



www.fishcostarica.org

The Costa Rican Sport Fishing Federation (FECOP)

FECOP salutes the 101st Annual Meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and thanks the Government of Canada for hosting this important meeting in the beautiful Vancouver Island BC. The Costa Rican Sport Fishing Federation (FECOP) is a non-profit organization that promotes sustainable fisheries through science-based policy change and education in Costa Rica and the Eastern Tropical Pacific region. FECOP is deeply concerned about the local abundance and stock health of billfish and other important species impacted by the tuna and tuna-like fisheries in the Eastern Pacific Ocean. Billfish, especially marlins and sailfish, are key species for the health of ocean ecosystems and sustain important sport fishing tourism-based industries that provide income and improved living conditions for many coastal communities in several countries in North, Central and South America, including the Canada, United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Panama, and Costa Rica.

Striped Marlin and sailfish

FECOP notes that the Document IATTC -101-01 present the most recent stock assessment on striped marlin done by the International Scientific Committee (ISC) indicating that the stock is overfished, and overfishing is occurring. We are discouraged to find no conservation measures recommended to the Commission by the scientific staff nor by the Scientific Advisory Committee in the corresponding documents for this meeting.

FECOP also notes the Commission has not updated the last stock assessment on sailfish since the evaluation made in 2013 and recommendations by the staff are basically the same for the past 10 years. This has caused that our understanding on the sailfish stock health is stagnant.

Therefore, FECOPs urges the Commission to consider the creation of a Working Group on Billfish with participation of NGOs working on the conservation of billfish and accredited to participate as observers at meetings of the IATTC, and task it with the objective of defining a plan of action to fill the gaps of data and knowledge to carry full stock assessment of sailfish and identify interim management actions and conservation measures for this species and identify conservation measures for the recovery of striped marlin to healthy levels.



www.fishcostarica.org

Yellowfin Tuna

FECOP is encouraged by the results of the condition of the stocks of yellowfin tuna presented by scientific staff showing that there is a small chance of this species being overfished or subject of overfishing. Nonetheless we recommend the Commission to continue and further expand its tuna tagging program and DNA studies with the purpose of identifying if there might be different stocks or sub stocks that might need special conservation measures. Furthermore, FECOP recommends that the commission present in 2024 an update on current knowledge of stock structure in the EPO and what evidence exist of sub populations and what research is needed to better understand if our current management regime requires special geographical attention.

Sharks

FECOP fully agrees and support proposals to require land landing of sharks with fins naturally attached to the bodies.

Longline observers

There is an urgent need to improve our understanding on the interaction of fishing vessels operating in the Eastern Pacific Ocean with billfish, sharks, and other important species. For this reason, we strongly recommend that the IATTC adopts an onboard observer program for longline vessels equal or larger than 20 meters, with a coverage no less than 30% of the effective fishing effort, either through human observers or deploying electronic monitoring equipment as soon as possible, with the guidance of the scientific staff.

Finally, we hope that discussions and deliberations among delegations attending the 101st Annual Meeting of the IATTC lead to the adoption of positive and valuable conservations measures for the several species covered under the Antigua Convention.