



OPRT

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FOR CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF TUNAS

IATTC: 94th Meeting

The 94th Meeting of IATTC is urged to seriously consider IATTC Staff's advice and to adopt effective measures without delay, in order to cope with the recent increase in FAD setting by purse seiners in the EPO.

The 94th Meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) is scheduled from July 22 to 26, 2019 in Bilbao, Spain. At this meeting, the IATTC members are urged to seriously consider IATTC Staff's advice including recommendations on management measures for tropical tunas (bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack) in order to effectively cope with the adverse impact derived from the increased number of purse-seine settings associated with floating objects in a timely manner. Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) have contributed to this increase.

Although the IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) requested the IATTC Staff (Staff) to present a set of options for management measures for tropical tunas to its next year's meeting [IATTC-94-02 Recommendations of the 10th meeting of the SAC], it should be noted that the IATTC Staff has pointed out recent developments in relevant fisheries with concern for tropical tunas and has provided recommendations to the Commission to reinforce management measures for tropical tunas since May, 2018 [IATTC-93-04 Staff Recommendations 2018 and IATTC-94-03 Staff Recommendations 2019].

In the Document IATTC-94-03, the Staff mentions "In 2019, stock status indicators (SSIs) are being used to monitor all three species of tropical tunas" and "The SSIs suggest that fishing mortality (F) is continuing to increase for all three species, due to increases in fishing effort in the purse-seine fishery, specifically in the number of sets on floating objects."

"....., in the absence of reliable stock assessments for tropical tunas in 2019, the staff used SSIs to monitor the stocks [SAC-10-06, SAC-10-08, SAC-10-09]. The indicators suggest that additional management measures should be considered to address the continuing increase in the number of sets on floating objects that, despite the longer closure since 2017, is a concern

for all three species.

In recent years, recommendations for longer closures have been driven mainly by increases in fleet capacity, and it is therefore essential that capacity does not increase further, particularly if the current management measures of Resolution C-17-02 continue unchanged in 2020. However, fleet capacity is not the only factor that can affect fishing mortality; there are at least three others: number of days fished, number of sets, and number of FADs. Currently, for the purse-seine fleet, capacity is restricted (C-02-03), as are the number of days fished and the number of active FADs (C-17-02), so the only one of these factors that remains to be limited is the number of sets (Figure 1), particularly sets on floating objects which continue to increase. "

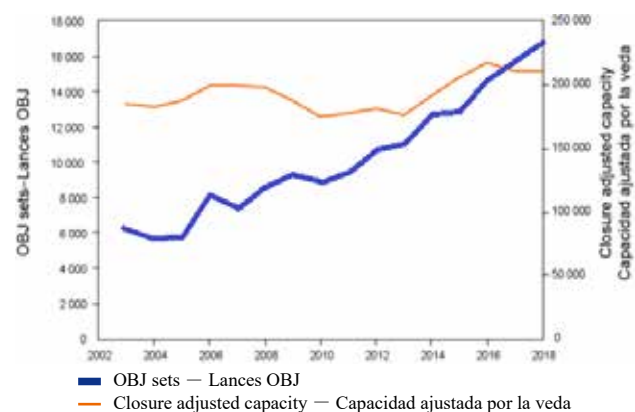


Figure 1. Sets on floating objects and fleet capacity, all purse-seine vessels, 2003-2018

[Source: IATTC-94-03 – Staff recommendations 2019]

With respect to conservation and management measures for tropical tunas that address this situation, Staff has provided the following findings and recommendations:

"Because it is not practical to limit floating-object sets alone, the staff maintains its 2018 recommendation to limit the total combined number of floating-object and unassociated purse-seine sets."

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Maintain the provisions of the current resolution (C-17-02).
2. For the purse-seine fishery, limit the total annual number of floating-object and unassociated sets combined (OBJ+NOA) by Class-6 vessels in 2020 to 15,723. Once the limit is reached, only dolphin-associated (DEL) sets will be allowed during the rest of that year, and all vessels without a Dolphin Mortality Limit must return to port.”

It is obvious that tropical tuna stocks require additional conservation and management measure in order to cope with the current situation. Therefore, the Commission is urged to recognize this situation and seriously consider the Staff’s findings with the view to adopting and implementing effective measures without delay.

It is true that the Current Resolution for tropical tunas covers 2020 and Staff mentioned that improved information for tropical tuna stocks would be presented to next year’s meetings of SAC and the Commission, but these should not be used as an excuse for postponing Commission’s work on this issue until next year.

The Commission members should act in a responsible and responsive manner.

The OPRT has advocated reducing fishing mortality of bigeye tuna caused by purse seine fisheries that bring about deterioration of the bigeye stocks in a multiple number of oceans. The ratio of bigeye catch to skipjack catch in purse seine fisheries can provide a useful index to see how many bigeye tuna are taken against the amount of skipjack that the purse seine fisher side argues is the target species for purse seine settings associated with FADs, the fact that such ratio for the EPO is much higher compared to that for the western and central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) should be noted. Besides restricting or reducing the number of FAD settings, there is a room to take additional actions for the EPO purse seine fishery, for example, change in purse seine operation mode from the FAD settings to settings on free schools of skipjack.

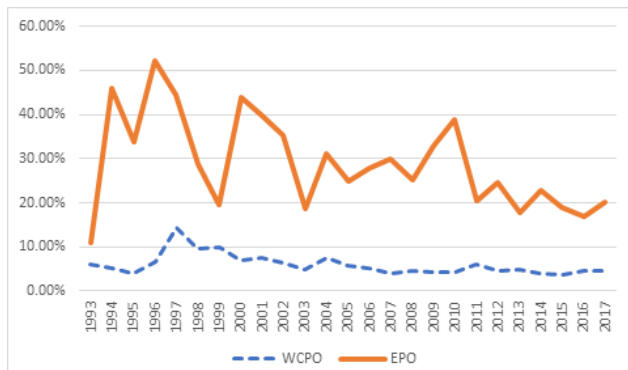


Figure 2. The ratios of bigeye/skipjack catch in purse seine fisheries in the EPO and WCPO [Source: P123 WCPFC TUNA YEARBOOK 2017 and P30 SAC-09-03 The fishery in 2017]

CITES CoP18 rescheduled

**Dates and venue for CITES/CoP18 rescheduled
August 17-28 in Geneva, Switzerland**

The dates and venue of the 18th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CoP18) -originally scheduled from May 23 to June 3, 2019 in Colombo, Sri Lanka- were rescheduled.

CoP18 will be held from August 17 to 28, 2019 at Palexpo, Geneva, Switzerland. [<https://www.cites.org/eng/cop/index.php>]

With respect to the proposal “CoP18 Prop. 42” which proposes that mako shark be included in Appendix II, please refer to the P1 of the OPRT Newsletter Nos. 67/68 Feb./March 2019: http://opr.or.jp/eng/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/OPRT67_68.pdf.

In summary, the advice from the FAO Expert Advisory Panel for this proposal [<http://www.fao.org/3/ca3914en/CA3914EN.pdf>] must be respected.

EXPERT PANEL SUMMARY Proposal: 42

Shortfin mako shark *Isurus oxyrinchus*

Does Not Meet CITES Listing Criteria

Scientific assessment in accordance with CITES biological listing criteria

Mako sharks are a wide-ranging species whose global distribution remains unchanged. Stock assessments from the North Atlantic and North Pacific show population numbers of shortfin mako sharks in these regions to be in the millions.

Shortfin mako sharks are highly migratory and found throughout the world's oceans from 50°N to 50°S latitude. Recent ecological risk assessments in the Atlantic evaluated the available life history data and found that the shortfin mako shark is one of the least productive of the pelagic shark species. The Expert Panel thus confidently concluded that the species was of low productivity.

The Expert Panel reviewed stock status findings by ocean basin, i.e. North and South Atlantic, Mediterranean, Indian, and North and South Pacific oceans. Given the low productivity of the species, it follows that declines to <30% of historic levels (i.e. a decline of 80% or more allowing 10% buffer) would meet the criteria for listing.

In the North Atlantic, the population has declined to about 50% of historic levels. Based on projections from stock assessments, the stock is not expected to meet the decline criteria in the next 10 years, but may be at risk of dropping below 30% of historic levels in the next few decades if catches are not decreased to well below recent levels. ICCAT has adopted a recommendation to reduce catches in the North Atlantic, which may in turn reduce further population decline.

In the Mediterranean, the population has declined, but the extent of this decline is not well determined.

For the South Atlantic, Indian, North Pacific and South Pacific oceans, the Expert Panel found no evidence that populations meet

the CITES criteria, whether based on historical extent of decline, recent rates of decline or these declines in combination.

Other modifying factors were considered by the Expert Panel. Mako sharks' lower productivity was considered as a factor that increased their vulnerability; however, the relatively data-rich assessments were a mitigating factor, as it strengthened confidence in stock abundance estimates. Viewed globally, and taking account of lower productivity and precautionary considerations, and the relatively good precision of estimates of status provided by the stock assessments, there is not evidence that the species meets the CITES Appendix II listing criteria.

The Panel’s conclusion is “Does Not Meet CITES Appendix II Listing Criteria”

Later the CITES Secretariat posted Document 105.1 on April 19, 2019, presenting its final assessments of the proposals to amend Appendices I and II of the Convention. These 57 proposals submitted by Parties to CITES for consideration at CoP18 address a wide range of wild plants and animals. Recommendation for CoP18 Prop.42 which is presented on pages 109-112 of the Annex 2 to the Document [<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/18/doc/E-CoP18-105-01-A2.pdf>] is as follows:

Isurus oxyrinchus does not meet the criteria in Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) Annex 2a for its inclusion in Appendix II in accordance with Article II, paragraph 2 (a) or 2 (b) of the Convention. Consequently, *I. paucus* should not be included for look-alike reasons under Annex 2b, criterion A of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17).

The Secretariat recommends that this proposal be rejected.

OPRT Membership Meeting

An OPRT Membership Meeting was held on June 10, 2019 with the participation of representatives of OPRT member associations from Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Vanuatu and the Seychelles.

The situation and challenges surrounding the tuna longline fishery of each member association was reported. Views were exchanged among participants on the issues of common interest such as how to recover bigeye stocks from ongoing deterioration and views against irrational arguments seeking a ban of transshipment on the high seas.



Toyosu Trip to observe tuna auctions for representatives of OPRT Member Associations

Representatives of the OPRT member associations enjoyed a field trip of Toyosu Fish Wholesale Market including observation of the auction site for frozen tuna in the early morning of June 11, 2019.

The participants assembled at the main gate of the 7th Block Fish Wholesale Building of Toyosu Market at 4:45 am. All who had joined this trip later participated in the OPRT Regular Meeting held in the afternoon of that day.

Toyosu Wholesale Market assumed its operations on October 11, last year in brand-new buildings featuring a closed facility, which allows area based temperature control. Toyosu Wholesale Market replaces the historic Tsukiji Fish Market. With new facilities, levels of maintaining quality and sanitary control have been significantly improved compared to that at Tsukiji Fish Market.

The trip was guided by Mr. Hiromi Amino (網野裕美), President of the Japan Fish Wholesalers Association ((一般社団法人) 全国水産卸協会). The trip started with observation of the auction for fresh Pacific bluefin, Southern bluefin and bigeye tunas which commenced at 5:30 a.m.. They then proceeded to other auction sites for fresh fish other than tunas; shrimp and prawn, and live fish. Finally, they arrived at the auction site for frozen tuna which commenced at 6 a.m. They were able to closely observe the auction for frozen tuna, most of which had been harvested by large-scale tuna longline vessels.

After finishing the trip participants described their impressions as follows: “It was a valuable opportunity for me to experience the atmosphere of auction for frozen tuna at Toyosu since this is my first time to observe auctions for tuna. I’ve got the picture that the auction site and activities at Toyosu Fish Market is one of the key stages in the distribution of frozen tuna in Japan.”, “Toyosu Fish Market located in Tokyo, capital of Japan is important for us. Toyosu Market seems to have an ample size with excellent facilities. I expect Toyosu will contribute to expansion of consumption of sashimi tuna in Japan” The participants, in general, seemed to feel Toyosu has a promising future.”



OPRT Seminar June 11, 2019

Dr. Jiro Suzuki sounded the alarm on deterioration of bigeye stocks.

The first OPRT Seminar of FY 2019 was held on June 11, 2019 prior to its 2019 Regular Meeting. Dr. Jiro Suzuki, ex-Director of Pelagic Fish Resource Department, National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries gave a lecture titled “Status, Stock Assessments, and Conservation and Management Measures for Bigeye Tuna Stocks with the special attention on the WCPO stock”.

Dr. Suzuki sounded the alarm on the fact that a large amount of catch of (or high level of fishing mortality on) juvenile bigeye tuna occurs with purse seine settings associated with Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) conducted by large scale purse-seiners. This is because such settings and consequent fishing mortality bring about considerable deterioration on bigeye stocks.

He summarized the status and/or characteristics of bigeye stocks ocean by ocean as follows: overfishing is occurring for the Atlantic bigeye stock and the stock is overfished with an increase in catches in recent years by Brazil and others; for the Indian Ocean, it has been reported for that overfishing is not occurring and the stock of bigeye is not overfished but the yellowfin stock is suffering deterioration in the red zone of the Kobe Chart; for the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO), the longline fishery and purse seine fishery catch of bigeye is almost the same amount as in recent years. Indonesia and Philippines have increased catch of very small sized bigeye although their percentage of the total bigeye catch in the WCPO in weight remain relatively small; and, the bigeye/skipjack ratio for purse seine catch in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) is very high and four times higher than that in the WCPO.

While Dr. Suzuki warned of the ongoing deterioration of bigeye stocks caused by purse seine settings associated with FADs (FAD settings), he indicated that purse seine settings on free schools (free school settings) result in a significantly smaller amount of juvenile bigeye compared to FAD settings. An increase in the ratio of free school settings would obviously promote conservation of bigeye stocks.

He also expressed deep concern about the fact that in 2017, the WCPFC Scientific Committee changed the stock assessment of the WCPO bigeye stock from the red zone to green zone of the Kobe Chart chiefly because of the introduction of a new growth curve, and subsequently, WCPFC made a decision to relax management measures controlling FAD settings at its Annual Meeting in December, 2017. In December 2018, the WCPFC decided to extend such relaxed conservation and management measures until 2020.

He pointed out the following: the adoption of such

change in the stock assessment is opposite to the previous one and is apparently contrary to the precautionary principle. In particular, it should be noted that the Scientific Committee itself admitted the new assessment includes higher level of uncertainty; and the growth curve should be thoroughly reassessed by scientists including the Japanese as quickly as possible. Dr. Suzuki also mentioned that “It is planned to discuss and determine target reference points (TRPs) for the WCPO bigeye and yellowfin this year by WCPFC. TRP provides the level of the stock concerned to which the stock should be re-covered or maintained.”

He stated that when conservation and management of bigeye stock is discussed, it is inevitable to consider interrelation among stocks of three tropical tuna species, namely bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack and it does not seem an easy task to develop TRPs for those species.

He emphasized that the TRP for the WCPO bigeye shall be one that provides the reliable basis for effective conservation and management of the WCPO bigeye stock based on the precautionary principle.



Dates and Venues for RFMO's Annual meetings for the remainder of 2019

(as of July 12, 2019)

Dates	RFMOs	Venues
July 22 (Mon) - 26(Fri)	IATTC: 94 th Meeting of the IATTC	Bilbao, Spain
Oct. 14 (Mon) - 17(Thu)	CCSBT: 26 th Annual Meeting of the CCSBT	Cape Town, South Africa
Nov. 18 (Mon) - 25 (Mon)	ICCAT: 26 th Regular Meeting of the Commission	Palma de Mallorca, Spain
Dec. 5 (Thu) - 11 (Wed)	WCPFC: 16 th Regular Session of the Commission (WCPFC15)	Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

Source: Websites of respective Commissions
Note: Date and/or Venue might be subject to change.