



Sri Lankan Longline FIP Bulletin No. 6

The new Sri Lankan longline fishery improvement project (FIP) is an initiative of the Seafood Exporters' Association of Sri Lanka (SEASL). The FIP is a tripartite collaboration by the SEASL with government authorities responsible for the regulation and management of the fishery and export promotion and the longline boat owners' associations engaged in harvesting **yellowfin** and **bigeye tuna** and **swordfish**. The FIP's goal is to ensure that these fisheries can continue indefinitely at a level that maintains the biological health & abundance of yellowfin and bigeye tuna and swordfish stocks and the diversity, structure and function of the habitats and ecosystem upon which these fisheries depend. The FIP aims to minimize any adverse effects the fishery may cause by means of a management system implemented in conformity with national and international laws. Details of actions recently implemented by the members of the new longline FIP to improve the fishery are described in the 6th edition of the Sri Lankan Longline FIP Bulletin.

The following Sri Lankan seafood manufacturers, organisations, agencies are members of the longline FIP

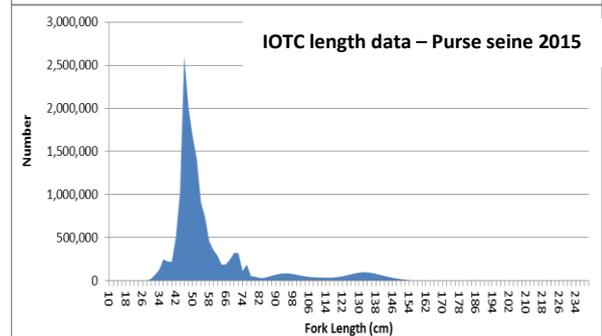
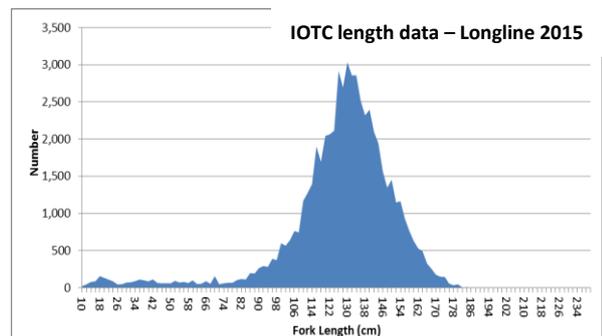


Improvements to the biological status of the fisheries

Conventional stock assessment methods require a lot of scientific knowledge and a large quantity of catch and effort data to assess the status of a simple – one country, one vessel type, one gear type - fishery. The Indian Ocean (IO) yellowfin tuna (YFT) fishery is not a simple fishery; it is an aggregation of many different fisheries. The complexity, uncertainty and data deficiency inherent in the 'IO YFT fishery' means it is difficult to predict the impact of fishing on the stock.

In response to this uncertainty, researchers at pelagikos pvt ltd applied length-based assessment methods to Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) length frequency data for YFT between 1955 and 2015. Five different fishing methods (*i.e.* pole and line, handline, longline, gillnet and purse seine) have been assessed. The length frequency data for YFT caught using longline (*right top*) most closely corresponds to length-based target reference points for a sustainable fishery. The length frequencies of YFT caught using pole and line and purse seine (*right middle*) generated the least favourable results for all five assessment methods.

Extrapolating from these results, the preliminary findings suggest that only 12% (47,147 mt) of YFT harvested in 2015 (407,573 mt) were caught at Optimum Size (*bottom right 60 kg*). 52% of the catch (207,170 mt) in 2015 was immature (*bottom right 5 kg*). The IO YFT catch reported in 2015 was numerically similar to the maximum sustainable yield (422,000 MT) but was unlikely to be sustainable, due to the large quantities of immature YFT present in the catch.



Improvements to the ecological status of the fisheries

The IOTC adopted Resolution (11/04) on a Regional Observer Scheme in 2011. The Resolution sets out the minimum recording requirements for fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species in the IOTC's area of competence. The Government of Sri Lanka initiated an Observer Scheme in compliance with Resolution 11/04 in 2013. However, the small size of Sri Lankan multi-day fishing vessels was quickly highlighted by Independent Observers as a safety concern.



98.7% of the 1,838 multi-day fishing vessels currently registered to fish in the IOTC's area of competence are less than 24 m length overall. Sri Lanka's large fleet of small-scale vessels represents 34% of the total number of vessels registered to fish in the IOTC's area of competence (5,430). The average length of IOTC registered Sri Lankan vessels is 12.6 m (41.34 ft.). The majority of Sri Lankan longline vessels are simply too small and inadequately equipped to safely deploy IO. Therefore an alternative approach is necessary to enable Sri Lanka to *collect verified fisheries information and catch data related to the fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species*, in compliance with IOTC Resolution 11/04.

In 2018 the FIP launched an action to investigate whether skippers operating less than 24 m longline multi-day fishing vessels could be trained to collect independently verifiable fisheries information and data using a simple measuring board and a GPS enabled digital camera (see right). The action was co-financed by **SEA PACT**, a group of leading North American seafood companies dedicated to driving stewardship and continuous improvement of social, economic, and environmental responsibility throughout the global seafood supply chain. The success of the action suggested that skippers could be trained as Local Observers (LO), which would enable Sri Lanka to *collect verified fisheries information and catch data related to the fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species*, in accordance with IOTC reporting requirements. In December 2019 the FIP commenced the second LO programme in collaboration with 18 multi-day boat owners and skippers, the Information Communication and Technology Division of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR) and District Fisheries Offices in Negombo and Chilaw. The second deployment of LO was co-financed by **New England Seafood International Pvt Ltd** and the **Corporate Members** of the SEASL.

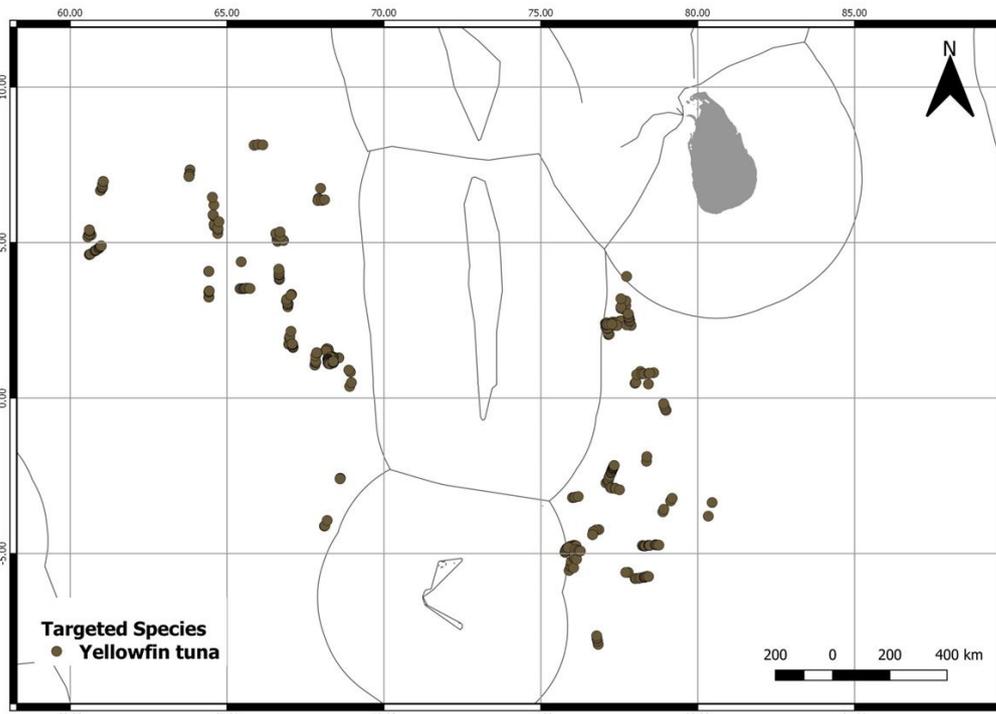
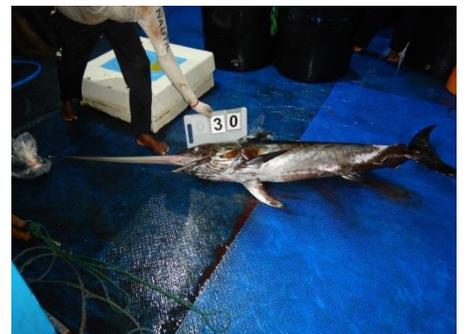


The LO programme was designed and implemented by pelagikos pvt ltd

Eighteen (18) skippers operating less than 24 m longline multi-day fishing vessels were trained by pelagikos to collect IOTC fisheries information and data using a new LO information and data collection protocol, between December 2019 and March 2020. Seventeen (17) of the LOs returned with independently verifiable digital (see right and below) for one or more longline sets. The new LO protocol enabled the FIP to collect more IOTC fisheries information and data (40 variables) compared to first deployment of LOs (36 variables).

98% of the IOTC's minimum recording requirements for fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species in the IOTC's area of competence were successfully collected from 55 sets over a period of five months. The new LO protocol enabled the FIP to collect 96% of the trip information, 91% of the gear information, 91% of the set information, 114% of the catch data and 97% of the scientific data required by the IOTC. The cost of collecting IOTC fisheries information and data using the LO protocol from 17 trips was US\$ 2,750 / US\$ 50 per set. The results of the most recent deployment of LOs further demonstrated the effectiveness of the LO information and data collection protocol to collect independently *verifiable catch and other scientific data related to fisheries* from Sri Lanka's large fleet of small-scale longline fishing vessels, which fish outside Sri Lanka's EEZ.

Information and data about endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species (*e.g.* oceanic whitetip shark and turtles *bottom right*) accidentally caught by longline fishing vessels, is also collected and analysed using the LO protocol. Over past 18 months the FIP has collected information and data from 88 longline sets, using the LO protocol. The information and data suggest that Sri Lanka's longline fisheries for yellowfin and bigeye tuna and swordfish have a reasonable chance to moving from **FAIL** to a **PASS with conditions** against the Marine Stewardship Council's Principle Indicators (PI) PI 2.3.1 and PI 2.3.2 in early 2021. This outcome is contingent upon the FIP continuing to collect fisheries information and data about the longline catch, using the new LO protocol.



Improvements to the management of the fisheries

Officers from the DFAR attended the IOTC's Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS) Working Group Meeting in Nairobi on the 10th February 2020. The status of membership to the CDS Working Group; presentations by ICCAT, CCSBT and WWF; possible specification of IOTC CDS; presentations of preferred CDS options from CDS studies; species coverage, medium of IOTC CDS and relationship with EU IUU regulations (for avoidance of duplication) were discussed. On the 12th February, DFAR officers attended the 3rd Meeting of the IOTC Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures meeting, also in Nairobi. In the meeting participants discussed whether to provide technical advice to the Compliance Committee related to the possible infraction on VMS units with switches and whether or not Observers should continue to highlight those possible infractions for the VMS; the implementation of the WPICMM work plan; conducted a review of the assessment criteria for the 2020 CPCS Compliance Report; discussed the draft guidelines on how IOTC might operationalize the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear and the proposal to amend Appendix V of the IOTC Rules of Procedure.

Status Update – Marine Stewardship Council and Fisheryprogress

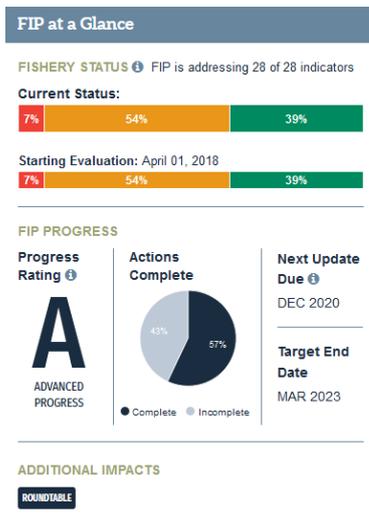
Marine Stewardship Council's (MSC) Fishery Standard

| Performance Indicators | Overall | ≥80 | 60-79 | <60 |
|------------------------|---------|-----|-------|-----|
| Yellowfin Tuna | 0.68 | 12 | 14 | 02 |
| Bigeye Tuna | 0.69 | 12 | 13 | 02 |
| Swordfish | 0.69 | 12 | 13 | 02 |

A pre-assessment (PA) of Sri Lanka's longline fisheries for yellowfin and bigeye tuna and swordfish was conducted by MSC approved consultants at CapMarine (Pty) Ltd in 2018. The results suggested the three fisheries were operating at a level consistent with a **PASS with**

conditions of MSC's Fishery Standard (i.e. SG > 0.60). However all three fisheries **FAILED** the PA because two PIs scored <0.60. The MSC approved PA was co-financed by **New England Seafood International Pvt Ltd**.

Fisheryprogress.org



The progress made by the FIP to improve the biological and ecological status and the management of Sri Lanka's longline fisheries for yellowfin and bigeye tuna and swordfish was uploaded to the fisheryprogress.org web site at the end of June. The FIP's Progress Rating is A (Advanced Progress). 57% of the FIP's Actions have been completed. The next update is due in December. The target end date for the FIP to reach a level equivalent to an **unconditional PASS** of the MSC Fishery Standard is March 2023. The following new actions are necessary to achieve the FIP's target

- 1) Continue to collect IOTC fisheries information and data using the Local Observer protocol with LOs on the west coast (Dikowitta and Negombo)
- 2) Introduce and implement the Local Observer protocol with DFAR, boat owners and skippers on the south coast (Matara)
- 3) Develop and introduce a procedure that will ensure the successful live release of ETP species accidentally caught in the longline fishery
- 4) Research and develop a national policy to enable Sri Lanka to respond to IOTC's Harvest Control Strategy, Rules & Tools for yellowfin and bigeye tuna and swordfish fisheries
- 5) Improve the collection and analysis of IOTC fisheries information and data by the National (Scientific) Observer Programme on more than 24 m vessels
- 6) Review and update the NPOA IUU Fishing 2018 – 2022

Seven of Sri Lanka's leading seafood manufacturers are currently Corporate Members of the longline FIP **Ceylon Fresh Seafood Pvt Ltd, Global Seafood Pvt Ltd, Jay Seafood Processing Pvt Ltd, John Seafood Pvt Ltd, Lihini Seafood Pvt Ltd, North West Fisheries Pvt Ltd and Tropic Sri Lanka Pvt Ltd**

Soft copies of this and previous editions of the Sri Lanka Longline FIP Bulletin are available in English and Sinhala. To obtain copies of the bulletin or more details about the all new Sri Lanka longline FIP please email steve@pelaqikos.lk