



International Game Fish Association

Fishing Hall of Fame & Museum

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Recommendations to the 23rd Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas

The International Game Fish Association (IGFA) is a non-profit organization that represents recreational anglers throughout the world. IGFA was established in 1939, has active members in over 100 countries, is the governing body for international recreational fishing, and provides rules for ethical angling practices. Many of IGFA's members target the highly migratory species managed by ICCAT, especially marlin, sailfish and spearfish (i.e. billfish) which are primarily caught and released.

IGFA continues to have great concern about how many highly migratory species are being managed on a global level. The lack of data and accurate reporting on billfish catch is of particular concern. As an organization that is committed to the conservation of game fishes and obtaining more and better data on them, IGFA has deployed 81 pop-up satellite archival tags in marlin around the world in the last two years, many of which have been in waters under this organization's purview. The information gained from this exercise is open access and available to your scientific committee and others who wish to utilize it for management purposes.

Billfish

The most recent stock assessments for blue marlin, white marlin, and eastern Atlantic sailfish indicate that all three stocks are currently still overfished with overfishing occurring in blue marlin and eastern Atlantic sailfish. ICCAT Recommendation 11-13 states *"that for stocks that are subject to overfishing, the Commission shall immediately adopt management measures, taking into account, inter alia, the biology of the stock and the SCRS advise, designed to result in a high probability of ending overfishing in as short a time as possible."* Yet all three of these stocks have been in alternating states of being overfished and/or experiencing overfishing for nearly three decades.

While positive steps were put in place during last year's commission meeting, IGFA does not feel that the TAC structure implemented in blue and white marlin/spearfish is sufficient to rebuild these stocks in a timely manner, especially given their protracted history of overfishing. The 2013 SCRS assessment reported that the established TAC of 2,000 t for blue marlin only gives a 32% chance that the stock will not be overfished with overfishing not occurring by 2026. The established TAC for white marlin is worse, giving it a 0% chance of being rebuilt with overfishing not occurring by 2022. No ICCAT regulations for sailfish are in effect.

- IGFA recommends reducing harvest of blue marlin, white marlin/spearfish and eastern and western Atlantic sailfish.
- IGFA further recommends implementing a prohibition on Atlantic billfish entering into international trade. Similar legislation has recently been passed, at the request of IGFA, in the United States that now bans importation of all marlin, sailfish and spearfish into the continental United States.
- We also recommend that all countries be required to use circle hooks in their longline fisheries

The International Game Fish Association is a not-for-profit organization committed to the conservation of game fish and the promotion of responsible, ethical angling practices through science, education, rule making and record keeping.

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Bluefin Tuna

The 2012 stock assessment showed modest improvements to both eastern and western Atlantic bluefin tuna stocks. Last year, following the advice of the SCRS, the commission established a quota of 13,400 t for the eastern stock and 1,750 t for the western stock. In order to allow both of these stocks to continue rebuilding, it is imperative that the commission take a precautionary approach in their management. IGFA recommends that the commission continue to heed the recommendations of the SCRS including:

- Not exceeding the western quota of 1,750 t, inclusive of any possible scientific research quota, for 2014 and 2015.
- No increase in the eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna quota for 2014-2015
- Cancel the 2014 eastern Atlantic bluefin stock assessment update. The SCRS believes that a benchmark mixed stock assessment to be conducted in 2015 would provide better data for future management considerations.
- Address illegal fishing by fully implementing the electronic bluefin catch document (eBCD) system by the March 2014 deadline.

General

Recreational angling is a growing and economically vibrant entity in many countries and we wish that ICCAT recognize both its relevance and that it may necessitate alternate management objectives than those used in commercial fisheries. IGFA kindly offers its consultation to ICCAT on recreational fisheries issues.

- Current ICCAT quota allocation and reallocation policies do not take into consideration the economic value of catch and release recreational fisheries. ICCAT Contracting parties should be free to utilize quota as they desire, even if it is not fully harvested without penalty of quota redistribution.
- Managing fisheries on the basis of MSY is an excessively risk-prone approach. As such, we suggest that ICCAT adopt a target objective below MSY to compensate for biological, environmental and data uncertainties.