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# International Pole & Line Foundation Fishery Improvement Toolbox

## Promoting Equitable Rebuilding of the Atlantic Ocean Bigeye Tuna Stock

### **IPNLF FIT CASE STUDY SERIES**

FISHERY IMPROVEMENT TOOL: ECOSYSTEM AND  
MANAGEMENT TOOL AREA 2.2

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# INTRODUCTION

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The Atlantic Ocean is home to many one-by-one tuna fisheries harvesting temperate and tropical tuna species in at least sixteen coastal states. All require the sustainable and equitable management of internationally shared fish stocks by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). These fisheries support local livelihoods in isolated and developing economies, enhance food security, and some provide responsibly harvested tuna to global supply chains.

The 2015 stock assessment concluded that the Atlantic bigeye tuna stock was overfished and continuing to be harvested at unsustainable rates - as a result, ICCAT decided to limit catches. However, the chosen total allowable catch (TAC) only provided a 49% chance of achieving bigeye stock recovery by 2028. Since 2015, total bigeye catches have significantly exceeded the limit. In 2016 and 2017 catches exceeded the TAC by 20%, by 13% in 2018, and by 14% in 2019. In 2018, ICCAT scientists determined that maintaining prior years' harvest rates would provide only a 1% probability of stock recovery by 2033.

Before crucial progress was made in 2019, only seven ICCAT Contracting Parties were on the bigeye quota allocation table, together accounting for 89% of the TAC. Then, 83% of the Atlantic bigeye tuna quota allocation went to developed countries, with 63% going to distant water fishing nations, and almost all of this was allocated to industrial fisheries. Not only was this unfair and inequitable, it did not conform to many international agreements and instruments including UNCLOS, the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, the FAO Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the FAO Guidelines for Small-scale Fisheries, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Target 14.b), and ICCAT's own Criteria for the Allocation of Fishing Possibilities.



## ACTIVITIES

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IPNLF took the following actions to promote the equitable rebuilding of overfished Atlantic bigeye tuna stock:

- Co-hosted the world's first one-by-one tuna conference in the Azores with the Government of the Azores' Regional Secretariat for the Sea, Science and Technology. This resulted in the [Azores Declaration](#), establishing a definitive commitment to ensure a sustainable and equitable future for fisheries, and to prioritise the needs of associated communities and cultures.
- Became a member of the Long Distance Advisory Council (LDAC) and the Outermost Regions Advisory Council (ORAC; CCRUP), representing one-by-one fishery interests and supporting IPNLF members from the Canary Island and Azores, to co-develop recommendations to the European Commission and EU countries.
- Supported IPNLF members joining the EU delegation to ICCAT and participating in stakeholder coordination meetings organized by the European Commission.
- Coordinated actions with supportive delegations including Brazil, Senegal, South Africa, and the UK Overseas Territories.
- Worked with Senegal and South Africa, supported by the Common Oceans ABNJ Program funded by the Global Environment Fund (GEF), to facilitate a technical workshop with African Coastal states on the conservation and management of Atlantic tropical tunas.
- Provided ongoing technical support and coordination to various coastal state delegations throughout ICCAT tropical tuna management negotiations.
- Signed a follow up agreement with FAO to facilitate further knowledge sharing and capacity building among African coastal states delegations.
- Lifted the profile of Atlantic Ocean one-by-one fisheries through press releases, position statements, blogs, and social media content.



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## OUTCOMES

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In 2019, ICCAT Contracting Parties were able to agree on a 15-year rebuilding plan for bigeye tuna, a species that was then considered heavily overfished. Within this package, the adopted measures include a reduced Total Allowable Catch (TAC), with a large number of countries needing to make significant cuts from their current catches; a stricter limit on the number of drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) permitted per vessel, as well as the addition of an Atlantic-wide FAD fishing closure covering periods of greatest recruitment overfishing risk to the stock. Also, foundational language was adopted covering the special rights and needs of developing coastal states and their artisanal and small-scale fisheries. Although much work remains to be done to ensure the measures will be effective in meeting their conservation objectives, such as replacing the interim catch limit measure by an appropriate allocation scheme, the adoption of this plan can be regarded as a historic step forward, and one that lays the groundwork for further improvements in the Atlantic Ocean.

IPNLF's exciting and impactful work in this space is ongoing.

## RESOURCES

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- FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries - <http://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/en/>
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals - <https://sdgs.un.org/>
- United Nation's Fish Stocks Agreement - [https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/convention\\_overview\\_fish\\_stocks.htm](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_overview_fish_stocks.htm)
- The Azores Declaration - <https://www.azoresdeclaration.info/>
- Long Distance Advisory Council (LDAC) - <https://www.ldac.eu/en/>
- European Council Advisory Councils - [https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/fisheries/scientific-input/advisory-councils\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/fisheries/scientific-input/advisory-councils_en)
- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea - [https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/closindx.htm](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/closindx.htm)
- ICCAT's Criteria for the Allocation of Fishing Possibilities - <https://www.iccat.int/Documents/Recs/compendiopdf-e/2015-13-e.pdf>

# ABOUT

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## About IPNLF

The International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF) promotes the sustainable management of the world's responsible pole-and-line, handline and troll (collectively known as 'one-by-one') tuna fisheries while also recognising the importance of safeguarding the livelihoods they support.

IPNLF's work to develop, support and promote one-by-one tuna fisheries is subsequently fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We believe effective and equitable global governance is essential to protect and restore the ocean, and this should be achieved by ensuring the participation of local and coastal communities in decision-making processes.

Environmental sustainability in tuna fisheries can only be fully achieved by also putting an end to the overfishing and destructive fishing practices that are driving the degradation of already threatened marine species, habitats and ecosystems. Allied with its members, IPNLF demonstrates the value of one-by-one caught tuna to consumers, policymakers and throughout the supply chain. IPNLF works across science, policy and the seafood sector, using an evidence-based, solutions-focused approach with strategic guidance from our Board of Trustees and advice from our Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) and Market Advisory Group (MAG).

IPNLF was officially registered in the United Kingdom in 2012 (Charity 1145586), with branch offices in the UK, South Africa, Indonesia, The Netherlands, and the Maldives.

## About FIT

IPNLF are the global one-by-one tuna fishery and supply chain specialists, and the Fishery Improvement Toolbox (FIT) provides a framework whereby we can offer tailor-made project support and consultancy services to our members. When IPNLF members seek to demonstrate their responsible seafood sourcing on IPNLF's Sourcing Transparency Platform (STP), they can also target strategic improvements to specific seafood supply chain issues by engaging IPNLF directly through its FIT. The FIT is designed to work collaboratively alongside IPNLF's STP and when combined, these tools offer members a way to transparently demonstrate their ongoing improvements and responsible performance to all stakeholders in seafood supply chains, including end-consumers.

The FIT also provides a clear pathway to our members so that they can actively engage in collaborative improvements made in the fisheries they source from, and in their associated supply chains. The FIT is underpinned by a holistic understanding of sustainability, offering a framework for social, economic, environmental and operational improvements. The FIT has five main components that will help facilitate targeted improvements in one-by-one supply chains:

- Social Responsibility
  - ToolEcosystem and Management Tool
  - Traceability Improvement Tool
  - Plastic Neutrality Tool
  - Seafood Quality Assurance Tool
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