

Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission

RESOLUTION ON YELLOWFIN TUNA

June 2000

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, having responsibility for the scientific study of the tunas and tuna-like fishes of the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO), which for the purpose of this Resolution is the area bounded by the coastline of the Americas, the 40°N parallel, the 150°W meridian, and the 40°S parallel, and for the formulation of recommendations to the High Contracting Parties with regard to these resources, and having maintained since 1950 a continuing scientific program directed toward the study of those resources,

Notes that the yellowfin tuna resource of the eastern Pacific supports one of the most important surface fisheries for tunas in the world, and

Recognizes that, based on past experience in the fishery, the potential production from the resource can be reduced by excessive fishing effort, and

Recalls that from 1966 through 1979 the implementation of a successful conservation program maintained the yellowfin stock at high levels of abundance, and

Notes that from 1980 through 1999, excepting 1987, conservation measures were recommended to the Commissioners by the scientific staff, and that in turn such measures were approved by the Commissioners for recommendation to their respective governments, and

Observes that, although the stock of yellowfin is currently near a level of optimum abundance, nevertheless it can be over-exploited, and

Believing that it is important to follow a precautionary approach when addressing conservation and management measures for yellowfin tuna, and

Understanding that most yellowfin tuna caught in the area west of the Commission's Yellowfin Regulatory Area (CYRA) (as defined in the resolution adopted by the Commission on May 17, 1962) and east of 150°W are of such a size that limiting the catches in that area is currently not necessary, and

Observing that currently the fishery for yellowfin tuna in the eastern Pacific Ocean includes a variety of fishing gears and methods of operation which require the implementation of differentiated management systems adapted to this complexity, and

Noting the recommendation to limit the catch of bigeye tuna taken in the purse-seine fishery in the EPO by prohibiting sets on all types of floating objects,

The IATTC therefore recommends to the High Contracting Parties that a limitation on the catches of yellowfin in the CYRA is necessary before the end of 2000, and will take effect on the date on which the total catch of yellowfin tuna from the CYRA in 2000 reaches 240,000 metric tons. (This date will henceforth be referred to as the "closure date," and the period beginning on the closure date and ending at midnight, December 31, 2000, will henceforth be referred to as the "restricted period.") Further, on the basis of the analysis of information presented by the Director, the limitation may be implemented on a differential basis. The limitation would be implemented as follows:

1. Purse-seine vessels and baitboats must refrain from fishing for yellowfin tuna in the following areas of the CYRA (the "restricted areas") during the restricted period:
 - a. The area between the coast of Mexico and longitude 125°W north of latitude 23°N, and
 - b. The area between the coast of South America and longitude 85°W from latitude 5°N to latitude 5°S.

2. As of December 1, 2000, or the date on which a catch of 265,000 metric tons of yellowfin tuna is reached in the CYRA, purse-seine vessels with an observer aboard from the On-Board Observer Program established under the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program must refrain from fishing for yellowfin in the CYRA.
3. The landings of fish caught in the restricted areas during the restricted period or in the entire CYRA after the date established in section 2 above by any individual purse seiner with an observer aboard may include a maximum of 15 percent yellowfin (relative to its total catch of all species of fish during those periods) caught while fishing for other species of tunas.
4. Vessels with an observer aboard which are at sea on December 31, 2000, will not be subject to the 15-percent maximum after that date during the remainder of that trip.
5. Purse-seine vessels and baitboats without an observer aboard which are at sea on the closure date may continue to fish for yellowfin without restriction until they return to port for unloading.
6. Purse-seine vessels and baitboats without an observer aboard which are not at sea on the closure date, but which depart from port to fish for tunas during the restricted period, must refrain from fishing for yellowfin. The landings of vessels in this category, regardless of the date the trip is completed, may include a maximum of 15 percent yellowfin caught while fishing for other species of tunas.

The IATTC staff shall evaluate landings of small tuna during the period when this area closure is in effect in order to determine whether the actual reduction in catches of small yellowfin tuna is consistent with the expected reduction, and shall report on the results of that evaluation at the Meeting of the IATTC in June 2001.

Finally recommends that all member states and other interested states work diligently to achieve the implementation of such a yellowfin conservation program for 2000.