YELLOWFIN TUNA

IDENTIFICATION

SCIENTIFIC NAME
Thunnus albacares

SPECIES NAME(S)
Yellowfin tuna

COMMON NAMES
Yellowfin tuna

STOCK IDENTIFICATION
Despite the identification of distinct spawning grounds within the Atlantic Ocean, observed transatlantic movements and catch data suggest the existence of a unique stock which is used for stock assessment purposes (ICCAT, 2011). A new research study about the genetic variation in the region is being developed (Antoni et al., 2014).

RELATED LINKS:
- International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)

ASSESSMENT

STRENGTHS
Managers have adhered to scientific advice. The stock assessment (2011) indicated that maintaining catches at current levels (110,000 t) would allow the population to remain healthy through 2024. The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) set a total allowable catch (TAC) at this level starting in 2013. Yellowfin tuna are included in a multi-year conservation and management plan for bigeye tuna.

WEAKNESSES
There are no formally adopted target or limit reference points. There is no harvest control rule in place, although the framework for one has been adopted. The population has been decreasing for over two decades and under target levels since 2009, but fishing mortality rates appear to be sustainable (although some model runs indicated it was not). It has also been recommended that 4 measures which are currently at reducing fishing mortality for small yellowfin tuna were implemented, the long-term yield would be improved. No measures have yet been adopted by ICCAT. An observer program is in place, but required coverage rates (all fleets) (5%) are very low. Catch and catch at size data needs to be reported, at a smaller scale, data on present samples of size frequency data needs to be recovered and identifying ways of improving catch estimates from logbook data are all needed.

The population has been decreasing for over two decades and under target levels since 2009, but fishing mortality rates appear to be sustainable (although some model runs indicated it was not). However, if catches are maintained at the set TAC level, the population should recover, thus catches during the next several years should be monitored against to ensure compliance. If catches exceed this TAC and reach 140,000 t or more, the probability of meeting Convention Objectives will fall below 50%. Catch monitoring needs improvement in both artisanal and industrial fisheries. A mandatory logbook scheme should be implemented for all industrial purse seine and longline fleets operating from Panama ports. Regular checks for reported catches should be in place for artisanal fisheries, where bulk of the catches are landed along the coastline. The sport fishing sector is not regulated and there is absence of fisheries statistics for this sector, with the exception of some major landing points along the Atlantic coast. Although, Panama has landing and transshipment facilities for fishing vessels operating in Caribbean and Atlantic waters, most of the foreign fishing fleet lands their tuna catch in ports of other countries (EU, Suriname, Gambia) (ICCAT 2011b).

Managers should establish fishing regulations and identify major fishing areas to establish closed areas at least for certain months in a year especially, in the high seas areas.

SCORES

MANAGEMENT QUALITY

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

≥ 6

MANAGERS COMPLIANCE

10

FISHER COMPLIANCE

10

STOCK HEALTH

CURRENT HEALTH

78

FUTURE HEALTH

8.9

FIPS

for related FIPs

MSC

No related MSC fisheries

RECOMMENDATIONS

CATCHES & REGULATIONS

1. Enforce member countries to comply with all conservation and management measures (CMMs) of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), including measures aimed at both target and bycatch species, and all other mandated obligations. Member countries must make information on monitoring and compliance with all ICCAT obligations publicly available, including actions being taken to address any identified non-compliance with ICCAT CMMs. Ensure compliance with the current total allowable catch (TAC) for yellowfin tuna.

2. Promote the adoption by the ICCAT and member countries of precautionary management measures, including target and limit biological reference points, harvest control rules, increased observer coverage for all fisheries, national management measures and monitoring efforts adequate to ensure harvest efficiency.
strategy objectives are being met. Promote the adoption of management measures aimed at reducing mortality rates of juvenile yellowfin tuna caught in purse seine sets made on fish aggregating devices (FADs).

3. Improve data collection and reporting to ensure complete data sets (i.e. catch, effort, size), which are needed for robust stock assessments. For example, catch and catch at size data needs to be reported at a smaller scale, data on present samples of size frequency data needs to be recovered and identifying ways of improving catch estimates from logbook data are all needed.

4. Conduct studies, increase monitoring and publish information to assess longline interactions with protected, endangered and threatened (PET) species. Demand compliance with ICCAT management measures prohibiting the retention of oceanic whitetip, silky, thresher and hammerhead sharks.

RETAILERS & SUPPLY CHAIN

1. Encourage the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and individual member countries to adopt precautionary and ecosystem-based management measures. Demand that member countries comply with all ICCAT’s Conservation and Management Measures.

2. Explore implementation of control documents to ensure supplier compliance with ICCAT conservation and management measures (CMMs) (e.g. around bycatch) such as: recording and reporting interactions, use of detangling devices and line cutters for sea turtles, sea bird mitigation measures and prohibition on retaining silky, oceanic whitetip, hammerhead and thresher sharks. Source from vessels registered on the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF)/Proactive Vessel Register (PVR).

3. Encourage the ICCAT and member countries to conduct studies, increase monitoring and publish information to assess longline interactions with protected, endangered and threatened (PET) species. Demand compliance with ICCAT management measures prohibiting the retention of oceanic whitetip, silky, thresher and hammerhead sharks.

3. Explore opportunities to support studies and data gathering.

4. Contact SFP to learn more about fishery improvement projects (FIPs) and SFP’s Supplier Roundtables.