

NATIONAL REPORT OF SOUTH AFRICA

D.T. Clarke¹ and C. Smith²

1. GENERAL FISHERY STATISTICS

South Africa has three commercial fishing sectors which either target or catch tuna and tuna-like species as by-catch in the Indian Ocean. These sectors are swordfish/tuna longline, pole and line/ rod and reel, and shark longline. In addition, there is a boat-based recreational/sport fishery.

1. a Catch by Gear

Swordfish/Tuna Longline

This fishery was commercialized in 2005, with the issuing of 18 swordfish-directed permits and 26 tuna-directed permits. These commercial rights were allocated for ten years. The large pelagic longline fishery was deliberately split into swordfish and tuna-directed sub-sectors due to the drastic declines in swordfish CPUE experienced during the period of the experimental fishery. South Africa (amended its fishery policy and) has allowed an interim period for foreign vessel chartering in this sub-sector as a means of skills development and a means of acquiring suitable vessels. South Africa submitted a bigeye tuna fishing plan (CoC 07/13) to the Commission meeting of the IOTC, thereby notifying the Commission of South Africa's intention to exceed 1000 t of bigeye tuna in future as the fishery develops.

Prior to 2002 most of longline fishing effort was concentrated in the Atlantic Ocean. Fishing effort only started increasing in the Indian Ocean since 2001 with the development of ice and processing facilities at Richard's Bay, which is situated on the east coast of South Africa. In recent years, a sizeable amount of the fishing effort was conducted in the Indian Ocean. This fishery is now the most important South African tuna fishery operating in the Indian Ocean in terms of tonnage landed.

The total reported swordfish catch in the Indian Ocean for 2008 was 244 t (dressed weight) and increased by 6 t compared to that of 2007. The nominal CPUE for swordfish-directed vessels also increased from 321 kg.1000hooks⁻¹ in 2007 to 336 kg.1000hooks⁻¹ in 2008. Yellowfin and bigeye tuna reported catches in 2008 were 520 t and 389 t (dressed weight) respectively. This was much less than the 865 t of yellowfin and 470 t of bigeye reported in 2007. The nominal CPUE of the swordfish-directed vessels (for yellowfin tuna) decreased from 191 kg.1000hooks⁻¹ in 2007 to 169 kg.1000hooks⁻¹ in 2008. Despite the decreased catches of bigeye tuna, the nominal CPUE increased from 112 kg.1000hooks⁻¹ in 2007 to 251 kg.1000hooks⁻¹ in 2008.

Pole and Line/ Rod and Reel

The use of pole and line in the South African tuna fishery (since the 1970's) has essentially targeted mainly sub-adult albacore in near-shore waters off the west coasts of South Africa and Namibia. It is important to note that within the tuna pole fishery there has been an emerging rod and reel component that targets large yellowfin tuna (> 45 kg dressed weight) south of Cape Town. Although the fishing ground lies just outside the IOTC area the catch is presumed to be of Indian Ocean origin. This catch has been increasing sharply since 2003 to reach 1062 t in 2007, (although only 361 t was caught in 2008). Currently, these catches are reported to ICCAT and further research is being conducted (and should be concluded by the end of 2009) to determine the origin of the catch.

¹ Marine and Coastal Management, P/Bag X2, Roggebaai 8012, Cape Town, South Africa; e-mail: dclarke@deat.gov.za

² Marine and Coastal Management, P/Bag X2, Roggebaai 8012, Cape Town, South Africa; e-mail: csmith@deat.gov.za

South Africa also has a commercial linefish fishery which opportunistically catches yellowfin, king mackerel and shark in the Indian Ocean using rod and reel. These catches usually only contribute to a small percentage of the total catch by the linefishery due to the multispecies nature of the fishery. Catches of pelagic species are also inversely correlated to abundance of other preferred target species such as kob, geelbek and slinger. This implies that when the preferred species is not available the fleet will opportunistically shift targeting to pelagic species, including yellowfin, king mackerel and sharks. In 2007 and 2008 the only significant catches made were for sharks (dusky, copper, hound and black-tip), which was < 100 t. Yellowfin catches were in the order of 6 t in 2008 for this sector.

Shark longline

In 2005 the shark longline sector was split into a demersal shark longline component, which predominantly targets soupfin and hound sharks, and a pelagic longline component, which predominantly targets shortfin mako. The latter also catches blue shark, tuna and swordfish as by-catch. This fishery was split as a precursor to phase out the targeting of pelagic sharks due to the concern over the stock status of these species. South Africa is still in the process of phasing out its pelagic shark fishery and currently these fishers are operating under exemption. This fishery is scheduled to be closed at the end of 2009.

Pelagic shark catches only started to increase in 2003 when the fishery shifted fishing to the east Agulhas Bank area. Fishing effort (for the pelagic shark directed fishery only) in the Indian Ocean decreased from 334 thousand hooks in 2007 to 225 thousand hooks in 2008. Peak catches were obtained in 2005 with 625 t mako and 65 t of blue shark reported. The catches in 2008 declined to 288 t mako and 21 t blue shark compared to 310 t mako and 26 t blue shark in 2007. Nominal CPUE increased for mako sharks from 928 kg.1000.hooks⁻¹ in 2007 to 1277 kg.1000.hooks⁻¹ in 2008. Similarly, catch rates for blue sharks increased from 80 kg.1000.hooks⁻¹ in 2007 to 94 kg.1000.hooks⁻¹ in 2008. By-catches of yellowfin and swordfish accounted for less than 2 t in both years.

Recreational fishery

The recreational fishery uses rod and reel from ski-boats (5-8 m) to target numerous game fish, including yellowfin and king mackerel. Although catch and effort data are unknown for this fishery it is estimated that over 100 t of yellowfin and king mackerel are landed annually for the Atlantic and Indian Oceans combined. All recreational fishers are required to purchase a permit and are restricted to a bag-limit of 10 tuna per day, with the sale of catch prohibited. (Recreational bag limits are currently under review and may be reduced in future.)

1. b Fleet Structure

Table 1. Structure of fleets catching tuna and tuna-like species in the Indian Ocean in 2008.

Fishing Sector	No Active Permits	Min Vessel Size (in m)	Max Vessel Size (in m)	Avg Vessel Size in (m)
Swordfish/Tuna Longline	25	19	36	~46
Pole & Line	198*	8	30	~15
Rod & Reel (commercial)	455*	6	10	~7
Rod & Reel (recreational)	unknown	4	10	~6
Pelagic Shark Longline	7	13	30	~18

* - denotes registered not necessarily active in the Indian Ocean

1. c Available Information on non-target, associated and dependant (NTAD) species

Blue and mako sharks account for the most common shark species caught in the longline fishery. In total, blue sharks and mako sharks accounted for 16%, by weight, of all tuna caught by tuna-directed longline vessels. Similarly, these sharks accounted for 32% by weight of all tuna and swordfish caught in the swordfish-directed longline fishery. A considerable amount of sharks are released due to the current shark by-catch limit which restricts tuna vessels to a by-catch of 10% of tuna landed. In the swordfish longline fishery, this by-catch limit is 10% of the combined weight of tuna and swordfish. South Africa is currently exploring the implementation of an Upper Precautionary Catch Limit for pelagic sharks for 2008.

Average seabird mortality has been estimated at 2460 birds per annum, from 1998-2005. The three most common species caught in the longline fishery is the white-chinned petrel, the white-capped albatross and the black browed albatross. The average catch rate for tuna and swordfish-directed longliners combined was estimated at 0.44 birds.1000hooks⁻¹. Although catch rates in the tuna-directed fleet is significantly higher than the swordfish-directed fleet, both fleets are catching birds at a rate much higher the FAO International Plan of Action of 0.05 birds.1000hooks⁻¹. South Africa has employed a bird limit (of 25 birds) per vessel in its large pelagic fishery as a means of reducing seabird mortality in 2008 (456 birds were caught for the entire fleet as at 24th November 2009).

Turtle catch rates in the Indian Ocean has averaged 0.05 turtles.1000hooks⁻¹ for the years 2000-2003. The most commonly caught in 2008 was the loggerhead (36%) followed by the leatherback (31%). Green and Olive Ridley turtles were also recorded but in small numbers. A small number of turtles (13%) were unidentified by the observer.

Other catches such as billfish has remained low as longline skippers are required through permit conditions to release live billfish. Oilfish and escolar probably constituted over 70% of the "other" by-catch, with dorado accounting for 10%. There are a large number of ray and shark species (including crocodile sharks) that are also caught but not reported as they are discarded at sea.

2. Report on the implementation of recommendations of the Scientific Committee

98/01, 00/01 and 01/05 – Mandatory statistical requirements

South Africa has provided IOTC with catch, effort and length frequency data for its commercial fisheries according to the resolution required.

South Africa has not always managed to adhere to the deadlines of data submission due to capacity problems, but has provided all mandatory data before the June 30 deadline in 2009.

As yet South Africa is unable to provide data on its recreational fishery targeting tuna.

00/02 – Predation Survey

South Africa only started collecting data for this survey using its observer programme since 2004.

01/01 – National Observer Programme

South Africa established an on board scientific observer programme for its vessels in 1998. The primary aim of the programme is to collect length frequencies, biological samples and fisheries data for target and by-catch species. The observer coverage is aimed at 20% of domestic vessel trips and 100% coverage of all foreign vessel trips fishing under charter agreement. The observer programme has also reported on non-compliance such as flying of tori- lines, and shark fining.

01/06, 03/03 – Bigeye Tuna Statistical Document

Although South Africa implemented the programme in 2003 the management of the programme was subsequently improved in 2007 with the establishment of dedicated Management unit to deal with RFMO matters. Although South Africa does not import much tuna the Department, nonetheless worked more closely with Customs in 2007 as a means to raise awareness on these issues. Thus far no import stats documents have been received from customs or reported to IOTC.

03/01 – Limitation of fishing capacity

South Africa has never had more than 50 vessels on the IOTC record and is therefore exempted from this resolution.

05/01 – Conservation and Management of bigeye tuna

South Africa intends to catch more than 1000t of bigeye tuna in the future and as such has submitted a bigeye tuna fishing plan to the Commission.

05/05 – Conservation of sharks

South Africa has provided all its historic shark data to IOTC. Shark finning is banned in South Africa and vessels are required not to exceed 8% shark fin to trunk ratio. In the large pelagic fishery a 10% shark by-catch limit was imposed since 2006 and skippers are required to release live sharks.

05/08 – Sea Turtles

The South African government has worked closely with WWF to educate skippers on release procedures for turtles. The use of circle hooks are also encouraged as stated in the permit conditions. South Africa has provided information on turtle interaction to IOTC.

05/09, 06/04 – Incidental mortality of seabirds

South Africa has been collecting data on seabird interaction with its longline fishery since 1998. South Africa has finalized its NPOA for seabirds and was gazetted in 2007. South Africa has made a number of bird mitigation measures a permit condition since the start of its fishery such as dumping of offal on the non-hauling side of the vessel, thawed bait to improve sink rates, no daylight setting in the tuna fishery and the compulsory flying oftori-lines. Furthermore, South Africa has developed a management plan to reduce seabird by-catch in its longline fishery in 2008. This plan includes a seabird limit per vessel that was implemented in 2008.

06/05, 07/05 – Limiting of fishing capacity

South Africa has made provision for 20 swordfish and 30 tuna-directed vessels in its fishery. It has submitted the bigeye tuna fishing plan and is currently developing its capacity.

3. National Research Programs currently in place

As the large pelagic researcher post was only filled towards the end of 2007, very little research took place during 2008. In addition, one research supporting position in the large pelagic section (in the Department) remains vacant and should be filled towards the end of 2009. However various projects were initiated in 2009 including: the age and growth of albacore and bigeye tuna; the life history, stock delineation and spatial movement and distribution of bigeye tuna, swordfish and blue sharks between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

The Department continues to collaborate with WWF and Birdlife SA to assess the impact of longline fisheries on seabirds, turtles and sharks and to investigate various mitigation and management measures. A national plan of action was also gazetted for the above-mentioned by-catch species in 2008 and 5-day observer reports were introduced (since 2008) in order to monitor sea-bird by-catch.

Rhodes University (Grahamstown) is also collaborating with the Department and is conducting research on the stock delineation of yellowfin in the boundary region between the Indian and Atlantic Oceans by conducting genetic analysis and investigating movement patterns. The results of this project are due to be made known by the end of 2009 in the form of an MSc thesis.

4. Other Relevant Information

South Africa is a long standing Member of ICCAT. Consequently, South Africa has implemented ICCAT management and control measures for her fleets, including measures to combat IUU fishing, mandatory VMS, onboard scientific observer coverage for longline vessels, full port inspection scheme, minimum size limits and a daily logbook system for commercial fisheries. South Africa has also improved upon its port state control measures for foreign vessels making application to use South African port facilities. South Africa also provides fishery statistics according to IOTC specifications on an annual basis.