

BYCATCH MITIGATION EXPECTATIONS

Goals

The undersigned organizations strongly agree that efforts to reduce, mitigate and eliminate bycatch in global tuna fisheries is inadequate, and that bycatch issues must be more effectively addressed if these fisheries are to be considered sustainable and responsible.

Further, we expect tuna RFMOs and industry to work constructively to address bycatch issues.

What follows is a set of expectations that must be addressed without delay by both RFMOs and industry alike to ensure global tuna fisheries and their ecosystems – including issues of bycatch – are sustainably and responsibly managed.



Bycatch is defined as discarded catch of any living marine resource plus retained incidental catch and unobserved mortality due to a direct encounter with a fishing gear.

Source: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) U.S.

Our Collaborative Position

Effective avoidance and mitigation of [bycatch](#) is a critical component of sustainable tuna fisheries.

A tuna fishery cannot claim to be sustainable and responsible if effective measures are not in place to avoid causing unsustainable impacts upon non-target and/or ETP species and measures to safely release bycatch are not sufficiently effective to minimize mortality of a species. Further, management approaches must be both precautionary and ecosystem based.

Unfortunately, bycatch issues are under-addressed across global tuna fisheries and more must be done to reduce, mitigate and eliminate bycatch through the development and implementation of, and compliance with, management measures, as well as greater data collection, data reporting, and data sharing for purposes of management, science, and compliance.

We can no longer afford to insufficiently address the impacts of bycatch in tuna fisheries upon non-target and/or ETP species – these impacts must be prioritized, and RFMOs, fleet, and markets must take proactive action to address these issues.

In support of our collaborative position, we expect:

1. [Adoption, implementation of, and compliance with best available policies and approaches to effectively reduce bycatch of non-target and/or ETP species.](#)
2. [Improved bycatch data collection and reporting for purposes of science, compliance, and accountability.](#)
3. [Adequate monitoring of all tuna vessels.](#)
4. [Implementation of policies and systems to facilitate improved compliance and accountability.](#)
5. [Public access to information, with limited restrictions only when necessary.](#)

RFMO/Market Integrated Expectation #1

Adoption, Implementation of, and Compliance with Best Available Policies and Approaches to Effectively Reduce Bycatch of Non-Target and/or ETP Species

We Expect RFMOs to:	We Expect Markets, Supply Chain Partners to:	Why It's Important:
Implementation of Best Practices		All tuna fishing methods have varying degrees of impact on the marine environment, including on non-target and ETP species. These impacts must be reduced and minimized using all existing methods and applying a precautionary approach. All sectors have a role to play in this effort. The supply chain must take account of their impacts on bycatch species. RFMOs and their members have a legal obligation to manage and verifiably reduce impacts on non-target and ETP species.
Implement precautionary, science-based regulations, best practices and guidelines for avoidance, handling, release and, where appropriate, science-based catch or retention limits, for all tuna fishing fleets to proactively minimize their impacts upon all non-target and non-retained bycatch species.	Require suppliers to verifiably implement best practices for bycatch avoidance, mitigation, and safe release, and to comply fully with RFMO bycatch measures, including data collection and reporting requirements. Implement and publish clear policies and commitments to reduce, mitigate and where possible eliminate the bycatch of non-target and/or ETP species in their supply chains. Transparently report on progress to implement these policies and commitments.	
Fins Naturally Attached		
Require that all sharks are landed with fins-naturally-attached without exceptions.	Adopt supplier requirements that all fisheries interacting with sharks either as a target or as a bycatch species must have verifiable fins-naturally-attached regulations in place – without exceptions.	
Fishing Gear		
Improve selectivity of existing gear design and introduce or improve measures to avoid gear loss and its impacts. Where damage from existing gear designs and/or gear loss cannot be sufficiently mitigated, adopt additional solutions, which could include conversions to lower impact fishing gears.	Where bycatch issues cannot be sufficiently mitigated, consider additional solutions, which could include conversions to lower-impact fishing gears.	

RFMO/Market Integrated Expectation #2

Improved Bycatch Data Collection and Reporting for Purposes of Science, Compliance and Accountability

We Expect RFMOs to:	We Expect Markets, Supply Chain Partners to:	Why It's Important:
Collection and Reporting		
Establish comprehensive electronic reporting systems and monitoring programs with sufficient capacity to implement. Require that logbooks, transshipment and landing declarations (if bycatch is retained), and observer reports are submitted to the proper authorities in a timely manner. Improve the collection and reporting all necessary data by flag and coastal states; enhance RFMO data requirements to ensure timely and quality data for scientific, management and/or compliance purposes.	Have traceability mechanisms and transparent policies in place to verify availability of harvest and supply chain data (if bycatch is retained). Require that data collected and reported from your supply chains is in full compliance with all required RFMO conservation measures and reporting obligations.	Data are essential to RFMOs and members for developing science-based bycatch mitigation measures and ensuring effective implementation of, and compliance with, those measures. Data are important to help supply chain members understand potential IUU issues and other bycatch risks in their source fisheries, as well as to track and report on the effectiveness of implemented measures. Data must be reported accurately and in a timely manner to be used for science, compliance, management and accountability. There is a need is to standardize data collection and mandatory reporting requirements. Gaps in data collection and reporting hinder science, management and accountability.

RFMO/Market Integrated Expectation #3

Adequate Monitoring of All Tuna Vessels

We Expect RFMOs to:		We Expect Markets, Supply Chain Partners to:	Why It's Important:
Catch Data			Monitoring of fishing vessels promotes transparency and ensures effective implementation of, and compliance with, RFMO measures and data collection. The supply chain needs credible information on what their source fisheries are capturing and the impacts to these species, and bycatch and ETP species.
Require all vessels that target tuna record the amount and species of catch, bycatch, discards, and effort. Support the collection of independent data on catch, bycatch, and effort through use of dockside-monitoring, sale receipts, remote detection technologies.	Require your supply chain to collect data on catch, bycatch, discards and effort in the logbooks, and transshipment and landing declarations. Support the collection of independent data on catch, bycatch, and effort through use of dockside-monitoring, sale receipts, remote detection technologies.		
Vessel Monitoring			Greater observer coverage rates are needed across all fisheries to substantially improve data collection and reporting. Increased monitoring is feasible and scalable now via human observers and/or EM technology.
Require industrial tuna vessels to be fully monitored by human observers and/or electronic monitoring; and implement methods to adequately monitor all other vessels. Require all industrial tuna vessels to have a VMS system onboard, with VMS position data provided to the relevant RFMO in near-real time.	Advocate to RFMOs and national governments to implement 100% observer coverage in industrial tuna fisheries, and adequate levels of monitoring in all other tuna fisheries through electronic and human observation. Ultimately require 100% observer coverage – through electronic and human observation – in your tuna supply chains, MSC-certified fisheries, and FIPs. Advocate to RFMOs to require VMS systems onboard all industrial tuna vessels, and that VMS position data is provided to the relevant RFMO in near-real time.		

RFMO/Market Integrated Expectation #4

Implementation of Policies and Systems that Facilitate Compliance and Accountability

We Expect RFMOs to:	We Expect Markets, Supply Chain Partners to:	Why It's Important:
Verification of Implementation		Improvements in compliance and accountability are required of RFMOs, their members, and the supply chain. Strong compliance processes improve fisheries management by ensuring robust, transparent assessment of RFMO member implementation. It promotes accountability when RFMOs address non-compliance.
Require verification/ validation of implementation of RFMO measures through compliance mechanisms and use a variety of monitoring, control, and surveillance tools to verify self-reported data and to monitor compliance.	Advocate for verification/validation of implementation of RFMO measures through compliance mechanisms and use a variety of monitoring, control, and surveillance tools to verify self-reported data and to monitor compliance. The supply chain should adopt policies and tools that provide credible information to support any public commitments they have made.	
Compliance Procedures		
Adopt and implement clear and transparent policies and procedures for addressing non-compliance, including predefined consequences that include capacity assistance and/or penalties that are enforced and publicly reported.	Advocate for the adoption and implementation of clear and transparent policies and procedures for addressing non-compliance, including predefined consequences that include capacity assistance and/or penalties that are enforced and publicly reported.	

RFMO/Market Integrated Expectation #5

Public Access to Information, with Limited Restrictions Only When Necessary

We Expect RFMOs to:	We Expect Markets, Supply Chain Partners to:	Why It's Important:
Access		Comprehensive data are essential to developing science-based bycatch mitigation measures and ensuring effective implementation of, and compliance with, those measures. Scientists, RFMOs, RFMO members, fisheries managers and others (rights holders and stakeholders) require access to data for purposes of improving science, compliance and accountability. Retailers and supply chain companies need access to data to support their verification of and reporting on their sustainability commitments. Too often, available data is restricted – or not available at all. There must be a general ability to request and receive data for parties that need it.
Provide timely public access to reported data, with only limited restrictions to meet legal and safety commitments.	Make publicly accessible key sourcing and catch data, such as identity and type of vessel sourced from, catch certification information, fishery/ product information, bycatch information, and transshipment events if any. Advocate to RFMOs to provide public access to reported data, with only limited restrictions to meet legal and safety commitments.	
Policy		
Develop policies and procedures to ensure the RFMO, government fisheries managers, and fisheries scientists, have timely access to data for the purposes of science, research, management, and compliance.	Publish your organization's sustainability commitments and supplier expectations and make public verified information that your commitments and supplier expectations are being met.	