

NATIONAL REPORT – SRI LANKA (Summary)

Small scale gill nets and tuna long lines are the two main fishing methods used by Sri Lankan fishermen to target for tuna and tuna like fishes. There are over 3000 boats operate in offshore waters. They fish in EEZ of Sri Lanka as well as outside waters. In 2006 the catch of offshore fleet is 60,044.24 mt which comprised 50% skipjack and 25% yellowfin tuna. This is 11.5 mt to the 2005 production. Eventhough the main fishing gear is gill netting more than 40% of the fleet carry long lines specially during non-monsoon seasons. Other than this Sri Lanka owns 8 small sized (52ft) fresh tuna longliners targeted for yellowfin and bigeye. In 2006 the catch from those boats is 135.5 mt comprising 40% yellowfin, 11% bigeye and 40% bill fishes. These boats operate throughout the year in EEZ of Sri Lanka and high seas. It is estimated that a further 26,000 mt of medium sized yellowfin and other tuna are landed by coastal tuna longline fishery operated with 20-40 km distance from the shore especially in the north west and northeast coasts of Sri Lanka. The fishery is conducted by 5-6 m long outboard engine day-boats. The fishery is highly seasonal and conducted during non-monsoonal months. The reported species composition was dominated by 65% of yellowfin tuna.

Due to the nature of the fishery and non-availability of adequate resources the present data collection system does not provide adequate reliable information for management and development. Therefore, Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources has already taken initiatives to improve and upgrade the fisheries statistical system with technical and financial assistance from ICEIDA.