discrepancies were observed when crosschecking the data collected in the program with data from other sources. Some adjustments were made to improve the accuracy of the data. The first interim results indicate that the national production statistics for tuna and billfish have been overestimated in the past. A standardization of the data collection and a stronger collaboration between the different institutions could contribute to improve the fishery statistical system in Sri Lanka.

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