**Bigeye tuna**

**Indian Ocean**

**Fishery**: IOTC, Sri Lanka, Drifting longlines

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**ASSESSMENT**

**Strengths**

The population of bigeye tuna in the Indian Ocean is considered healthy and fishing mortality rates are sustainable. Assessments are conducted by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission. Discarding of tropical (bigeye, skipjack, yellowfin) tunas is prohibited in purse seine fisheries. Fishing pressure (longline and purse seine) has been lowered since 2007. There are interim target and limit reference points in place and the IOTC is working towards a harvest control rule.

The population of bigeye tuna in the Indian Ocean is considered healthy and fishing mortality rates are sustainable. Sri Lanka is working on developing a vessel monitoring and observer program. A National Plan of Action for Sharks was published in 2014. Sri Lanka complies with a number of IOTC management measures. The incidental capture of sea birds and marine mammals does not appear to be an issue in Sri Lanka’s tuna fisheries.

**Weaknesses**

The fishery is not regulated by TAC or catch limits. Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing has been a major issue. Observer coverage rates are very low. Interactions with protected, endangered and threatened species along with sharks occur. There are issues with data reporting. Specifically, industrial longline fisheries from India, pole and line artisanal fisheries from the Maldives, gillnet fisheries from Iran (before 2012) and Pakistan, from gillnet and longline fisheries from Sri Lanka and artisanal fisheries from Indonesia, Comoros (before 2015) and Madagascar.

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**SCORES**

**Management Quality:**

- **Management Strategy**: 6
- **Managers Compliance**: 6
- **Fishers Compliance**: 6

**Stock Health:**

**Current Health**: 9.2
**Future Health**: 9

**FIPS**:

- Sri Lanka tuna and swordfish - longline: Stage 3, Progress Rating C, Type: Fishery, Evaluation Start Date: 18 May 2018

**MSC**: No related MSC fisheries

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RETAILERS & SUPPLY CHAIN**

- Work with IOTC Members and Complimenting Non-Contracting Parties to:
  - Develop and implement a comprehensive, precautionary harvest strategy with specific timelines for all tuna stocks, including the adoption and implementation of limit and target reference points, harvest control rules, monitoring strategies, operational objectives, performance indicators, and management strategy evaluation.
  - Strengthen compliance processes and make information on non-compliance public and continue to provide evidence of compliance with all IOTC Conservation and Management Measures. In a timely manner.
  - Implement a 100% observer coverage requirement for all tuna transshipment activities, as well as other measures that ensure transshipment activity is transparent and well-managed, and that all required data are collected and transmitted to the appropriate bodies in a timely manner.
  - Increase compliance with the mandatory minimum 5% longline observer coverage rates by identifying and correcting non-compliance.
  - Implement a 100% observer coverage requirement – human and/or electronic – within five years for longline fisheries. Adopt a 100% observer coverage requirement for purse seine vessels where it is not already required and require the use of the best-available observer safety equipment, communications and procedures.
  - Adopt effective measures for the use of non-entangling FAD designs as a precautionary measure to minimize the entanglement of sharks and other non-target species, and support research on biodegradable materials and transition to their use to mitigate marine debris.

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**RELATED LINKS**

- Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)
- Fishery Profile: https://www.fishsource.org/fishery_page/2145

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**STOCK IDENTIFICATION**

Bigeye tuna of the Indian Ocean constitutes a single panmictic population (Chiang et al., 2008) and the stock is assessed by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC, 2014).
More effectively implement, and ensure compliance with, existing RFMO bycatch requirements and take additional mitigation action, such as improving monitoring at sea, collecting and sharing operational-level, gear-specific data, and adopting stronger compliance measures, including consequences for non-compliance for all gear types.

Ensure all products are traceable back to legal sources. Verify source information and full chain traceability through traceability desk audits or third party traceability certification. For fisheries without robust traceability systems in place, invest in meaningful improvements to bring the fisheries and supply chain in compliance with best practices.