



Indian Ocean Tuna longline FIP Position Statement Ahead of the IOTC Annual Meeting 2021

Drafted with agreement from all Indian Ocean Tuna Longline FIP Participants
May 2021

The submission of this position statement is on behalf of the [Indian Ocean Tuna Longline FIP](#). Fishery targets albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*), bigeye (*Thunnus obesus*) and yellowfin (*Thunnus albacares*) tuna in the Indian Ocean, fished by Malaysian and Taiwanese flagged vessels. The vessels are managed under the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, IOTC.

This Fishery Improvement Project aims to meet the rising global demand for tuna and other large pelagics in a sustainable manner by assuring catches do not exceed sustainable levels, promoting the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management and strengthening policy and governance systems in the region. The end goal is to achieve certification under the [Marine Stewardship Council](#) Fisheries Standard by the latest 2024.

As a FIP, we are concerned with the status of the tuna stocks in the Indian Ocean and their effective management. We operate in this region and the sustainability of these stocks is integral to not only our business, but also to the overall marine environment.

We recognise that the impacts of COVID-19 continue to present challenges to regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) like the IOTC. However, we do not believe these circumstances should prevent the IOTC from taking action in 2021 to adopt science-based management measures to ensure the sustainable management of the tuna stocks and marine ecosystems under its purview.

The Indian Ocean Tuna Longline FIP is disappointed that the IOTC failed to reach an agreement on a revised yellowfin rebuilding plan at its Special Meeting in March 2021. We therefore strongly urge that the IOTC acts in June 2021 at the virtual Meeting of the IOTC Commission to:

1. Adopt without delay an effective rebuilding plan for yellowfin tuna which, if implemented effectively, would imply a reduction to a total catch below 403,000 tons.
2. Address over-catches in contravention of Resolution 19/01.
3. Urgently monitor and manage catches of skipjack to ensure catches in 2021 do not exceed the limit set by the adopted Harvest Control Rule in line with latest scientific advice from the SC
4. Accelerate the development of Management Procedures (Harvest Strategies and Harvest Control Rules) and agree on permanent Limit and Target Reference Points for tropical and temperate tunas, particularly yellowfin, by 2022.
5. Request the Scientific Committee to provide science-based limits on FAD deployments and/or FAD sets; develop in 2021 and adopt, by 2022, FAD marking guidelines and FAD tracking and recovery policies; and require the use of biodegradable materials in the construction of FADs and establish a timeline for transitioning to 100% biodegradable.
6. Establish the Working Group on Electronic Monitoring (EM) and develop EM program minimum standards by 2022; and drastically improve observer coverage (human and/or electronic) in industrial tuna fisheries, including all those engaged in at sea transshipment, by 2024 to improve the quality and quantity of data, especially concerning ETP species.
7. Strengthen Shark, Turtle, Seabird and Cetacean Management by adopting best practices and strategies for mitigation and best practice of safe release to reduce fishing impacts on these species.



8. Strengthen IOTC Resolution 17/05 on shark finning by requiring that all sharks be landed with fins naturally attached to align with the WCPFC's new CMM on sharks (19-04), which came into effect on 1st November 2020.

The Indian Ocean Tuna Longline FIP looks forward to the continued leadership of the IOTC in the Indian Ocean, a region rich in tuna resources that are in need of continued science-based conservation and management. Many thanks for taking time to read our position statement. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Evans', written in a cursive style.

Tom Evans - FIP Manager *on behalf of the* Indian Ocean Tuna Longline FIP
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