

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION (IATTC) 95TH MEETING, HELD VIRTUALLY, 30 NOVEMBER – 4 DECEMBER, 2020

The impacts of COVID-19 have presented challenges to regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) in conducting meetings in 2020. The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) cancelled its in-person Commission and Scientific Advisory Committee meetings. These meetings will be taking place virtually.

Even under these challenging circumstances, IATTC must ensure the uninterrupted, sustainable management of the tuna stocks and marine ecosystems under its purview. In particular, there are several critical measures and issues that require immediate attention by IATTC this year.

This Statement focuses on those critical measures and issues on which IATTC must take action in 2020 or advance work in 2021, which align with the ISSF global priorities for tuna RFMOs.

Tuna Conservation

What are the issues

Effective management measures — consistent with advice from the IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee — are needed to maintain bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack tuna fishing mortality and biomass at sustainable levels.

Why are we concerned?

The current IATTC conservation measure C-17-02, which expires this year, has been ineffective in limiting catches of yellowfin, bigeye and skipjack. In 2020, IATTC conducted new assessments of bigeye and yellowfin tuna and found that, while yellowfin remains healthy, there is a 53% probability that bigeye is overfished and a 50% probability that overfishing is occurring. Moreover, most stock status indicators based on the floating-object fishery show long-term increases that could lead to increase fishing mortality in the near future. Thus, the IATTC SAC recommended, in addition to maintaining the 72 current closure days, to limit fishing mortality at or below the status quo conditions considering appropriated options (e.g. in particular FAD related measures) based on the best available science.

Our Top Asks for IATTC in 2020/2021

1. In 2020, adopt a robust conservation management measure to replace the expiring resolutions that is precautionary and based on scientific advice.
2. Request the Scientific Staff to provide science-based limits on FAD numbers, deployments and/or sets; and amend resolutions in 2020 or 2021 to include clear timelines to develop FAD marking guidelines, transition to fully non-entangling FADs and the use of biodegradable materials, FAD recovery mechanisms, and provide FAD position data.
3. In 2021, speed up development of MSE for bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin.
4. Develop in 2021 a workplan for a EM and e-reporting program and to establish fleet-wide observer program (either human or electronic) for small purse -seine vessels by 2022.
5. By 2022, adopt Port State Measures.
6. By 2021, establish a work plan for a scheme of responses to non-compliance and audit points.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

- (1) In 2020, adopt a robust conservation management measure to replace the expiring resolutions (C -17-02 and C-17-01) that is precautionary and based on scientific advice to limit fishing pressure on yellowfin and bigeye. At a minimum, ensure that the current tropical tuna conservation measures do not lapse and stay in place for 2021.
- (2) Fund needed research to ensure data is collected on FADs so a science-based limit on floating-object (e.g. active numbers, sets, deployments, etc.) can be adopted.

FAD Management

What are the issues?

Comprehensive fleet data on FAD deployments and usage are required to effectively manage the tropical tuna purse seine fishery. Data from echo-sounder buoys used to track FADs could help develop indices of tuna abundance to complement current stock assessment models. These data can also be used to support science-based estimation of the sustainable number of FADs at sea. Currently deployed FADs should be lower-entangling and fleets should be moving towards fully non-entangling using biodegradable materials to mitigate ecosystem impacts. The identification of an efficient FAD marking systems and its implementation are critical.

Why are we concerned?

Compliance with FAD data provision requirements in the IATTC is weak. In June 2020, the IATTC Staff reported that only 58% of the required FAD data were received and only one country submitted 100% of the data. It is essential to collect and report the number of FADs being deployed and FAD position data and trajectories to develop science-based management measures.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

- (1) Amend C-18-05, C-17-01/C-17-02 or C-19-01 in 2020 or 2021 to include:
 - (i) A clear timeframe to transition to FADs without nets and with biodegradable materials.
 - (ii) A workplan to design and adopt FAD-recovery mechanisms and incentives by 2022.
 - (iii) A requirement for vessels to provide complete FAD position data and acoustic records from echosounder buoys.
 - (iv) A workplan to develop and adopt a FAD marking scheme by 2022 for all new FAD deployments, regardless of vessel type, that requires that FADs be marked on both the buoy and the FAD structure.
- (2) Ensure required FAD data are collected and submitted to IATTC, even for those fleets that interact only sporadically with FADs, and request the Scientific Staff to provide science-based limits on FAD numbers, deployments and/or sets by 2022.

Harvest Strategies

What are the issues?

Harvest Strategies (HS) — which include target and limit reference points together with Harvest Control Rules (HR) — provide pre-agreed rules for managing fisheries resources and acting in response to stock status changes.

Why are we concerned?

IATTC needs to urgently develop species-specific harvest strategies, including harvest control rules. The MSC has established hard deadlines for Principle 1 conditions for certified tuna fisheries. For tuna stocks in the IATTC, if harvest control rules are not adopted by June 2022 for southern albacore and by May 2024 for northern albacore, current MSC certifications for these stocks will be suspended.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

As recommended by the IATTC Staff, in 2021, speed up the process and development of Management Strategy Evaluation that are shown to be robust to the main uncertainties for bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin.

Monitoring, Control and Surveillance

OBSERVER COVERAGE AND ELECTRONIC MONITORING

What are the issues?

Comprehensive observer coverage is critical to effective fisheries management, compliance monitoring, and independent verification of catch, effort and species interactions. 100% observer coverage (human and/or electronic) is feasible and necessary.

Why are we concerned?

The minimum 5% observer coverage requirement for longline vessels is not being fully met. The lack of data on longline catches and interactions with non-target species, and the lack of observer coverage on small purse seiners, prevents the development of effective measures and the monitoring of important segments of the fishery. The IATTC has no Electronic Monitoring (EM) standards.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

- (1) Direct the Scientific Staff to develop in 2021 a workplan for a comprehensive EM and e-reporting program so to ultimately achieve 100% coverage for all vessels engaged in at-sea transshipment, the longline fishery and small purse seine vessels within five years.
- (2) Develop a work plan to establish fleet-wide observer program (either human or electronic) for small purse -seine vessels by 2022.

PORT STATE MEASURES

What are the issues?

Effective Port State measures are an important MCS tool essential to strengthening compliance and combatting IUU fishing.

Why are we concerned?

IATTC is the only tuna RFMO that has not yet adopted Port State measures.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

By 2022, adopt a resolution to give full effect to the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures at a regional level.

Compliance

What are the issues?

IATTC has a transparent compliance process but it can be strengthened to improve fisheries management.

Why are we concerned?

IATTC does not report on individual CPC compliance, or their actions, and the IATTC has no scheme of responses to non-compliance.

What is ISSF asking IATTC to do?

By 2021, that the Review Committee establish a work plan to develop a scheme of responses to non-compliance and audit points for IATTC measures.

ISSF Global Priorities for Tuna RFMOs

Implementation of rigorous harvest strategies, including harvest control rules and reference points

Effective management of fleet capacity, including developing mechanisms that support developing coastal state engagement in the fishery

Science-based FAD management & non-entangling and biodegradable FAD designs

Increased member compliance with all adopted measures adopted, and greater transparency of processes reviewing member compliance with measures

Strengthened Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) measures and increased observer coverage, including through modern technologies such as electronic monitoring and e-reporting

Adoption of best-practice bycatch mitigation and shark conservation and management measures

Did you know?

ISSF is leading research on biodegradable FADs in collaboration with fleets operating in the EPO, coastal nations, and other stakeholders.

ISSF develops resources for the vessel community, including skippers guidebooks on bycatch-mitigation techniques and as well as reports on electronic monitoring and vessel monitoring systems.

ISSF offers guidelines for implementing non-entangling FADs.

Three ISSF conservation measures focus on shark bycatch mitigation.



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