

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

90th MEETING (RESUMED)

La Jolla, California (USA)

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DOCUMENT IATTC-90 INF-A

BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO ADDRESS ISSUES RELEVANT TO PROPOSAL [IATTC-90 D-1](#) ON DISCARDS

One of the elements needed to study the dynamics of fish populations is accounting for all impacts of the fishing operations. In the eastern Pacific Ocean tuna fisheries, the presence of on-board observers means that the records include not only the portion of the catch that is retained, but also the portion that is discarded at sea.

Discards may happen for several reasons, some completely accidental, others deliberate, as follows:

Accidental

1. Ripped sack: the sack rips and some fish is lost through the opening.
2. Fish “unfit for human consumption” (in bad condition): this occurs generally in sets with large catches, or in warm waters.

Deliberate

3. Small fish: The fish are below market size.

Ambiguous

4. Last set: The catch in the last set made exceeds the remaining capacity in the vessel’s wells. The captain may have known that this would be the case, but this cannot be known or proven with any degree of certainty.
5. Well restrictions: The wells were not in a condition to receive catch (damaged, full of fuel, *etc.*). The captain may have known that there was insufficient space to load all the catch.

Other

6. Any other reason (for instance, tuna used in bait buckets).

IATTC Resolution [C-04-05](#) on bycatch prohibits the discarding of tuna, since in its paragraph 1.a.i. it requires “*all purse-seine vessels to first retain on board and then land all bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin tuna caught*”, with two exceptions: first, when the fish could be “*considered unfit for human consumption for reasons other than size*”, and, second, for the “*final set of a trip, when there may be insufficient well space remaining to accommodate all the tuna caught in that set*”. Of course these provisions do not apply to the cases where the discards are not intentional, but the result of an unforeseen event (accidental cases).

Considering the most recent period (2013-2015), and using only trips with 10 or more sets on floating objects, Table 1 shows the total tonnage discarded in correlation with the specific reason for the discards, as listed above:

Table 1: Discarded tonnage, in metric tons, by reason.

Reason	Tonnage	%
Ripped sack	3,577	43
Last set	2,280	28
Well restriction	643	8
Small fish	144	2
Bad condition	1,582	19
Other	57	1

Figure 1 shows the distribution of discards by individual vessels during 2013-2015. The distribution is quite uneven, with a few vessels responsible for the majority of the discards.

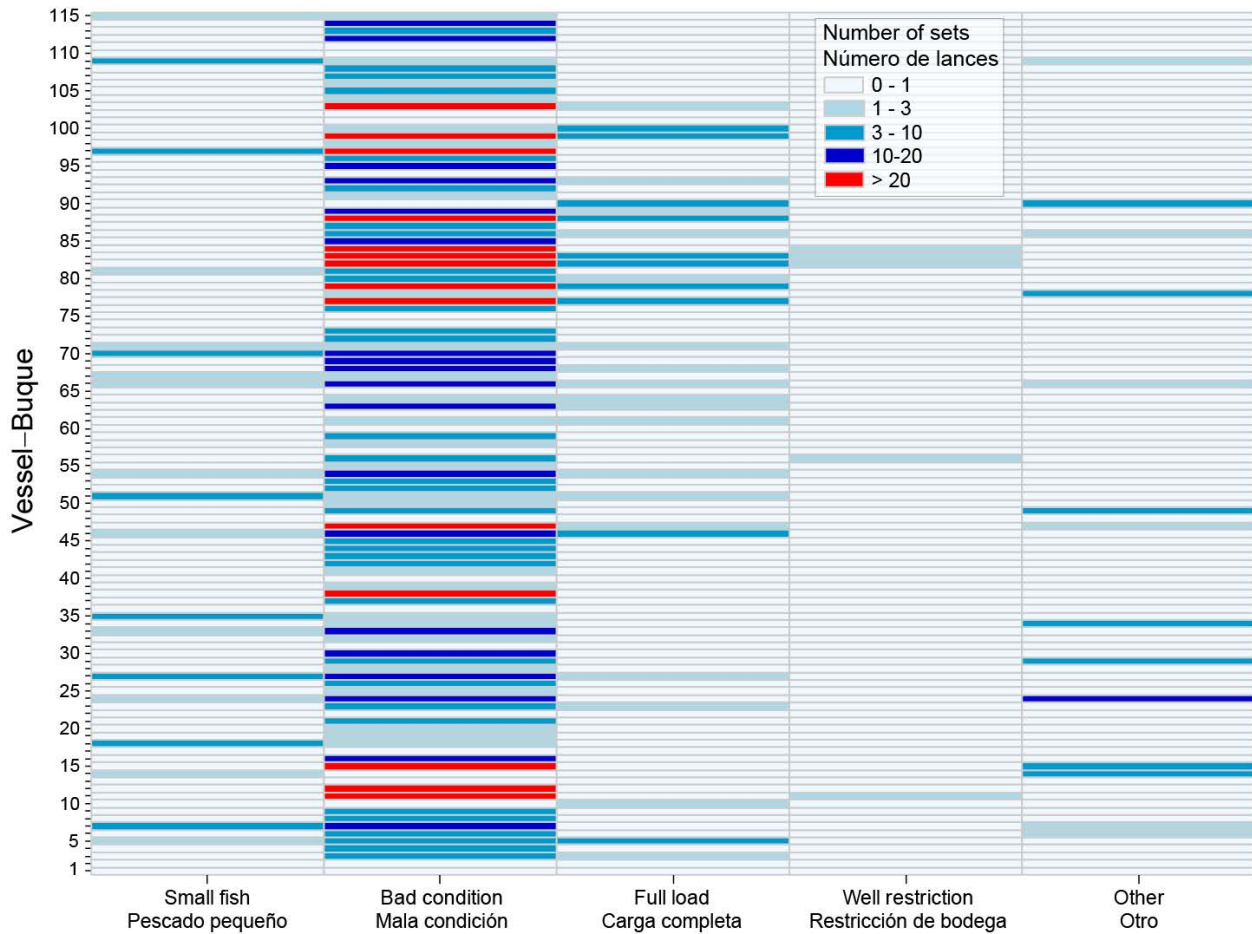


FIGURE 1. Reasons for discarding tunas by vessel (rows) and category (columns), 2013-2015.

Table 2 shows the total tonnage across categories and by intentional discards, Table 3 the number of trips with intentional discard proportions in different intervals, and Table 4 the total tonnage of intentional discards in the same categories. Presently, the total amount of discards is not high, and the number of sets involved is low, but it is impossible to predict the potential impact on the discard patterns of changes in applicable management measures.

TABLE 2: Total discards and intentional discards, 2013-2015.

	Total discards	Intentional discards	Total capture	% discarded	% intentional discards
2013	2,707	30	272,972	0.99	0.01
2014	2,637	34	311,280	0.85	0.01
2015	2,939	80	309,256	0.95	0.03

TABLE 3: Number of trips relative to percentages of intentional discards, 2013-2015.

	2013	2014	2015	All years
0%	333	379	370	1,082
0.1% - 0.5%	7	4	4	15
0.5% - 1.0%	3	1	1	5
> 1.0%	1	3	7	11

TABLE 4: Total tonnage intentionally discarded relative to percentages of intentional discards, 2013-2015.

	2013	2014	2015	All
0%	0	0	0	0
0.1% - 0.5%	11	4	5	21
0.5% - 1.0%	13	8	2	23
>1.0%	6	22	72	100