

Original: English

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT FOR WESTERN ATLANTIC SAILFISH

Proposal submitted by the United States

CONSIDERING the results of the 2016 stock assessment and the SCRS advice that western Atlantic sailfish catches should not exceed current levels;

RECALLING the provisions of the *Recommendation by ICCAT on the Principles of Decision Making for ICCAT Conservation and Management Measures* [Rec. 11-13];

NOTING that the western Atlantic stock of sailfish is exploited by longline fisheries, recreational fisheries and surface fisheries (mainly artisanal drift-gillnets);

RECOGNIZING that ICCAT has not yet adopted any management measures for this stock, and that fair and equitable conservation actions are needed to ensure its long-term sustainability;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING that recent research has demonstrated that in some longline fisheries the use of circle hooks resulted in a reduction of billfish mortality, while the catch rates of several of the target species remained the same or were greater than the catch rates observed with conventional J hooks;

COGNIZANT that catches of sailfish are likely under-reported, and according to the SCRS, this is one of the main sources of uncertainty in the assessment;

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE
CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. A total allowable catch (TAC) of 863 t is established for this stock.
2. To prevent catches from exceeding the TAC, CPCs shall ensure domestic management measures are in place that limit fishing mortality for sailfish. Such measures could include, for example: releasing live sailfish, encouraging or requiring the use of circle hooks or other effective gear modifications, implementing a minimum size, and/or limiting days at sea.
3. If total western Atlantic catches of sailfish exceed the TAC in any year, the Commission shall review this recommendation.
4. CPCs shall collect data on catches of sailfish, including live and dead discards, and report these data annually as part of their Task I and II data submission to support the stock assessment process. The SCRS shall review these data and determine the feasibility of estimating fishing mortality by commercial fisheries (including longline and purse seine), recreational fisheries and artisanal fisheries. The SCRS shall also develop a new data collection initiative as part of the ICCAT Enhanced Program for Billfish Research to overcome the data gap issues of those fisheries, in particular artisanal fisheries of developing CPCs, and shall recommend the initiative to the Commission for its approval in 2017.
5. In their Annual Reports, beginning in 2017, CPCs shall describe their data collection programs and steps taken to implement this recommendation.
6. The SCRS shall review and evaluate CPC data collection programs and develop recommendations to strengthen them, including through capacity building.
7. This recommendation shall be reviewed in light of the outcomes of the next stock assessment for western Atlantic sailfish.