

Original: English

**DRAFT RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT TO ESTABLISH
REBUILDING PROGRAMS FOR BLUE MARLIN AND WHITE MARLIN/ROUNDSCALE SPEARFISH**
Proposal submitted by United States

RECALLING the 2000 blue marlin stock assessment, which found that the stock was below B_{MSY} (overfished) with fishing mortality above F_{MSY} (overfishing occurring), and subsequent assessments, most recently in 2018, confirming that the stock remains in this state;

ACKNOWLEDGING the 2019 white marlin/roundscale spearfish stock assessment, which found that overfishing is not occurring, but the stock remains overfished after more than twenty years of management by ICCAT;

AWARE OF measures adopted by the Commission over the last 20 years to improve the status of blue marlins and white marlins, including the *Recommendation by ICCAT to establish a Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin Populations* (Rec. 00-13), *Recommendation by ICCAT to Further Strengthen the Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin stocks* (Rec. 12-04), and subsequent recommendations;

UNDERSTANDING, however, the 2019 SCRS advice that total catches of blue marlin should be reduced to 1,750 t or less to provide at least a 50% chance of rebuilding by 2028 and that total catches of white marlin/roundscale spearfish should not exceed 400 t to support rebuilding;

ACKNOWLEDGING that dead discards and unreported catches are not currently accounted for in the annual limits in the *Recommendation by ICCAT to Replace Rec. 15-05 to Further Strengthen the Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin Stocks* (Rec. 18-04);

NOTING WITH CONCERN the landings by some Contracting Parties, non-Contracting Parties, Entities and Fishing Entities (CPCs) that are significantly in excess of landing limits under ICCAT recommendations, fishing by non-CPCs for these species occurring outside of the ICCAT management framework, and the significant levels of unreported catches highlighted by the SCRS;

AIMING to establish limits for blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish that take into account both reported dead discards and an additional buffer for unreported catches to ensure overall annual catches will not exceed the levels recommended by the SCRS;

UNDERSCORING the existing obligations of CPCs to require the collection of data on dead and live discards in their domestic observer and logbook programs under the *Recommendation by ICCAT on Information Collection and Harmonization of Data on By-catch and Discards in ICCAT Fisheries* [Rec. 11-10], consistent with the *Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish Minimum Standards for Fishing Vessel Scientific Observer Programs* [Rec. 16-14], and to report these data to ICCAT;

EMPHASIZING that 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 the use of conventional J hooks;

UNDERSCORING advice in the 2019 SCRS report that to reduce the chance of exceeding any established total allowable catch, the Commission should consider the use of circle hooks;

SEEKING to implement measures without delay that will further decrease mortality of hooked marlins, help to ensure catch limits will not be exceeded, and improve data collection;

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

1. CPCs shall implement measures for blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish to end overfishing as soon as possible and rebuild these species to their respective B_{MSY} levels within 10 years, as follows:

Annual Limits and Related Provisions

2. An annual limit of [1,500 t] for blue marlin and of [300 t] for white marlin/roundscale spearfish are established beginning in 2020. Landings limits shall be implemented as follows, in accordance with the *Resolution by ICCAT on Criteria for the Allocation of Fishing Possibilities* (Res. 15-13):

<i>Blue Marlin</i>	<i>[Landings Limit (t) in Rec. 18-04]</i>	<i>Landings Limit (t) beginning in 2020</i>
Brazil	[190]	X
China, P.R.	[45]	X
Chinese Taipei	[150]	X
Côte d'Ivoire	[150]	X
European Union	[480]	X
Ghana	[250]	X
Japan	[390]	X
Korea Rep.	[35]	X
Mexico	[70]	X
S. Tomé & Príncipe	[45]	X
Senegal	[60]	X
Trinidad and Tobago	[20]	X
Venezuela	[100]	X
TOTAL	[1,985]	[1,500]

<i>White Marlin/ Roundscale Spearfish</i>	<i>[Landings Limit (t) in Rec. 18-04]</i>	<i>Landings Limit (t) beginning in 2020</i>
Barbados	[10]	X
Brazil	[50]	X
Canada	[10]	X
China, P.R.	[10]	X
Chinese Taipei	[50]	X
European Union	[50]	X
Côte d'Ivoire	[10]	X
Japan	[35]	X
Korea Rep.	[20]	X

Mexico	[25]	X
S. Tomé & Príncipe	[20]	X
Trinidad and Tobago	[15]	X
Venezuela	[50]	X
TOTAL	[355]	[300]

The United States shall limit its landings to 250 recreationally caught Atlantic blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish combined on an annual basis. All other CPCs shall limit their landings to a maximum of 10 t of Atlantic blue marlin and 2 t of white marlin/roundscale spearfish combined.

3. (a) Any excess of the annual landings limits established in paragraph 2 shall be deducted from the respective landings limits during or before the adjustment year, in the following way:

<i>Catch Year</i>	<i>Adjustment Year</i>
2019	2021
2020	2022
2021	2023

- (b) Notwithstanding subparagraph (a) above, if any CPC exceeds its landings limit during any two consecutive years, its landings limit shall be reduced on or before the adjustment year by at least 125% of the excess harvest, and the Commission may recommend additional actions, as appropriate.
- (c) Any underharvest by a CPC of its annual landings limit may not be carried forward to a subsequent year.

Live Release Requirement and Retention Allowances

4. CPCs shall require pelagic longline vessels and purse seine vessels flying their flag to promptly release blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish that are alive when brought alongside the vessel in a manner that causes the least harm, while giving due consideration to the safety of crew members.
5. CPCs may authorize their pelagic longline and purse seine vessels to catch and retain on board, transship, or land blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish that are dead when brought alongside the vessel, provided that their vessels have either an observer or a functioning electronic monitoring system on board that can confirm whether the fish is dead or alive. CPCs shall prohibit the sale, or offering for sale, of any part or whole carcass of blue marlin or white marlin/roundscale spearfish retained pursuant to this paragraph.
6. For CPCs that prohibit dead discards, the landings of blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish that are dead when brought alongside the vessel and that are not sold or entered into commerce shall not count against the limits established in paragraph 2, on the condition that such prohibition be clearly explained in their Annual Report.
7. Blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish that are caught by developing coastal CPCs for local consumption are exempted from paragraphs 4 and 5, provided these CPCs (a) submit Task I and Task II data according to the reporting procedures established by the SCRS and (b) take necessary measures to ensure that blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish do not enter international trade and notify the Commission of such measures in their Annual Report.

8. For recreational and sport fisheries:
 - a. CPCs shall take appropriate measures to ensure that any released fish are released in a manner that causes the least harm.
 - b. CPCs shall establish minimum sizes for retention that meet or exceed the following lengths: 251 cm Lower Jaw-Fork Length (LJFL) for blue marlin and 168 cm LJFL for white marlin/roundscale spearfish.
 - c. CPCs shall prohibit the sale, or offering for sale, of any part or whole carcass of blue marlin or white marlin/roundscale spearfish caught in recreational and sport fisheries.

Gear Requirements

9. To reduce marlin/roundscale spearfish mortality at the vessel and post-release, CPCs shall require that vessels in their longline fisheries use large circle hooks, which are fishing hooks with the point turned perpendicularly back to the shank to form a generally circular or oval shape, and the point of the hook not offset more than 10 degrees.

Data Collection and Reporting

10. CPCs shall collect catch data on blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish, including live and dead discards, through logbooks and scientific observer programs as required by Rec. 11-10 and Rec. 16-14. CPCs shall include their estimates of total dead and live discards in their Task I Nominal Catch data submission.
11. No later than 2020, CPCs shall present to the SCRS the statistical methodology used to estimate these discards. The SCRS shall review these methodologies and if it determines that a methodology is not scientifically sound, the SCRS shall provide relevant feedback to the CPCs in question to improve the methodologies. The SCRS shall also determine if one or more capacity building workshops are warranted to help CPCs to comply with the requirement to report total live and dead discards. If so, the Secretariat in coordination with the SCRS should begin organizing the SCRS-recommended workshop(s) in 2021 with a view to convening them as soon as practicable.
12. The SCRS shall evaluate the completeness of Task I and II data submissions, including estimates of total dead and live discards. If after conducting such evaluation, the SCRS determines that significant gaps in data reporting exist, the SCRS should explore approaches to estimate the level of unreported catches to include in future stock assessments in order to enhance the basis on which to provide management advice to the Commission.
13. CPCs shall establish or maintain data collection programs in recreational and sport fisheries, including a minimum of 5% scientific observer coverage of blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish tournaments, to ensure that catches are reported in accordance with existing ICCAT reporting obligations.
14. Consistent with the *Recommendation by ICCAT on Improvement of Compliance Review of Conservation and Management Measures Regarding Billfish Caught in the ICCAT Convention Area* (Rec. 18-05), CPCs shall submit details of their implementation of this measure through domestic law or regulations, including monitoring, control and surveillance measures, and of their compliance with this measure using the billfish check sheet.
15. Failure to report Task I data, including dead discards, for blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish in accordance with established ICCAT requirements will result in a prohibition of retention of these species in accordance with Rec. 11-15, *Recommendation by ICCAT on Penalties Applicable in Case of Non Fulfilment of Reporting Obligations*.

Repeals

16. This Recommendation repeals and replaces the *Recommendation by ICCAT to Further Strengthen the Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin Populations* (Rec. 18-04).