



# International Game Fish Association

## Fishing Hall of Fame & Museum

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### Recommendations to the 24<sup>th</sup> 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 150 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 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 160 pop-up satellite archival tags in billfish around the world in the last three 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 (2011), white marlin (2012), and western and eastern Atlantic sailfish (2009) indicate that all 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 the 2012 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. According to the SCRS, 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 that the commission reduce the 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 in the United States, at the request of IGFA, which bans importation of all marlin, sailfish and spearfish into the continental United States.
- IGFA recommends that all countries be required to use non-offset circle hooks in their longline fisheries.

#### Bluefin Tuna

The 2014 stock assessment update of eastern and western populations of Atlantic bluefin tuna suggest that current management rules are allowing both populations to grow, but the extent of recovery remains highly uncertain. However, both populations are experiencing increased fishing pressure. Therefore, IGFA recommends that the Commission:

*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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- Take a precautionary approach in quota increase and heed the recommendations of the SCRS .
- Oppose any increase in the eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna quota for 2016-2017.
- Fully implement the electronic bluefin tuna catch document system (eBCD) by March 2016 to address illegal fishing and ensure catch limits are not exceeded.

#### **IUU Fishing**

- Increase efforts to reduce IUU fishing by improving VMS requirements across all managed species to create consistency with procedures already in place for eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna.
- Ban transshipment at sea until the Commission can verify that it is not facilitating IUU fishing.
- Strengthen the IUU vessel list by allowing vessels to be added at an intersessional basis.

#### **Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) in tropical tuna fisheries**

- Establish measures to effectively manage FADs to reduce the impacts of FADs on overfishing.
- Set limits on FAD fishing effort in purse seine fisheries
- Establish real time monitoring in FADs to better assess the fishery

#### **Sharks**

IGFA has significant concerns over ICCAT's management of blue, mako and porbeagle sharks. The latter species, in particular, is listed both as Critically Endangered by the IUCN and is also as an Appendix II species by CITES. IGFA recommends that the commission:

- Ensure sustainable fishing for shark species through adequate scientific data and, in the absence of such, prohibit the use of wire leaders, with sharks being released alive whenever possible.
- Prohibit the retention of porbeagle, longfin mako, night and common thresher sharks.
- Establish definitive, precautionary catch limits for blue and shortfin mako shark species.
- Adopt measures to prohibit deliberate purse seine setting around whale sharks.
- Prohibit the at-sea removal of shark fins.

#### **Recreational Fishing**

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.