

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
YELLOWFIN TUNA OVERFISHING RESPONSE

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) discussed Attachments 1-3 and the National Marine Fisheries Service report on the overfishing status of Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) yellowfin tuna. Taking into account the issues raised with the 2019 assessment and the small margin with which the 2015-2017 estimate of fishing mortality from the 2018 assessment exceeded the maximum fishing mortality threshold (MFMT), the HMSMT recommends no changes to domestic regulations at this time. As indicated in National Marine Fisheries Service's letter to the Council dated November 2, 2018, the current Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) management measures for the international fishery, which included an expanded number of closure days, took effect in 2018; the effects of these measures on fishing mortality are not yet known.

With regard to the current IATTC Resolution [C-17-02](#) expiring at the end of 2020, the HMSMT discussed the importance of obtaining a reliable assessment of fishing mortality for the EPO yellowfin stock. This is needed to determine management measures for 2021, including an evaluation of whether existing measures have reduced fishing mortality below the MFMT. The HMSMT took note of the IATTC scientific staff's work plan, which outlines tasks to address various assessment issues in an effort to produce a benchmark assessment next year. The HMSMT supports the Scientific and Statistical Committee's input on this work plan including the recommendation to specify tasks to examine model sensitivity to the longline catch-per-unit-effort index and to obtain finer resolution longline catch and effort data for this purpose.

To address the overfishing status of EPO yellowfin at the international scale, the Council could recommend prioritizing tasks in the interim which are most likely to assist in producing a benchmark assessment for EPO yellowfin in 2020 that reliably estimates fishing mortality. This could include the Scientific and Statistical Committee work plan recommendations regarding the longline catch-per-unit-effort index.

PFMC
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