
Ecology Action Centre Opening Statement for Panel 1

According to the 2015 stock assessment, the Atlantic bigeye stock is both overfished and experiencing overfishing. Bigeye fisheries are also suffering, with maximum sustainable yield steadily decreasing and the adult biomass required to produce maximum sustainable yield increasing. According to the SCRS, the prolific use of fish aggregating devices (FADs) that promote the removal of juvenile bigeye is a significant factor in driving these negative changes to both the stock and to the fisheries that target it.

Panel 1 should develop and move to implement a recovery plan for the Atlantic bigeye stock at this 24th meeting. In order to be effective, a bigeye recovery plan should, at minimum, include:

- A reduction in the bigeye total allowable catch (TAC) to 50,000 tonnes, the largest TAC that would provide a 60% likelihood of ending overfishing within a year and a 75% likelihood of recovering the stock by 2028;
- An end to rollover of underages in bigeye catch from year to year;
- The inclusion of all minor harvesters within the allocation key to ensure that the true catch does not exceed the TAC.

The above points are essential to give the bigeye stock a chance to recover in the near future, but they must be coupled with changes to the current management system in order to address the unsustainable removal of juvenile bigeye associated with FADs. Panel 1 should develop a set of recommended measures to reduce the mortality of small bigeye tuna from FADs this year.