

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

75TH MEETING

CANCUN (MEXICO)
25-29 JUNE 2007

RESOLUTION C-07-03

**RESOLUTION TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF TUNA FISHING VESSELS
ON SEA TURTLES**

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC):

Considering the adverse effects of fishing for tunas and tuna-like species on the populations of sea turtles in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) through capture and mortality;

Recalling and reaffirming the *Resolutions on Bycatch* adopted at the 66th, 68th, 69th, 72nd, 73rd and 74th Meetings of the Commission in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005, and 2006 respectively;

Recalling and reaffirming the *Resolution on a three-year program to mitigate the impact of tuna fishing on sea turtles* adopted at the 72nd Meeting of the Commission in 2004 expires in 2007;

Recognizing that the Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the Working Group on Bycatch include longline fisheries data that identify the incidental capture of thousands of sea turtles and their subsequent high mortality in the EPO;

Recognizing that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) adopted *Guidelines to reduce sea turtle mortality in fishing operations* at its Twenty-sixth Session of the Committee on Fisheries, held in March 2005, and recommended their implementation by regional fisheries bodies and management organizations;

Noting that recent international scientific studies on circle hooks show a statistically significant decrease in sea turtle bycatch when such hooks are used in shallow set pelagic longline fishing, but that studies and trials continue in different geographic areas;

Further noting that scientific studies indicate that, with the use of large circle hooks, the hooking location can lead to a decrease in the post-release mortality of incidentally caught sea turtles; and

Agreeing that additional measures should be undertaken to reduce sea turtle bycatch and mortality in tuna fisheries;

Has agreed as follows:

ACTIONS BY GOVERNMENTS

Contracting Parties, cooperating non-Parties, fishing entities and regional economic integration organizations (collectively "CPCs") shall:

1. Implement the FAO Guidelines to reduce the bycatch, injury, and mortality of sea turtles in fishing operations and to ensure the safe handling of all captured sea turtles, in order to improve their survival.
2. Beginning in 2008, report to the IATTC annually by 30 June on the progress of implementation of the FAO Guidelines, including information collected on interactions with sea turtles in fisheries managed under the Convention.
3. Enhance the implementation of their respective sea turtle bycatch, injury, and mortality reduction

measures that are already in place (using best scientific information) and collaborate with other CPCs in the exchange of information in this area.

4. Implement observer programs for fisheries under the purview of the Commission that may have impacts on sea turtles and are not currently being observed, taking into consideration economic and practical feasibility.
5. Require fishermen on vessels targeting species covered by the Convention to bring aboard, if practicable, any comatose or inactive hard-shell sea turtle as soon as possible and foster recovery, including resuscitation, before returning it to the water.
6. CPCs with purse seine vessels fishing for target species covered by the Convention in the EPO shall:
 - a. Avoid encirclement of sea turtles to the extent practicable.
 - b. Take actions necessary to monitor Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) for the entanglement of sea turtles, and provide the monitoring results to the Commission as part of the requirement of paragraph 2.
 - c. Require fishermen to release all sea turtles observed entangled in FADs.
 - d. Conduct research and development of modified FAD designs to reduce sea turtle entanglement. Take measures to encourage the use of designs found to be successful at such reduction.
7. CPCs with longline vessels fishing for target species covered by the Convention in the EPO shall:
 - a. Require fishermen to carry and, when sea turtle interactions occur, employ the necessary equipment (e.g. de-hookers, line cutters, and scoop nets) for the prompt release of incidentally-caught sea turtles.
 - b. Continue to improve techniques to further reduce sea turtle bycatch.
 - c. Expediently undertake fishing trials to determine the feasibility and effectiveness of appropriate combinations of circle hooks and bait, depth, gear specifications, fishing practices, and other measures in reducing the bycatch, injury, and mortality of sea turtles, assess their effects on the catch of target and other bycatch species, and provide results to the IATTC.
 - d. At future meetings of the Commission, consider measures related to the use of circle hooks and other gear modifications, taking into account the results of research and fishing trials.

ACTIONS BY IATTC STAFF

8. The Commission staff shall review information submitted as part of paragraph 2 of this Resolution, results of research and fishing trials provided by CPCs (including the development of modified FADs and effectiveness of circle hook/bait combinations), and any new information available regarding proven techniques to reduce sea turtle bycatch, injury and mortality in fisheries targeting tuna and tuna-like species. Results of this review shall be made available to all CPCs and shall be presented at the next meeting of the IATTC Bycatch Working Group, with the view toward strengthening these resolutions as necessary.