

Original: English/French

BILLFISH CHECK SHEETS RECEIVED IN ACCORDANCE WITH REC. 18-05

REVIEW OF BILLFISH CHECK SHEETS – RESPONSES FROM CPC TO THE U.S. QUESTIONS

This document contains the responses from some CPC to the questions, comments, and requests for clarifications from the United States regarding the Billfish Check Sheets (**COC_315/2021**), received by the deadline of Thursday, 11 November 2021, 18:00 Madrid time, as circulated by ICCAT Circular # 8404/2021 of 8 November 2021.

The revised check sheets received since circulation of the questions from the United States are contained in **COC_315_ADD_1/2021**.

Barbados submitted its revised Billfish Check Sheet as well as its revised Shark Check Sheet on the 11 November 2021 (see **COC_315_ADD_1/2021**).

Namibia submitted its revised Billfish Check Sheet on the 10 November 2021 (see **COC_315_ADD_1/2021**).

US: PCs reporting no targeted or industrial fishery: *A report of no targeted or industrial fisheries does not exempt CPCs from the implementation of Rec. 19-05. Many CPCs including Albania, **Algeria**, Cabo Verde, Ghana, Guatemala, Equatorial Guinea, Honduras, and Nigeria have noted that they have no laws or regulations in place because they do not target marlins. However, several of the paragraphs in Rec. 19-05 specifically address requirements relating to non-targeted incidental catch. Reduction of incidental mortality in non-targeted fisheries is a critical component of the rebuilding programs for these stocks.*

Algeria submitted on 11 November 2021, its responses to the questions, comments and requests for clarification of the United States delegation on the billfish check sheet, which are as follows:

Further to ICCAT Circular # 8404/2021, on review of the billfish check sheets (**COC_315/2021**), in particular paragraph 3, I would like to provide Algeria's response in this regard.

Algeria has requested exemption from the requirement to submit the billfish check sheet; this request was submitted in 2019 and has been reiterated again this year.

Arguments have been provided in this regard, in particular, the inexistence of this group of species in Algerian waters, and therefore no targeted fishing can be carried out, nor bycatch or accidental catch taken. In addition, Algeria does not issue any fishing authorizations to vessels flying the national flag for fishing in third party waters.

US: Response of N/A or no details provided on relevant laws or regulations: *Some CPCs have responded "not applicable" or "N/A" without providing an adequate explanation of why they believe that the measures should not apply to them. We request a more complete explanation from these CPCs. In other cases where CPCs responded "Yes" without citations, we request that additional information on relevant domestic laws or regulations be provided, consistent with the requirements of Rec. 18-05.*

US: COC-315 Annex I, Column H: *We note that the text of the header of this column, "If a CPC approaches its landings limits, the release of blue marlin and WHM/SPF (alive) must be in a manner that maximizes their survival," does not correspond to the text of Rec 19-05, paragraph 4. This issue was addressed by the COC last year; it was noted that this is an unintentional carryover of text from an earlier version of this measure. We request that the header correspond directly to Rec. 19-05, paragraph 4: "To the extent possible, 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 at haul-back, giving due consideration to the safety of crew members, in a manner that causes the least harm and maximizes post-release survival."*

US: Rec. 16-11 (Sailfish): In general, we have concerns about incomplete responses relating to the implementation of Rec. 16-11. We note that the limits established in Rec. 16-11 have been exceeded in each year of the last four years (2017-2020; although 2020 catches are still incomplete) for the western Atlantic and in 2017 and 2019 for the eastern Atlantic, which should trigger a review of this measure by the Commission according to paragraph 1a of Rec. 16-11. While the Commission has been dealing with the challenges of the pandemic and other pressing business, we would like to see the implementation of Rec. 16-11 reviewed by the Compliance Committee, as this could help to inform any future consideration of necessary revisions to Rec. 16-11.

Morocco submitted on 11 November 2021, its responses to the US comments on **Annex 1 to COC_315/2021**, in particular points 19-05 (16 & 16), 16-11 (2) and 16-11 (3), as presented in the attached table.

Turkey provided on 11 November 2021, the following responses:

Turkey's explanations relating to submission of Billfish Check Sheet in accordance with the requirements of Rec. 18-05 and reporting under Rec. 19-05 and Rec.16-11 are given below:

A) Submission of Billfish Check Sheet (Rec. 18-05)

In relation to conservation and management measures regarding billfish caught in the ICCAT Convention area; Turkey has no industrial or non-industrial fisheries that interact with billfish, blue marlin or white marlin/roundscale spearfish. Turkey notified the issue to Billfish Species Group on the date of 27/08/2019 to get an exemption for the requirement of submission of the check sheet for these species. Correspondingly, Billfish Check Sheet / M:BIL01 has been reported as NOT APPLICABLE since 2019.

Notwithstanding, upon Secretariat's request on the subject, an updated Billfish Check Sheet was submitted on 29/09/2021.

Turkey's request for an exemption from this reporting obligation that was brought to the agenda in the SCRS in August 2019, is still pending and a clarification/instructions from the relevant subsidiary body are needed on how we should proceed in fulfilling the check sheet in each year.

B) Data Collection and Reporting under Rec. 19-05 under Rec. 16-11

Blue marlin (Rec. 19-05)

Makaira nigricans is not an endemic or native species in surrounding waters of Turkey. The species has not been reported so far by any Turkish fishing operators, neither as a targeted catch nor as bycatch, and it has no known interaction with ICCAT fisheries carried out by Turkish operators. The relevant provisions of Rec.19-05 will be transposed into the domestic law in case an updated information is obtained from the scientific bodies / observer programmes that reports an interaction with fisheries and emergence of blue marlins within Turkey's fishing zones.

White marlin (Rec. 19-05)

Tetrapturus albidus is not an endemic or native species in surrounding waters of Turkey. The species has not been reported so far by any Turkish fishing operators, neither as a targeted catch nor as bycatch, and it has no known interaction with ICCAT fisheries carried out by Turkish operators. The relevant provisions of Rec. 19-05 will be transposed into the domestic law in case an updated information is obtained from the scientific bodies / observer programmes that reports an interaction with fisheries and emergence of white marlins within Turkey's fishing zones.

Roundscale spearfish (Rec. 19-05)

Tetrapturus georgii is not an endemic or native species in surrounding waters of Turkey. The species has not been reported so far by any Turkish fishing operators, neither as a targeted catch nor as by-catch, and it has no known interaction with ICCAT fisheries carried out by Turkish operators. The relevant provisions of Rec.19-05 will be transposed into the domestic law in case an updated information is obtained from the scientific bodies/observer programmes that reports an interaction with fisheries and emergence of roundscale spearfish within Turkey's fishing zones.

Atlantic sailfish (Rec. 16-11)

Istiophorus albicans has no known / reported interaction with ICCAT fisheries that are being carried out by Turkish operators. The relevant provisions of Rec. 16-11 will be transposed into the domestic law in case an updated information is obtained from the scientific bodies / observer programmes that reports an interaction with fisheries of Atlantic sailfish within Turkey's fishing zones.

N ^o	CPC	Group	Received?	Within deadline?	19-05 (16 & 16)	16-11 (2)	16-11 (3)
					<p>Does your CPC have non-industrial fisheries that interact with blue marlin or white marlin/spearfish? "CPCs with non-industrial fisheries shall provide information about their data collection programs."</p>	<p>To collect data on catches of sailfish, including live and dead discards, and report these data annually as part of their Task 1 and 2 data submission to support the stock assessment process. Has your CPC enhanced its data collection efforts as required?</p>	<p>CPCs shall describe their data collection programmes and steps taken to implement this Recommendation. Has your CPC described its data collection programmes?</p>
32	MOROCCO	A	2021	Yes	<p>N/A & N/A</p> <p>Morocco has closed its blue marlin / white marlin / roundscale spearfish fisheries for a duration of 5 years.</p> <p>Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the onboard scientific observer programme for lonliners was suspended in 2020 for reasons of health security and health restrictions related to the pandemic. However, given the improvement in the epidemiological situation in Morocco, the programme was resumed in 2021. The available data including dead and live discards will be reported to the ICCAT Secretariat when the S11 data related to scientific alternative have been reviewed by the SCRS and validated by the Commission.</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>Sailfish are not caught in Morocco.</p> <p>Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the onboard scientific observer programme for lonliners was suspended in 2020 for reasons of health security and health restrictions related to the pandemic. However, given the improvement in the epidemiological situation in Morocco, the programme was resumed in 2021. The available data including dead and live discard will be reported to the ICCAT Secretariat when the S11 data related to scientific alternative have been reviewed by the SCRS and validated by the Commission.</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>Sailfish are not caught in Morocco.</p> <p>Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the onboard scientific observer programme for lonliners was suspended in 2020 for reasons of health security and health restrictions related to the pandemic. However, given the improvement in the epidemiological situation in Morocco, the programme was resumed in 2021. The available data including dead and live discard will be reported to the ICCAT Secretariat when the S11 data related to scientific alternative have been reviewed by the SCRS and validated by the Commission.</p>