

FAO: The Heads of Delegation, Indian Ocean Tuna Commission

7th April 2016

Dear Delegates,

Our companies represent major EU seafood buyers that source seafood products from a diverse, international supply network. This includes the Indian Ocean, a region for which your government serves as an important leader through membership of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). Our companies source a variety of tuna products from member countries, and we recognize that the sustainability of tuna stocks is integral to our businesses as well as the health of the marine environment.

We recognize that the Commission has made some initial progress in recent years to develop basic science-based management measures to ensure the sustainability of the Indian Ocean tuna fishery. This has been, highlighted by the adoption of interim reference points and ongoing work on evaluation of management strategies.

However we are deeply concerned by recent advice provided by the IOTC Scientific Committee that large and unsustainable catches of yellowfin tuna taken over the last three years has resulted in the reclassification of this stock as 'overfished'. Of even greater concern was the acknowledgment that the Commission does not currently have key conservation and management measures in place to regulate fishing for yellowfin tuna. Nor any other Indian Ocean tuna species such as skipjack tuna, which are also under increasing fishing pressure.

As the 20th Session of the Commission approaches, we are encouraged to know that many of you are actively engaged in discussions and development of proposals over the coming months which, if adopted, will provide critical tools to ensure the sustainable management of the tuna fisheries for which the Commission is responsible.

Our companies are committed to providing consumers with sustainably sourced seafood, and look to the members of the IOTC to provide the foresight and leadership required to ensure a long-term supply of tuna.

We take this opportunity to assure all delegates to the 20th Session of the IOTC that there is full support and encouragement by each company listed for the immediate adoption of measures needed to meet the IOTC Scientific Committee recommendation to reduce catches of yellowfin tuna by 20%, and to take the steps necessary, including the adoption of harvest control rules, to ensure the sustainability of all Indian Ocean tuna stocks.

Thank you for your consideration of this message of support from the seafood industry. We trust the 20th meeting of the Commission will result in historic and courageous decisions that will safeguard tuna stocks for the future.

Sincerely,



This letter was convened by WWF as part of our programme to achieve sustainable fisheries.

	<p>Why we are here To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. panda.org</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>For more information</p>	
<p>Daniel Suddaby Deputy Leader WWF Smart Fishing Initiative e: daniel.suddaby@wwf.panda.org</p>	<p>Aisla Jones Seafood Sustainability Officer e: ajones@wwf.org.uk</p>
<p>www.panda.org/smartfishing</p>	