

**DRAFT RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT TO ESTABLISH THE FOUNDATION FOR REBUILDING
PROGRAMS FOR BLUE MARLIN AND WHITE MARLIN/SPEARFISH**

Proposal submitted by United States

RECALLING the 2000 blue marlin stock assessment, which found that the stock was below B_{MSY} (overfished) and that fishing mortality was above F_{MSY} (overfishing occurring);

CONSIDERING that subsequent assessments by the SCRS, most recently in 2011 and 2018, have confirmed with greater certainty that the blue marlin stock remains in this state;

UNDERSTANDING that the 2018 assessment confirms the advice provided in 2011 that catches of 2,000 t would have allowed the stock to increase in size, but catches have generally exceeded 2,000 t since 2012;

ACKNOWLEDGING that, since the stock has not rebuilt as expected, the SCRS recommends that the Commission find ways to ensure that the catches remain within established limits;

FURTHER RECALLING the Recommendation by ICCAT on the Principles of Decision Making for ICCAT Conservation and Management Measures [Rec. 11-13], which specifies that for stocks that are overfished and subject to overfishing (i.e., stocks in the red quadrant of the Kobe plot), the Commission shall immediately adopt management measures, taking into account, *inter alia*, the biology of the stock and SCRS advice, designed to result in a high probability of ending overfishing in as short a period as possible, as well as a plan to rebuild these stocks, taking into account, *inter alia*, the biology of the stock and SCRS advice;

RECOGNIZING that the Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish a Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin Populations [Rec. 00-13] and subsequent recommendations, including the Recommendation by ICCAT to Further Strengthen the Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin Stocks [Rec. 15-05], were described by the Commission as steps toward the establishment of formal rebuilding programs for these stocks;

FURTHER UNDERSTANDING that the SCRS advised that, while catches of 2,000 t will stop overfishing of blue marlin in 2019 with a 60% probability, catches need to be reduced to 1,750 t or less to provide at least a 50% chance of rebuilding by 2028;

AWARE OF the need to end overfishing of blue marlin by 2019 with a greater than 50% probability;

SEEKING, moreover, to establish the foundation for formal, comprehensive rebuilding programs for blue marlin and white marlin/spearfish that account for both landings and dead discards in 2019;

ALSO SEEKING to implement measures without delay that will contribute to the conservation of blue marlin and white marlin/spearfish, including by decreasing mortality of hooked fish and helping to ensure landings limits will not be exceeded.

EMPHASIZING in that regard that the SCRS in 2017 advised the Commission to consider the use of circle hooks, as they reduce deep hooking and, therefore, increase the at-haulback and post-release survival of marlins in many fisheries while not negatively affecting catch rates of most target species;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the SCRS has concluded that current data limitations impair its ability to conduct any analysis of the effectiveness of Rec. 15-05;

HIGHLIGHTING the second phase of the Comprehensive Study of Strategic Investments Related to Artisanal Fisheries Data Collection in ICCAT Fisheries and the need for missing data from these fisheries;

EMPHASIZING the importance of data collected in accordance with the Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish Minimum Standards for Fishing Vessel Scientific Observer Programs [Rec. 16-14], given that marlins are often not retained;

UNDERSCORING the existing obligations of Contracting Parties, non-Contracting Parties, Entities and Fishing Entities (CPCs) to require the collection of discard data in their domestic observer and logbook programs under the *Recommendation by ICCAT on Information Collection and Harmonization of Data on By-catch and Discards in ICCAT Fisheries* [Rec. 11-10] and to report these discards as part of their Task I data submission;

SUPPORTIVE OF SCRS plans to improve data collection and reporting, including through the development of an inventory of sport fishing activities, inventories of non-industrial data reporting programs in West Africa and the Caribbean Sea, and collaboration with the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC);

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that the 2012 stock assessment for white marlin/spearfish found that with catches of 400 t the stock was very unlikely to rebuild by 2022, and that the SCRS plans to conduct another stock assessment for white marlin/spearfish in 2019;

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE
CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. The Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities, or Fishing Entities (hereinafter referred to as CPCs), shall implement measures for blue marlin and white marlin/spearfish to end overfishing and establish the foundation for rebuilding these species to their respective B_{MSY} levels, as follows:

Annual Limits and Related Provisions

2. Annual limits of ~~[2,000 t]~~~~[1,750 t]~~ for blue marlin and 400 t for white marlin/spearfish are implemented for 2019.

These landings limits shall be implemented as follows:

<i>Blue Marlin</i>	<i>Landings Limit (t)</i>
Brazil	[190] [166] [166]
China, P.R.	[45] [39] [45]
Chinese Taipei	[150] [131] [131]
Côte d'Ivoire	[150] [131] [131]
European Union	[480] [419] [419]
Ghana	[250] [218] [218]
Japan	[390] [340] [340]
Korea Rep.	[35] [30] [35]
Mexico	[70] [61] [61]
S. Tomé & Príncipe	[45] [39] [45]
Senegal	[60] [52] [52]
Trinidad and Tobago	[20] [17] [20]
Venezuela	[100] [87] [87]
TOTAL	[1,985] [1,730] [1,750]

<i>White Marlin/Spearfish</i>	<i>Landings Limit (t)</i>
Barbados	10
Brazil	50
Canada	10
China, P.R.	10
Chinese Taipei	50
European Union	50
Côte d'Ivoire	10
Japan	35
Korea Rep.	20
Mexico	25
S. Tomé & Príncipe	20
Trinidad and Tobago	15
Venezuela	50
TOTAL	355

The United States shall limit its landings to 250 recreationally caught Atlantic blue marlin and white marlin/spearfish combined on an annual basis. All other CPCs shall limit their landings to a maximum of [10] [8.8] [10] t of Atlantic blue marlin and 2 t of white marlin/spearfish combined.

3. Any excess of the annual landings limits established in Paragraph 3 shall be deducted from the respective landings limits during or before the adjustment year, in the following way:

<i>Catch Year</i>	<i>Adjustment Year</i>
2017	2019
2018	2020
2019	2021

Live Release Requirement and Retention Allowances

4. CPCs shall require pelagic longline vessels and purse seine vessels flying their flag to promptly release blue marlin and white marlin/spearfish that are alive at haul back in a manner that, to the extent possible, causes the least harm and that maximizes their survival, while giving due consideration to the safety of crew members.
5. CPCs shall prohibit the export of any part or whole carcass of blue marlin or white marlin/spearfish that is retained consistent with paragraph 4.
6. Blue marlin and white marlin/spearfish that are caught by developing coastal CPCs [or by small scale fishing vessels of LOA equal to or smaller than 12m] for local consumption are exempted from paragraph 4, provided these CPCs (a) submit Task I and Task II data according to the reporting procedures established by the SCRS and (b) take necessary measures to ensure that blue marlin and white marlin/spearfish do not enter international trade and notify the Commission of such measures in their Annual Report. For CPCs that prohibit dead discards, the landings of blue marlin and white marlin/spearfish that are dead at haul back and that are not sold or entered into commerce shall not count against the limits established in paragraph 1, on the condition that such prohibition be clearly explained in their Annual Report.

7. For recreational and sport fisheries:

- a. CPCs shall take appropriate measures to ensure that any released fish are released in a manner that causes the least harm.
- b. CPCs shall adopt domestic regulations that establish minimum sizes for retention that meet or exceed the following lengths: 251 cm Lower Jaw-Fork Length (LJFL) for blue marlin and 168 cm LJFL for white marlin/spearfish.
- c. CPCs shall prohibit the sale, or offering for sale, of any part or whole carcass of blue marlin or white marlin/spearfish caught in recreational and sport fisheries.

Gear Provisions

8. To reduce marlin/spearfish mortality at the vessel and post-release, CPCs shall encourage that vessels in their surface longline fisheries (i.e., longlines set at less than 100 m depth) use large circle hooks, which are fishing hooks originally designed and manufactured so that the point is turned perpendicularly back to the shank to form a generally circular, or oval, shape.
9. CPCs shall encourage vessels in their recreational and sport fisheries for blue marlin or white marlin/spearfish to use circle hooks, which are fishing hooks originally designed and manufactured so that the point is turned perpendicularly back to the shank to form a generally circular, or oval, shape.

Data Collection and Reporting

10. CPCs shall collect data on marlin catches, including live releases and dead discards, through logbooks and scientific observer programs as required in Rec. 11-10 and Rec. 16-14. In accordance with the established Task I and Task II data reporting deadlines, CPCs shall provide their estimates of total live and dead discards as part of their data submission. No later than 2020, CPCs shall present to the SCRS the methods used to estimate these discards and the SCRS shall determine the efficacy of the methodology used. If the methods used are found to be estimating the discard levels appropriately, the SCRS will consider a revised catch history and make a determination whether an update of the current advice as to the status of the stocks is warranted.
11. If, after conducting the review called for in paragraph 9 above, the SCRS determines that one or more workshops on methodologies to estimate dead discards is warranted, it should recommend that the Secretariat conduct or organize such workshops in coordination with the SCRS.
12. CPCs shall establish or maintain data collection programs in recreational and sport fisheries, including a minimum of 5% scientific observer coverage of blue marlin and white marlin/spearfish tournaments, to ensure that catches are reported in accordance with existing ICCAT reporting obligations.
- 12 bis. In order to implement paragraph 4, CPCs are encouraged to deploy electronic monitoring systems on their longline and purse seine vessels, and to consider an increase of the observer coverage on these vessels, in accordance with the Recommendation by ICCAT to Establish Minimum Standards for Fishing Vessel Scientific Observer Programs [Rec. 16-14]. The monitoring should include recording and reporting accurate estimates of live releases and dead discards.
13. In their Annual Reports, CPCs shall inform the Commission of steps taken to implement the provisions of this Recommendation through domestic law or regulations, including monitoring, control and surveillance measures.
- 13bis. The SCRS is requested to develop, by 2020 at the latest, a multifactorial experimental protocol, including costs and time frame, with a view to evaluate the effect of circle hooks on the incidental catches, and catch rates of protected marine species (excluding birds), as well as by-catch and target species, both in shallow and deep water longlines.

Rebuilding Programs

14. The Commission, at its 2019 Annual Meeting, shall develop new management measures for blue marlin in order to establish a rebuilding program with a high probability of rebuilding the stock to B_{MSY} consistent with the provisions of Recommendation 11-13 and, as appropriate, for white marlin/spearfish, taking into account scientific advice from the SCRS. Such management measures shall take appropriate account of dead discards.

Repeals

15. This Recommendation repeals and replaces the *Recommendation by ICCAT to Further Strengthen the Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin Populations* [Rec. 15-05] and repeals the Recommendation by ICCAT Amending Recommendation [15-05] by ICCAT to Further Strengthen the Plan to Rebuild Blue Marlin and White Marlin Stocks [Rec. 16-10].