17858

environment & tourism

Department:
Environmental Affairs and Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Reference: V1/5/5/1

MINISTER

TOTAL ALLOWABLE EFFORT (TAE) FOR THE 2008 TUNA POLE SEASON

1. PURPOSE

To request that you determine the Total Allowable Effort (TAE) for the 2008 Tuna Pole season in terms of the provisions of Section 14 of the Marine Living Resources Act, 1998 (Act No. 18 of 1998).

2. SUMMARY

It is recommended that the TAE for tuna pole is capped at the current effort of 198 vessels given the concerns regarding stock status for both albacore and yellowfin tuna. The minimum vessel length restriction of 10 m should be maintained so as to mitigate conflict with the traditional linefish sector. The fishing season for tuna pole is from 1 January to 31 December.

3. BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

3.1 For the 2007 season you determined a TAE of 200 vessels and 3 600 crew for the Tuna Pole fishery (Annexure A).

3.2 The Department considered the recommendations from the Chief Directorate: Research, Antarctica and Islands of the Branch: Marine and Coastal Management (as per Annexure B) and wishes to advise as follows:

3.2.1 The tuna pole fishery is seasonal (October - May), which traditionally targets high volume, low value albacore along the west coast of South Africa for

canning. Recent annual catches have averaged approximately 3 500 t. As there is little value adding the fishery operates normally on small profit margins.

3.2.2 Since 2003 an increasing number of Permit Holders (currently > 60 permit holders) have been targeting low volume, high value yellowfin tuna for sashimi markets. Yellowfin catches have increased from ~ 250 t in 2003 to ~ 950 t in 2006.

3.2.3 Albacore and yellowfin tuna are oceanic migratory tuna species, which are targeted by a number of fishing nations. Consequently, albacore and yellowfin tuna stock assessments and allocations are the responsibility of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs). The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) is responsible for the management of albacore and yellowfin caught in the Atlantic Ocean, whereas the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) is responsible for management of these species caught in the Indian Ocean.

3.2.4 The last full Southern Atlantic albacore stock assessment was conducted in July 2007 using an Age Structured Production Model (ASPM) and indicated that the biomass of the stock is below the biomass required to produce Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). Hence, the stock needs to be rebuilt.

3.2.5 The catch limit for southern albacore was set at 29 900 t for 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. However, a proviso was included and stated that if catches exceeded 28 800 t in any given year then the four main fishing entities (namely Chinese Taipei, South Africa, Namibia and Brazil), which currently participate in a collective sharing arrangement of 26 333.6 t, would have to review the sharing arrangement with the aim of determining country-specific quotas. As catch performance is one of the most important criteria in considering country quotas it would be important for the South African fishery to improve its catch performance to former years where catches averaged > 5 000 t.

3.2.6 Although there are no recent assessments of yellowfin stocks there are concerns by both ICCAT and IOTC regarding the status of these stocks. High fishing mortality of juvenile yellowfin has been the cause of concern in the

Atlantic Ocean, whereas in the Indian Ocean catches have been well above MSY in recent years. Furthermore, the uncertainty of whether the yelllowfin tuna caught off Cape Town originates from the Indian or Atlantic ocean, is also of concern.

3.2.7 Due to the seasonality of tuna in South Africa's waters, the tuna pole fishery was also allowed access to snoek and yellowtail (10 yellowtail per person per trip). Further access to yellowtail by the tuna pole fishery is currently under review.

3.2.8 A minimum vessel size of 10m was stipulated to reduce conflict with the traditional linefish fishery.

4. OTHER BRANCHES/CHIEF DIRECTORATES CONSULTED

The Chief Directorate Resource Management (Marine) consulted with the Chief Directorate Research, Antarctica and Islands within the branch Marine and Coastal Management.

5. IMPLICATIONS

- Personnel : Limited
- Financial : None
- Communication : Limited

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

6.1 the TAE for tuna pole 2008 season be capped at the current number of vessels (198) and crew (crew numbers still needs to be verified) and that such TAE be apportioned and allocated as follows:

Commercial	:	198 vessels and current crew level.
Recreational fishing	:	Nil allocation (previously nil)
Subsistence fishing	:	Nil allocation (previously nil)
Foreign fishing	:	Nil allocation (previously nil)

6.2 The minimum vessel length restriction of 10 m should be maintained so as to mitigate conflict with the traditional linefish sector.

DIRECTOR-GENERAL (ACTING)
DATE:

RECOMMENDATION IN PARAGRAPH 6.1 APPROVED/NOT APPROVED

RECOMMENDATION IN PARAGRAPH 6.2 APPROVED/NOT APPROVED

MINISTER WS
DATE: 11/01/08

10830

ANNEXURE A

environment & tourism

Department:
Environmental Affairs and Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Reference: V1/5/5/1

MINISTER

TOTAL ALLOWABLE EFFORT (TAE) FOR THE 2007 TUNA POLE SEASON

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To request that you determine the TAE for the 2007 Tuna Pole season in terms of the provisions of Section 14 of the Marine Living Resources Act, 1998 (Act No. 18 of 1998).

2. SUMMARY

2.1 It is recommended that the TAE for tuna pole remain unchanged and limited to a maximum of 200 vessels or a crew of 3 600, whichever is reached first, for the 2007 season. It is further recommended that if the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) issues country quotas for 2007, then an Olympic system should operate in this fishery until 80% of the country quota is caught; thereafter the remaining quota should be apportioned to each right holder. The fishing season for tuna pole is from 1 January to 31 December.

3. BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

3.1 For the 2006 season you determined a TAE of 200 vessels and 3 600 crew for the Tuna Pole fishery (Annexure A).

3.2 The department considered the recommendations from the Chief Directorate: Research, Antarctica and Islands of the Branch: Marine and Coastal Management (as per Annexure B) and wishes to advise as follows:

- The tuna pole fishery traditionally targets high volume, low value albacore along the west coast of South Africa for canning. As there is little value adding the fishery normally operates on small profit margins.

- Albacore is an oceanic migratory tuna species, which is targeted by a number of fishing nations. Consequently, albacore stock assessments and allocations for the Northern and Southern Atlantic stocks are the responsibility of ICCAT, of which South Africa is a founding member party.

- The last full Southern Atlantic albacore stock assessment was conducted in September 2003 using an Age Structured Production Model (ASPM).

- The global Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for 2005, 2006 and 2007 has been set at 29 200 MT (replacement yield).

- The four major contracting parties and co-operating non-contracting parties/fishing entities actively fishing for albacore in the South Atlantic are Brazil (averaging 4 100 mt), Namibia (averaging 2 100 mt), South Africa (averaging 5 700 mt) and Taiwan (average 16 800 mt).

- Although several meetings have been held to date, there has been no agreement between the parties/entities on how to apportion the TAC. Until this agreement is formalised, South Africa has to maintain its catch performance in the fishery, as this will be one of the main criteria used to obtain a country allocation.

- Due to the seasonality of tuna in South Africa's waters, the tuna pole fishery was also allowed access to snoek and yellowtail (10 yellowtail per person per trip).

- A minimum vessel size of 10m was stipulated unless a smaller vessel demonstrated a tuna performance.

- During the long-term rights allocation process in 2006, rights were allocated for a TAE of 191 vessels and 2 990 crew.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Personnel

Limited.

4.2 Financial

None.

4.3 Communication

Limited.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

5.1 The TAE for tuna pole (albacore) be determined at 200 vessels or 3 600 crew, whichever is reached first, for the 2007 season and that such TAE be apportioned and allocated as follows:

Commercial: 200 vessels or 3 600 crew.
Recreational fishing: Nil allocation (previously nil)
Subsistence fishing: Nil allocation (previously nil)
Foreign fishing: Nil allocation (previously nil).

5.2 If the ICCAT issues country allocations, then an Olympic system should operate in this fishery. Only once 80% is reached will the remaining country quota be apportioned to each right holder.

Acting DG approved recommendations via EDMS 10/11/2006

DIRECTOR-GENERAL (ACTING)
DATE:

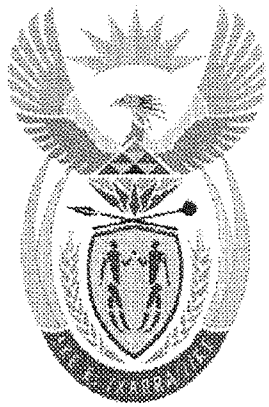
RECOMMENDATIONS
5.1 APPROVED/~~NOT APPROVED~~
5.2 APPROVED/~~NOT APPROVED~~

MINISTER
DATE: 20/11/06

ANNEXURE B

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND TOURISM

MARINE AND COASTAL MANAGEMENT



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE ALBACORE AND YELLOWFIN RESOURCES IN 2008 (TUNA POLE)

December 2007

Summary

The primary objective for allocating long-term rights in the tuna pole fishery in 2006 was to improve or maintain catch performance of tuna, particularly albacore. Catch performance is the single most important criteria for the allocation of country quotas by Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), like the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). To achieve this objective a TAE of 200 vessels or a crew of 3 600, which ever is reached first, was made available for the 2006 allocation. However, in recent years an increasing proportion of the fishery has been targeting yellowfin tuna. Both ICCAT and the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) are concerned over the stock status of yellowfin tuna. Furthermore, there is concern by the Department as to the origin of the yellowfin tuna caught by the tuna pole fishery. The albacore stock assessment conducted by ICCAT in 2007 indicated that the south Atlantic albacore stock biomass is below the biomass needed to produce Maximum Sustainable Yield. Consequently, there is a need to rebuild the stock. Given, the abovementioned concerns it is recommended that the TAE be frozen at the current effort levels. Lastly, to limit

conflict with the traditional linefish sector on the snoek and yellowtail resources it is recommended that the minimum vessel size restriction of 10 m be maintained. The last recommendation will also assist in improving catch performance and safety at sea.

Introduction

Tuna species, including albacore, *Thunnus alalunga*, and yellowfin, *T. albacares*, are highly migratory species, which are targeted by a number of fishing nations. Consequently, stock assessments and country allocations are the responsibility of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) such as ICCAT (of which South Africa is a long-standing member party) and IOTC (of which South Africa is a Co-operating Non-Contracting Party). The single most import criteria for issuing country quotas is catch performance, hence one of the main objectives of this fishery is to either maintain or improve tuna catch performance so that South Africa can motivate for equitable country allocations.

The tuna pole fishery traditionally targets high volume, low value albacore along the west coast of South Africa (for canning). However, in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of vessels targeting low volume, high value yellowfin tuna for sashimi markets. This fishery is a seasonal fishery that operates from October to May when these tuna species are found in coastal waters.

In 2000, the Minister declared that the line fishery was in a crisis. To alleviate fishing pressure on linefish stocks the former commercial handline sector was split into three sectors for the 2002 rights allocation process. The three sectors are traditional linefish, hake handline and tuna pole, with the tuna pole sector mainly established for the targeting of albacore *Thunnus alalunga* with some vessels targeting yellowfin tuna *T. albacares* since 2003. A maximum of 200 rights (200 vessels with a crew of 3 600) were available in the tuna pole sector for the medium-term rights allocation process followed in 2002. This allocation, in essence, was based on the number of vessels targeting albacore prior to 2002. Although the tuna pole sector was under-subscribed in the medium-term rights allocation (only 163 vessels and 2 734 crew allocated) the long-term allocation policy in 2005 still made provision for 200 vessels with a crew of 3 600 as albacore (the primary

target species) was considered under-exploited. Current effort in the tuna pole fishery in 2007 consists of 198 vessels and a crew of 2 951 (2 961 if including one pending application from Right Holder to increase crew limits).

Due to the seasonality of tuna in South Africa's waters the tuna pole fishery was also allowed access to snoek *Thyrsites atun* and yellowtail *Seriola lalandi*. Access to these additional species has caused conflict with the traditional linefish sector. Some tuna pole operators in the past have exacerbated the situation by targeting these species only, with no or little performance on tuna. To reduce the conflict between these sectors the tuna pole access to yellowtail was managed by means of bag limits, i.e. 10 yellowtail per person per trip, and that only vessels ≥ 10 m will be allowed into the fishery on condition that tuna performance was demonstrated. The restriction on vessel size also assists in improving catch performance and safety at sea.

Updated input data

The albacore catches in the tuna pole fishery has averaged ~3 500 t for the years 2004-2006 and is below the last ten year average of ~5 000 t. The reason for the decline in catch is likely indicative of the decline in value of the resource and availability of the resource in South Africa's coastal waters. In contrast, yellowfin catches made by this sector have increased sharply from ~250 t in 2003 to ~950 t in 2006 due to an increase in the number of vessels targeting this species.

The last full southern Atlantic albacore stock assessment was conducted by ICCAT in 2007, using an Age Structured Production Model (ASPM). The stock assessment estimated that $B_{current}/B_{msy}$ is 0.91 and that $F_{current}/F_{msy}$ is 0.63 (B = biomass, F = fishing mortality). The results indicated that the southern Atlantic albacore stock needs to be rebuilt in order to achieve Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). In order to achieve MSY of 33 300 t, the Standing Committee of Research and Statistics (SCRS) of ICCAT recommended that the fishery does not exceed the Replacement Yield (RY) of 28 800 t per annum in the next few years. The ICCAT Commission meeting adopted a catch limit of 29 900 (the lowest estimate of MSY). This meant a reduction of 1 166 t, which was obtained by reducing the collective sharing arrangement between Chinese-Taipei, Brazil, Namibia and South Africa from 27 500

t to 26 333 t. A proviso was included which stated that if catches exceeded RY in any given year until 2011 then the sharing arrangement would have to be revisited with the aim of determining country allocation for the four above mentioned fishing entities.

The last stock assessment for yellowfin conducted by ICCAT indicated that the yellowfin stock in the Atlantic Ocean was under-to-optimally exploited. However, ICCAT has expressed concern regarding the status of this resource due to the high levels of juvenile mortality. The agreement to bring the stock assessment forward to 2008 is indicative of this concern. IOTC has also expressed concern regarding the stock status of Indian Ocean stock as catches for yellowfin tuna have far exceeded MSY since 2003. The recommendation from IOTC was to reduce catch and effort to the levels recorded between 1999 and 2002. Of further concern, is that there is uncertainty regarding the origin of the fish being caught off Cape Town where the bulk of the South African yellowfin are caught. Research is currently being conducted to determine the stock delineation of these fish.

Management recommendations for the sustainable management of the resource:

1 The TAE for 2008 should be capped at the current number of vessels and crew given the concerns regarding the stock status of both albacore and yellowfin.

2 The vessel minimum size restriction of≥ 10 m should be maintained so as to limit conflict with the traditional linefish sector.

Acting Chief Director

20/11/07