



Sri Lankan Longline FIP Bulletin No.1

In April 2017 a new fishery improvement project (FIP) for Sri Lanka's longline fishery was launched at the Seafood Expo Global in Brussels (Belgium) by the President of the Seafood Exporters' Association of Sri Lanka (SEASL) Prabhath Subasinghe. In May the SEASL signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development (MFARD), the Honourable Mahinda Amaraweera MP (see right), to improve the biological and ecological status of Sri Lanka's longline fishery. The MoU also commits the parties to implement fishery specific management measures that will maintain the status of the fishery at a level consistent with a sustainably managed fishery. In July peLagikos pvt ltd was appointed to administer and manage, design, plan, monitor and evaluate the new FIP. The progress made by the FIP to improve the Sri Lankan longline fishery since July, is presented in this the first FIP bulletin.



About the new FIP



The new FIP is a collaboration between the government's regulatory authorities, Sri Lanka's leading seafood manufacturers, boat owners' associations, skippers and their crew (*i.e.* the decision making 'members' of the FIP). The first Steering Committee was convened by M.W.W.R. Adikari (Secretary, MFARD) at the end of July. 'Focal points' (see below) were appointed by each member of the new FIP. The scope of the new FIP was discussed and agreed (see overleaf) in the second Steering Committee meeting held in October. In this meeting the immediate opportunities (*including certification*) and challenges that need to be overcome to further

improve Sri Lanka's longline fishery were presented and discussed.

Chairperson W.M.M.R Adikari, Secretary, MFARD

MFARD Sepalika Wickramasinghe, Acting Director, Quality Control Division

DFAR H. L. N. Sandamali Herath, Assistant Director, Fishery Management Division

NARA Dr. Sisira Haputhantri, Head, Marine Biological Resource Management Division

CFHC Percy Samarasinghe, General Manager, Ceylon Fisheries Harbour Corporation

CFC P. U. K. Botheju, Ceylon Fisheries Corporation

SLEDB Malani Baddegamage, Director Export Agriculture, Sri Lanka Export Development Board

SEASL President, Secretary and one other member company

Boat Owners All Island Multiday Boat Owners' Association *to be confirmed*
Skippers *to be confirmed*

Scope of the new FIP

In 2016, Sri Lankan vessels harvested 77,029.24 metric tonnes of tuna (86%) and billfish (14%) from Sri Lanka's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and international waters, using gillnets, longlines, ring nets, handlines and trolling lines (NARA, 2017). Key species included skipjack, yellowfin, bigeye and albacore tuna, together with indo-pacific sailfish, swordfish and black, blue and striped marlin. The scope of the new FIP was determined based on the consideration of three factors. (1) The export demand for fresh and frozen tuna and billfish products. (2) The types of vessels and gears supplying tuna and billfish for export. (3) The current and short term status of key export species.

Sri Lanka's fresh and frozen seafood export industry is driven by demand for yellowfin tuna products. Demand for bigeye, indo-pacific sailfish, swordfish and marlin products is also important to the industry.

Artisanal (<15m) and semi-industrial (<24 m) multiday fishing boats, deploying short (500 – 1,500 hooks) longlines are the main source of tuna and billfish for Sri Lankan exporters. 498 longline multiday boats were registered to fish within and beyond Sri Lanka's EEZ in 2017. 80% of these vessels were registered under the District Fisheries Offices in Chilaw (Thodduwawa and Wennappuwa) and Negombo. A further 300 or so longline multiday boats were registered for the EEZ only.

IOTC stock assessments (see left) indicate that bigeye tuna and swordfish stocks are currently fished at a level consistent with a sustainably managed fishery (Green). The yellowfin tuna stock is judged to be overfished and subject to overfishing (Red). However, interim reference points and harvest control rules are in place to ensure that the stock recovers within the next three years.

Sailfish and blue marlin stocks are overfished or subject to overfishing (Orange). Black and striped marlin stocks are judged to be overfished and subject to overfishing (Red). The absence of reference points for these species means it is unlikely stocks will recover within the next three years.

Target Species?	Stock Status 2017
	RED (Reference Points)
	GREEN (Reference Points)
	GREEN (Reference Points)
	Orange (No Reference Points)
	Orange (No Reference Points)
	RED (No Reference Points)
	RED (No Reference Points)



Based on the FIP's internal assessment, members of the FIP agreed the scope of the new Sri Lanka FIP to be

Geographic Sri Lanka's Exclusive Economic Zone & International Waters in the Indian Ocean

Vessel Type Sri Lankan multiday fishing boats (left) registered to fish in the EEZ or High Seas

Gear Type Short longline (500 – 1,500 hooks)

Target Species Yellowfin Tuna, Bigeye Tuna, Swordfish

Improving the biological status of each fishery



The DFAR is monitoring Sri Lanka's catch of yellowfin tuna in 2017, in compliance with the IOTC's [Resolution 17/01](#) - *On an interim plan for rebuilding the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock in the IOTC area of competence*. The resolution applies to all commercial fishing vessels targeting tuna and tuna like species within the IOTC area of competence and any traditional fishing vessels, if they fish outside the EEZ of their flag State. The IOTC has directed all parties to reduce their catch of yellowfin tuna in 2017 as follows - purse seine fisheries (> 5,000 MT) by 15% of 2014 catch levels; gillnet fisheries above 2,000 MT and longline fisheries (> 5,000 MT) by 10% of 2014 catch levels and other gears (>5,000 MT) by 5% of 2014 catch levels. The DFAR is confident that Sri Lanka will comply with the IOTC's directive to improve the biological status of the yellowfin stock in 2017.



On the weight-of-evidence available in 2016, the IOTC [report](#) determined that the bigeye stock is not overfished and is not subject to overfishing. The IOTC's management advice concluded that *"the stock status determination did not qualitatively change in 2016, but is somewhat less optimistic than in 2013. If catch remains below the estimated MSY levels estimated for the current mix of fisheries, then immediate management measures are not required"*.



On the weight-of-evidence available in 2016, the IOTC [report](#) determined that the swordfish stock is not overfished and is not subject to overfishing. The IOTC's management advice concluded that *"most recent catch (41,760 t in 2015) is 2,360 t above the MSY level (39,400 t). Hence catches in 2017 should be reduced to less than MSY (39,400 t). As the updated stock assessment is scheduled in 2017, more concrete advice after 2018 should be developed next year"*.

Improving the ecological status of the longline fishery

Sri Lankan multiday boats use gillnets, longlines, ring nets, handlines and trolling lines to harvest yellowfin, bigeye and swordfish within and beyond Sri Lanka's EEZ. Each gear type has a different ecological impact on non-target species. The gear's impact on non-target species is likely to be different within and beyond Sri Lanka's EEZ. The DFAR's Fishery Management Division and High Seas Fishing Unit began work to disaggregate the catch data for the *'longline fishery only'* during the reporting period, for catches made within and beyond the EEZ. A draft report on the ecological impact of Sri Lanka's longline fishery on non-target species will be published by the DFAR early next year.

Improving the management of the longline fishery



The MFARD has voluntarily undertaken to deploy Scientific Observers on all fishing trips made by the four commercial fishing vessels (>24m LoA) currently registered in Sri Lanka and to introduce e-monitoring on semi-industrial and artisanal longline fishing vessels (<24m). To assist the DFAR to achieve this objective, the FIP co-financed an orientation programme for new Scientific Observers (in November, see right) and a three day technical training programme conducted by IOTC staff, which included an introduction to the IOTC's e-reporting programme. A two week technical observer training programme financed by FAO UN is planned for January

next year, conducted by CAP Marine. Members of the FIP attended IOTC fishery management [workshops](#) in Spain (September) and the Seychelles (October, November & December) during the reporting period.

Social responsibility and improving economic equity

Members of the new Sri Lankan longline FIP are committed to complying with the highest international standards for social responsibility throughout supply chains for Sri Lankan tuna and swordfish products. No child labour, no migrant labour, no slave or forced labour is or will be used to harvest, supply or manufacture Sri Lankan tuna and swordfish products; now or in the future. Ensuring the highest standards of social responsibility and improving economic equity throughout supply chains are essential components of sustainably managing small scale fisheries, such as Sri Lanka's longline fishery. If the economic benefits of sustainably sourced seafood products are not shared equitably with fishing communities, where is the incentive for hundreds of small boat owners and thousands of fishermen to sustainably exploit these resources?

In October the Ceylon Fisheries Harbour Corporation (CFHC) organised a meeting at Dikowita Fishery Harbour with the President and members of the All Island Multiday Boat Owners' Association to discuss the new FIP. This discussion led to meetings with boat owners' association in Wennappuwa (see right), Negombo and Thoduwawa; the main centres for multiday longline fishing in Sri Lanka. Representatives of national and local multiday boat owners' and skippers' associations will become members of the new FIP next year.



SLL FIP / Fishery Status Report

Every six months the FIP will conduct an internal performance evaluation of the FIP and each longline fishery against international protocols for FIPs / sustainably sourced seafood. The FIP's first internal performance evaluation suggests that



the FIP is already at **SFP Stage 4 (Delivering Impacts) / Stage 5 (Delivering Outcomes)**, *national fishery policies have changed and efforts are being made to increase the yellowfin tuna stock;*



*The yellowfin fishery could score **0.64** against the MSC's Fishery Standard (Target ≥ 0.60)
The bigeye fishery could score **0.65** against the MSC's Fishery Standard (Target ≥ 0.60)
The swordfish fishery could score **0.65** against the MSC's Fishery Standard (Target ≥ 0.60)*



*The yellowfin fishery could score **1.40** against the SW Criteria of Fisheries (Target ≥ 2.20)
The bigeye fishery could score **2.10** against the SW Criteria of Fisheries (Target ≥ 2.20)
The swordfish fishery could score **2.10** against the SW Criteria of Fisheries (Target ≥ 2.20)*

In December the SEASL signed a contract with a Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) approved Certified Assessment Body (CAB) to conduct an independent assessment of Sri Lanka's longline yellowfin, bigeye and swordfish fisheries against the MSC Fishery Standard. The MSC Pre Assessment is co-financed by **New England Seafood International Ltd.** The results of the assessment are expected by the end of January 2018.

