

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

RESOLUTION ON BYCATCH

10 October 1999

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), meeting in La Jolla, California, on the occasion of its 65th Meeting:

Notes with appreciation the work to date of the Bycatch Working Group to examine the question of bycatches of all species taken in the tuna purse-seine fishery in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO), established at the 58th Meeting of the IATTC, held on June 3-5, 1997, in San Jose, Costa Rica;

Further notes that the Working Group has made good progress with respect to its first two terms of reference, and that a further meeting of the Working Group is tentatively scheduled for April 2000 to focus largely on the third term of reference, to “formulate and evaluate management schemes for reducing bycatch”;

Concerned about the bycatches and discards associated with the purse-seine fisheries in the EPO;

Noting the International Plan of Action for the Management of Sharks adopted by the FAO Committee on Fisheries in February 1999;

Recommends:

- that the IATTC staff develop a mechanism for estimating the quantity and species of discards by tuna vessels fishing in the EPO from which such information is currently not available;
- that the Bycatch Working Group present to the meeting of the IATTC in June 2000 recommendations on management measures to reduce bycatch in the purse-seine fishery;
- that the IATTC staff develop and implement plans for the following research, in accordance with the budget approved by the IATTC, to support the work of the Bycatch Working Group and the development of measures to assess and reduce bycatch in the purse-seine fishery as well as in other fisheries, with a view to developing future recommendations with respect to these fisheries;
 - assess the impact of discards on species managed by the IATTC and how such discards may affect the management measures adopted by the IATTC for these species;
 - assess the effectiveness of gear modifications, such as size-sorting grids and other innovations, in reducing bycatch of juvenile tunas; and
 - estimate catches and the incidental fishing mortality of species such as sharks and rays and non-target species, for which the IATTC has identified a significant interaction with the target species, to further assess the impacts on these species;
- that the appropriate provisions and recommendations of the FAO Plan of Action should be considered as an integral part of any bycatch management scheme adopted by the Commission; and

- that States with purse-seine vessels fishing in the EPO require, in accordance with Article VI of the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program, the release of all sea turtles caught, and report on their number and the condition in which they were released, and that States with other types of fishing vessels operating in the EPO encourage these practices to the extent practicable.