Skipjack tuna

**Indian Ocean**

**Fishery:** Indian Ocean, IOTC, Mauritius, Drifting longlines

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### IDENTIFICATION

**Scientific Name:** Katsuwonus pelamis  
**Species Name(s):** Skipjack tuna  
**Common Names:** Skipjack tuna

**Stock Identification:** 
Skipjack tuna is considered a single population for assessment purposes. There is some indication from tagging studies that it is a single population (IOTC 2015).

**Related Links:**  
- Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)

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### ASSESSMENT

#### Strengths

- The population is currently estimated to be healthy with sustainable fishing mortality rates. There is a harvest control rule in place along with formally adopted target and limit reference points. Skipjack tuna are managed and assessed by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission. There is a ban on discarding tropical tuna (bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin) caught in purse seine fisheries and the use of artificial lights and aircraft are prohibited in purse seine fisheries.

#### Weaknesses

- There are no specific management measures for skipjack tuna. The last assessment indicated that if catches remained substantially below the estimated maximum sustainable yield than urgent measures are not needed. However, there are some recent catch trends that suggest catches should be closely monitored. There is a considerable uncertainty surrounding the current assessment. Catches from many artisanal fisheries are not being reported at the species level. There is uncertainty surrounding the reported catches from the coastal fisheries of Sri Lanka, Comoros and Madagascar. Observer coverage is low in the purse seine fishery (5%) and much lower than levels mandated by other Regional Fisheries Management Organizations. Interactions between sea turtles, sharks and other fish occur in associated purse seine fisheries.

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### SCORES

**Management Quality:**
- Management Strategy: 8  
- Managers Compliance: 8  
- Fishers Compliance: 6

**Stock Health:**
- Current Health: 10  
- Future Health: 9.5

**FIPS:** No related FIPs

**MSC:** No related MSC fisheries

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### RECOMMENDATIONS

**CATCHERS & REGULATORS**

1. Ensure member countries comply with all Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) conservation and management measures (CMMs), including measures aimed at both target and incidental market and non-market species, and all other obligations. Through your delegation to IOTC, encourage the compliance committee to make information on non-compliance by individual members and cooperating non-members publicly available in order to increase the incentive for compliance by all IOTC members and cooperating non-members.

2. Promote the adoption by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and member countries of precautionary and ecosystem-based management measures, including formal biological reference points (interim currently in place), harvest control rules, increased observer coverage for purse seine fleets, and monitoring efforts adequate to ensure harvest strategy objectives are being met. Adopt domestic laws and regulation to implement IOTC measures and provide monitoring and surveillance adequate for compliance. Encourage IOTC and parties to comply with current required onboard observer coverage rates.

3. Encourage the IOTC to closely monitor catches of skipjack tuna to ensure they remain substantially below 550,000 t and to continue monitoring declines in catches, sets or FAO and ICES catch and effort data. Improve data collection and reporting to ensure complete data sets (i.e., catches, effort, size), which are needed for robust stock assessments. Specifically, catches from many artisanal fisheries are not being reported at the species level and there is uncertainty surrounding the reported catches from the coastal fisheries of Sri Lanka and Madagascar. Catch and effort data from gillnet fisheries off India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are either insufficient or of poor quality.

4. Conduct studies, increase monitoring and publish information to assess purse seine interactions with endangered, threatened and protected (EPT) species and other bycatch species. Identify and mandate best practices to reduce interactions and improve mitigation techniques. Cooperate with recently implemented IOTC management measures.
management measures prohibiting the retention of oceanic whitetip and thresher sharks and those requiring member countries to adopt fish aggregating device designs that reduce incidental entanglements of bycatch species.

RETAILERS & SUPPLY CHAIN
1. Ask the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and individual member countries to adopt precautionary and ecosystem-based management measures including formal reference points, harvest control rules and increased observer coverage.
2. Require that your suppliers source only from fisheries that comply with all IOTC Conservation and Management Measures, and request that IOTC continue to make information on compliance by members and cooperating non-members publicly available (IOTC.org). An example of how this might be achieved is a control document that ensures recording and reporting interactions, and prohibition on retaining thresher and oceanic whitetip sharks.
3. Source from vessels registered on the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) Proactive Vessel Register (PVR) and in full compliance with all measures relevant to their gear type as demonstrated by annual independent audit reports that are made publicly available.
4. Ask ISSF to expand the ecological sustainability criteria against which tuna vessels on the PVR are assessed. Contact SFP to learn more about fishery improvement projects (FIPs) and SFP’s Supplier Roundtables.