

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

1st CIRCLE HOOK WORKSHOP

By videoconference
7-8 March, 2022

ANNOUNCEMENT

BACKGROUND

In accordance with its mandate under the Antigua Convention with regards to the conservation of species belonging to the same ecosystem and that are affected by fishing for the fish stocks covered by this Convention, the Commission recognized the need “*to take all reasonable steps to prevent interactions with sea turtles*”. To this end, it adopted at its 75th meeting in June 2007 a *Resolution to mitigate the impact of tuna fishing vessels on sea turtles*, which was later amended and replaced by [Resolution C-19-04](#) *Resolution to Mitigate Impacts on Sea Turtles*, which the Commission adopted at its 94th Meeting in July 2019.

Resolution C-19-04 identifies expressly the use of circle hooks (as well as that of whole finfish bait) as leading to “*statistically significant reductions in the rates of both bycatch and mortality of sea turtles incidentally caught in longline gear*”. This resolution establishes an obligation for CPCs to require owners/operators of longline vessels fishing in shallow set manner to employ at least one of the listed mitigation measures, including the use of “large circle hooks” exclusively.

In addition, paragraph 4 c. of the resolution stipulates that:

“The Bycatch Working Group shall prioritize the identification and assessment of new scientific information regarding sea turtle bycatch mitigation and recommend, if needed, additional measures to the Commission that would strengthen this resolution. By 2021, the Bycatch Working Group and SAC shall analyze scientific information regarding different circle hooks sizes and their effectiveness at mitigating sea turtle bycatch (decreasing catch and increasing post-release survival) and provide a recommendation to the Commission for a minimum hook size as well as a schedule for implementing this recommended minimum hook size through a revision to this resolution.”

At the [10th Bycatch Working Group meeting](#) held virtually during May 2021, this task was discussed, including a presentation and summary of relevant research regarding circle hook sizes. However, it was not possible for Members to provide appropriate feedback and identify specific recommendations at the time. Consequently, as recommended by the Working Group, the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) at its 12th meeting held immediately afterwards, adopted the following recommendation:

“That IATTC staff host a virtual workshop prior to the 11th meeting of the Working Group on Bycatch to analyze scientific information regarding different circle hooks sizes and their effectiveness at mitigating on bycatch and target species with the specific goal of defining the characteristics of an adequate hook for the purpose of mitigating bycatch of sea turtles in accordance with Resolution C-19-04”.

That recommendation was subsequently adopted by the Commission at its 98th Meeting, held in August 2021 and resumed in October 2021. This first workshop is organized in compliance with that decision of the Commission.

OBJECTIVES

The two main objectives of the workshop are as follows:

- 1) A summarized presentation and discussion of research on the effects of the use of circle hooks in longline fisheries on sea turtles and other vulnerable species as well as on the target species themselves;
- 2) A discussion on the specific minimum hook size of a circle hook that would satisfy the requirements established by Resolution C-19-04.

If time allows, it is also proposed to take the opportunity of this workshop to engage in a preliminary discussion regarding the identification of the schedule for implementing the specific minimum hook size as defined through the discussion referred to above.

PARTICIPATION

In view of the nature and scope of the workshop and in spite of its informal and technical nature, all CPCs are invited to designate participants in their representation. IGOs, NGOs and individual experts in the field are also welcome to participate. For the purpose of registration, a form will be posted on the meeting website to allow for each participant to register individually.

In addition, CPCs, IGOs and NGOs interested in participating are invited to send also a list of these individual participants representing them in the workshop to Ms. Monica Galvan, Assistant to the Director, at mgalvan@iattc.org.

ARRANGEMENTS

The Workshop will be held by videoconference, utilizing the Zoom platform, on 7 and 8 March 2022, starting daily at 3 PM PDT (UTC -7) to finalize around 6 PM PDT (UTC -7) San Diego time.

The corresponding invitation to join will be sent individually to each registered participant.

For the convenience of the participants, a document will be posted on the website with more precise indications on the ways the meeting will be conducted, taking into account the special requirements and limitations of videoconferencing, using as a model the similar documents that were used for previous IATTC meetings by videoconference. The provisional agenda contained in this announcement will also be posted in the meeting website.

LANGUAGES: English and Spanish, with simultaneous interpretation.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Opening of the workshop
2. Summarized presentation and discussion of the state of research related to the use of circle hooks and sea turtles in tuna fisheries
3. Identification the specific minimum hook size of a circle hook complying with the requirements of Res. C-19-04
4. Preliminary discussion on a schedule for implementing a recommended minimum hook size as defined under agenda item 3
5. Closure of the workshop