

Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission

RESOLUTION ON BYCATCH

June 2000

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica, on the occasion of its 66th Meeting:

Understanding the importance of minimizing bycatches of juvenile tunas and non-target species in the purse-seine fishery for tunas in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) to ensure sustainable catches of target tuna species and to maintain healthy marine ecosystems overall;

Aware that measures to reduce such bycatches may require modified or new procedures, technologies, or management measures;

Noting with appreciation the work to date of the Bycatch Working Group established at the 58th Meeting of the IATTC to examine the question of bycatches of all species taken in the tuna purse-seine fishery in the EPO;

Further noting that the Working Group has made good progress with respect to its terms of reference, and that at its meeting in April 2000 it focused largely on the third term of reference, to “formulate and evaluate management schemes for reducing bycatch”;

Has agreed as follows:

1. To implement, as of 1 January 2001, a one-year pilot program to require all purse-seine vessels to first retain on board and then land all bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin tuna caught, except fish considered unfit for human consumption for reasons other than size, in order to provide a disincentive to the capture of these small fish. A single exception shall be the final set of a trip, when there may be insufficient well space remaining to accommodate all the tuna caught in that set. The program shall include an effort to analyze the effect in market terms, especially with respect to any undesirable possible increase in the demand for small fish. The Commission shall evaluate the results of the program at the end of the pilot period. The objective of that review should be to determine whether the program should be continued or whether other management measures should be considered.
2. The Commission staff should develop appropriate terms of reference for the development and implementation of the pilot program described in paragraph 1 above. These terms of reference shall include, *inter alia*, a definition of the exact time during a set at which full retention will then be required, and a definition of fish unfit for human consumption pursuant to paragraph 1.
3. To require fishermen on purse-seine vessels to promptly release unharmed, to the extent practicable, all sea turtles, sharks, billfishes, rays, mahi-mahi and other non-target species.
4. To encourage fishermen to develop and use techniques and equipment to facilitate the rapid and safe release of any such animals.
5. To require specific measures for application to encircled or entangled sea turtles as follows:
 - Whenever a sea turtle is sighted in the net, a speedboat should be stationed close to the point where the net is lifted out of the water.
 - If a turtle is entangled in the net, net roll should stop as soon as the turtle comes out of the water and should not start again until the turtle has been disentangled and released.
 - If a turtle is brought aboard the vessel, it should, if necessary, be resuscitated before being returned to the water.
6. To instruct the Director to develop a research program to further evaluate the use of sorting grids as a

means of releasing juvenile tunas from purse-seine nets, and facilitate other research to avoid bycatch, including technological innovations such as acoustic instruments, as well as means to implement the requirements of Section 2 above. The Commission approves the program of work presented at its meeting in June 2000 costing up to US\$320,000 required to carry out both phases of the sorting grid program. The industry should also be encouraged to participate in this research program and to continue its efforts to reduce bycatches of all species to the lowest level possible. Funding must be available before starting the program.

7. To instruct the Director to further evaluate the effectiveness of other measures to reduce bycatch such as: (a) time and area closures in the eastern Pacific Ocean; (b) limits on fishing effort, such as a limit on the number of sets on floating objects and unassociated schools; (c) limits on catches of juvenile tunas; (d) reducing the number of panels of net depth; and (e) limiting the number of FADs utilized by each vessel. The Director shall report the results of this evaluation, including analysis of practical ways to implement such measures, for example, quotas such as those used for reducing dolphin mortality, to the Commission by the end of 2000.
8. To develop for consideration of the Parties before the end of 2000, a program to obtain data on bycatches by purse-seine vessels not covered by the current observer program and by longline vessels and other tuna-fishing vessels. This program should include consideration of the placement of observers or any alternative data collection system, as appropriate and should specify the proposed funding mechanisms.
9. In the case of purse-seine vessels mentioned in paragraph 8, the objectives shall be to: (a) determine the catch and effort of these vessels by fishing strategy including natural and artificial floating objects and unassociated fish; and (b) evaluate the effects of the on-board retention of all bycatches of tunas.
10. To consider the development and implementation of additional measures, as appropriate, based on an evaluation of the research conducted pursuant to paragraphs 6, 7 and 9 above. The goal of any such measure should be to reduce to the maximum extent practicable the bycatch of juvenile tunas and other non-target species. The result of this should be reported by 1 January 2003.