



Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Annual Meeting, September 2–6, 2024

This Position Statement outlines issues that we urge the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) to act on at its upcoming meeting.



COMPLIANCE PROCESSES

2024 Asks

In implementing its revised compliance assessment process, the Committee for the Review of Implementation Measures should:

- Establish a work plan with timelines to further strengthen the Committee's procedures and outcomes, including developing a scheme of responses to improve compliance.
- Develop and adopt a hierarchy of infractions.

Background

A strong and transparent compliance process improves fisheries management by holding regional fisheries management organization (RFMO) members accountable. In 2022, the IATTC strengthened the procedures and outcomes of its Committee for the Review of Implementation of Measures and conducted a successful review of IATTC member compliance under its enhanced resolution in 2023. Further implementation of these improvements is needed, as are further advances. ISSF and Pew Charitable Trusts have recommendations to improve RFMO compliance processes in workshop reports: [2020 report](#), [2021 report](#), [2022 report](#).

Priorities to Progress

- Develop audit points for IATTC measures

RFMO Compliance Information & Resources



TUNA STOCK CONSERVATION

2024 Asks

- Maintain the current management measures in C-21-04 for up to three more years, and annually review the measure and adopt revisions, if needed, based on the stock status indicators for the three tropical tuna species.
- Maintain the Individual Vessel Limit and the Enhanced Monitoring Program as part of the measure.
- Adopt a reporting requirement for the provision of detailed operational data (set by set) for longline fisheries.

Background

This year's benchmark stock assessment for skipjack tuna indicates that the stock continues to be healthy. For bigeye tuna, the risk analysis estimates a very low probability that the limit reference points have been exceeded, and it remains below F_{MSY} . Additionally, it was not possible to complete the yellowfin stock assessment due to uncertainties related to the biological parameters and stock structure. The collection and integration of detailed operational data from longline fisheries is needed for the improvement of yellowfin and bigeye tuna stock assessments. The IATTC Scientific Staff identified important actions that are needed to be completed to provide the Commission with the best available scientific information for the implementation of a new multi-year management measure. The Staff and Scientific Advisory Committee recommended the extension of C-21-04 for up to three years. If the measure is extended for three years, IATTC should annually review it and adopt revisions, if needed, based on stock status indicators and not wait until three years have elapsed. The Staff also noted that the Enhanced Monitoring Program to estimate bigeye catches at the trip level has been very valuable and recommended its continuation.

Priorities to Progress

- Finance tagging studies to collect data on biological parameters of yellowfin tuna, such as growth and mortality rates, to support a robust stock assessment
- Collect historical biomass data from echosounder buoys to produce indices of abundance independent from the fishery

Tuna Conservation Information & Resources



2024 Asks

In line with ISSF's established approach to strengthening FAD management:

- Adopt an effective FAD marking scheme for both FAD structure and geolocating buoys.
- Adopt clear rules for FAD ownership.
- Adopt the data form in Appendix 4 in [FAD-07 INF-A](#) to facilitate reporting on FAD recoveries per Resolution C-23-03 and harmonization of data with WCPFC to promote Pacific-wide collaboration.

Background

Fishing with FADs has a risk of loss and abandonment of these devices, which can negatively impact the ecosystem. IATTC has taken steps to mitigate these impacts. In 2023, the IATTC adopted a timeline for transitioning to fully biodegradable FADs and a requirement for completely non-entangling designs without netting or meshed materials starting January 1, 2025. Additionally, recovery programs are being initiated in several areas in the Pacific Ocean. However, crucial steps are still needed to manage FADs effectively. This includes not only reducing their loss and abandonment, but also implementing better marking of FADs to understand their numbers, dynamics and fate. This would enable the establishment of more effective management measures, such as science-based FAD limits.

Priorities to Progress

- Request the IATTC Scientific Staff to analyze in more detail buoy data, such as activations and deactivations, to better understand fleet strategy on deployments, FAD's fate and lifespan

- Develop and implement science-based limits on FAD deployments and FAD sets
- Develop a binding FAD-recovery policy

FAD Management Information & Resources



ELECTRONIC MONITORING AND REPORTING & OBSERVER COVERAGE

2024 Asks

- Adopt in 2024 interim electronic monitoring program standards for all gear types and a timeline for implementation beginning in 2025. To the extent possible, these standards should be harmonized with those adopted by, or in development, in other tuna RFMOs.
- Establish a comprehensive observer program (human or electronic or a combination) to cover longline vessels

Background

Comprehensive observer coverage is critical to effective fisheries management, compliance monitoring, and independent verification of catch, effort, species composition and bycatch. 100% observer coverage (human and/or electronic) is feasible and necessary. IATTC's minimum 5% observer coverage requirement for [longline vessels is not being fully met](#) and there are gaps in the reporting of [longline operational observer data](#). There is no requirement for observer coverage on class 1-5 purse seine vessels. Catch estimates of bycatch species are unlikely to be reliable at 5% coverage, a rate also insufficient for estimating the total catch of bigeye and yellowfin tuna. Two tuna RFMOs have already adopted minimum standards for Electronic Monitoring. IATTC needs to also adopt minimum standards and aim for harmonization with other RFMOs, noting that many vessels move between RFMO areas.

Priorities to Progress

- Adopt a timeline and plan to substantially increase observer coverage in longline fisheries from 5% as progress toward 100% coverage in industrial tuna fisheries, including all vessels engaged in at-sea transshipment.

Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Information & Resources



EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES (HARVEST STRATEGIES)

2024 Asks

- Finalize the management strategy evaluation (MSE) for bigeye and development of management objectives and revised reference points for tropical tunas.
- Establish & convene a scientist-manager dialogue group to advance management procedures for other tuna stocks.

Background

Progress is still slow on management procedures for the tropical tuna species. IATTC has adopted preliminary target reference points and acceptable levels of risk for skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye tuna. The completion of a benchmark assessment in 2024 provides the tools needed to finalize MSE for bigeye tuna. IATTC must advance work on harvest strategies for all three tropical tuna stocks.

Priorities to Progress

- Ensure continued support, and secure funding, for all target tunas MSE.



BYCATCH MITIGATION & SHARK PROTECTIONS

2024 Asks

- Amend Resolution C-23-07 to require that all retained sharks be landed with fins naturally attached without exceptions.
- Endorse the [best handling and release practices \(BHRP\)](#) guideline development work plan.
- Adopt the [shark](#) (SAC-15-11) and [seabird](#) (EB-02-03) BHRP guidelines.
- Revise the seabird mitigation measures in C-11-02 to include current best practice.

Background

Sharks, rays and seabird species are declining in abundance or are threatened. Current IATTC shark, ray and seabird conservation resolutions are outdated and do not include best-practice mitigation techniques. IATTC needs to improve its measures and strengthen efforts to monitor and mitigate the bycatch of vulnerable species, and implementation of best handling and release practices, in both purse seine and longline fisheries.

Priorities to Progress

- Develop and adopt a recovery plan for oceanic white-tip sharks.

[Bycatch Reduction Information & Resources](#)



VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEMS & PORT STATE MEASURES

Background

IATTC's VMS program is not centralized and does not meet [best practice standards](#) for position reporting, polling frequency and vessel coverage, among others. Since Resolution for an IATTC Scheme for Minimum Standards for Inspection in Port (C-21-07) [is not fully aligned with FAO Agreement on Port State Measures](#), its effectiveness is undermined.

Priorities to Progress

- In order to ensure compliance with tuna conservation measures, adopt amendments to Resolution [C-23-11](#) to strengthen the IATTC VMS, including by establishing a centralized or partly centralized program and requiring simultaneous near-real time position reporting to the IATTC Secretariat and the flag State.
 - Adopt amendments to C-21-07 to deny use of ports when a vessel is in port, provide explicit communications regarding denial of port entry or use, and establish minimum standards for inspector training and inspection reports.
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Background

Although IATTC is the only tuna RFMO with a closed vessel registry, its current capacity is well in excess of resource productivity. Operative purse seine capacity has continued to [increase](#) since 2015 due to latent capacity being activated.

Priorities to Progress

- Implement the [2014 Technical Experts Workshop on the Capacity of the Tuna-fishing Fleet in the EPO](#) recommendations to strengthen the 2005 Plan for the Regional Management of Fishing Capacity and reduce the current capacity.



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