

Issue: 1

# THE QUARTERLY CATCH E-Newsletter

BELIZE HIGH SEAS FISHERIES UNIT

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## WELCOME

Welcome to our very first issue of The Quarterly Catch, the BHSFU quarterly E-Newsletter. We are excited that this project has now been accomplished. I trust that every person who receives a copy of this newsletter would find it quite helpful, enlightening, and of course, entertaining. All the articles in this newsletter are researched, curated and tailored to what we think will be gratifying and useful to our readers. Thank You!!

## BELIZE RANKED AS ONE OF THE TOP 10 BEST PERFORMING COUNTRIES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST IUU FISHING



According to the 2019 IUU Fishing Index developed by Poseidon Aquatic Resources Management Limited and The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, Belize has been ranked 8<sup>th</sup> out of 152 coastal countries for their responsibility in the fight against IUU fishing with a score of 1.78 (1 being the best and 5 being the worse) in comparison to the world average of 2.29.

The Index quantifies the level to which States are exposed to and how effectively they combat IUU fishing. It allows countries to be benchmarked against each other, and assessed for their vulnerability, prevalence and response to IUU fishing. The score for each country is calculated based on a collection of 40 indicators and the source of these indicators are taken primarily from publicly available data on each country and the recommendation and opinions of leading experts in the field.

Given the overall world average score and the scores across all countries it is evident that the fight against IUU fishing remains a worldwide challenge. The publication of this index is an excellent initiative as it allows for countries to identify their weaknesses, challenges and vulnerabilities as it relates to the threat posed by IUU fishing and the actions needed to be taken to address this never-ending obstacle.

### Contact Us

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Download a copy of the report at the following link.

<http://iuufishingindex.net/include/IUU-report.pdf>



## Nibbles

### Licensing

No Belize flagged vessel shall be used for fishing on the high seas or in the EEZ of another State unless the vessel has been licensed by the BHSFU.

### Transshipment

Transshipment on the High Seas is prohibited by Belize flagged vessels unless carried out under an approved Regional Observer Program.

### Prohibited Fishing Activities

- The finning of sharks by Belize flagged vessels is strictly prohibited.
- No vessel shall be used for driftnet fishing activities on the high seas.

### What is a Quota?

Quota is a share received of a fish stock. There are limits on how much a country can receive. Total Allowable Catch for a specie is granted by ICCAT to each country annually.

# FROM BLACKLISTED TO TOP TEN BELIZE'S CINDERELLA STORY

**By: Valarie Lanza – Director of High Seas Fisheries**

Belize – a tiny piece of paradise nestled on the western edge of the Caribbean Sea, blessed with many wonders and known for its traditional artisanal fisheries entered the high seas industry in 1989 when the first vessels were registered by the International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize. As Belize dared enter this competitive but highly lucrative industry, it was faced with many challenges as vessel owners did not play by the rules with many of them undermining important fisheries management measures. Belize was cautioned to ensure compliance by its fishing vessels in particular but did not act accordingly and as a result sanctions were imposed on Belize and its vessels, and countries were urged to prohibit any landings and discharges by Belize flagged fishing vessels.

By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Belize was known as one of the worst flags in the international fishing arena. This led Belize to embark on a campaign to liberate itself from its tarnished reputation and in 2003 this initiative resulted in the adoption of a High Seas Fishing Act. This heralded Belize's commitment to adhere to international regulations relating to high seas fisheries management and resulted in the adherence to several important regulations such as the FAO Compliance Agreement and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, inter alia.

The first few years after the adoption of the HSFA 2003 witnessed a whole scale expansion of Belize's enforcement capacity as it relates to its management regime over high seas fisheries. The international community was impressed by Belize's initiatives to ensure compliance with international fisheries regulations and Belize further solidified its commitment by becoming members of several prominent

regional fisheries management organizations.

Unmistakably, Belize had taken the right steps and continued to gain favor with the international community. Unfortunately, there is never a silver lining in the fisheries industry as in 2012 despite the continuous advancement in high seas fisheries management, Belize was identified by the EU as being a Non-Cooperating Third Country in accordance with their EU IUU Regulation for lacking the legal framework and institutional capacity to properly implement said Regulation. Nonetheless, Belize remained resolute in its determination to participate in high seas fisheries and displayed a great deal of resilience and resourcefulness as it used this identification to adopt significant legislation that would pave the way for a contemporary and highly effective high seas fisheries management regime.

Belize adopted a new holistic High Seas Fisheries Act in 2013 and commissioned the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit (BHSFU), charged with the specific responsibilities for the regulation and control of high seas fisheries.

The adoption of this Act and its subsidiary regulations would prove enough to provide the legal basis for the effective implementation of the EU IUU Regulation which led to the removal of the EU identification in February 2014. Since then Belize has remained steadfast in the effective management of its high seas fisheries and in 2019 was identified as one of the top ten best performing coastal countries in the fight against IUU fishing.

Belize remains unwavering in its efforts and commitment to promote long term conservation, management and sustainable use of the marine resources by its high seas fishing fleet and will continue to remain a global leader in high seas fisheries management.



Photo by: ICCAT

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2018 ICCAT MEETING

At its annual meeting which was held in Dubrovnik Croatia in November 2018, the **International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)** adopted a new multi-annual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean. Unfortunately, the Commission was unable to adopt a new management measure for tropical tunas and the current measure was carried over to 2019 where work in advance of the 2019 Commission Meeting has already commenced to develop draft measures that will be suitable to all.

The recommendation for a ban on shark finning, which Belize fully supported and was a proponent thereto, once again failed to reach consensus for adoption. This has placed this species at an even greater risk of depletion.

Work also continues on the modernization of the ICCAT Convention. Several other important recommendations were adopted such as new reporting formats regarding billfishes and sharks and several amendments to the monitoring, control and surveillance measures were also approved.

The conclusion of the 2018 ICCAT Commission meeting saw the adoption of twelve new recommendations and two resolutions on relevant issues significant to the management of the Atlantic tuna and tuna like stock.

Curacao has agreed to host the next ICCAT Commission meeting to be held in November 2019.



### THE FMC CORNER

By: Stanley Burgess  
Monitoring Officer

Belize's Fisheries Monitoring Center (FMC) was established in 2014 as part of the whole scale expansion of the Belize's

enforcement capacity and falls within the mandate of the BHSFU. Its primary function is the monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) of all Belize flagged fishing vessels that are operating on the high seas or within the jurisdictional areas of other Coastal States.

Our main tool for the effective and efficient monitoring and surveillance of our vessels is our Fleet Information and E-log System which is operated by Absolute Software Inc a subsidiary of Pole Star Global. Monitoring, control and surveillance is a very onerous task and can be very costly but using the right VMS tools and system along with other platform increases the efficiency, effectiveness and feasibility. We can monitor in almost real time, gather data such as vessel location, date and time of each position, vessel speed, vessel entry or exit in restricted or closed areas, vessel compliance, inter alia.

The role of the FMC is essential in helping to detect IUU activities and to enforce management measures for the long-term sustainability of the fisheries resources.



## DO YOU KNOW??



### HOW YOUR FISHERIES PRODUCTS ARE USED

By: Delice Pinkard  
Senior Fisheries Officer



Photos by: Pixabay

According to FAO's world fishery and aquaculture statistics, there was over 171 million tons of total fish production in 2016. Now that is amazing facts! And of this amount, about 88 percent or over 151 million tons were utilized for actual human consumption. The other 12 percent or 20 million tons was mainly used for non-food products such as fishmeal and fish oil products. Also, a portion of this 12 percent which was about 5 million tons was used for material for feeding in aquaculture and raising of livestock, bait, ornamental and pharmaceutical purposes.

Most people prefer their fish to be live, fresh or chilled. A perfect scenario would be enjoying your fish directly from the net to your plate, but it also comes at a higher price. In 2016, over 45 percent of people preferred to buy their fish in this fresh caught state while other forms such as frozen, prepared and preserved or cured were used as additional methods of processing for direct human consumption.

With the evolving world and developments of better refrigeration, ice-making machines and proper transportation, fish products have become increasingly more commercialized and it is easier to distribute fish in a variety of product forms. However, in developing countries, such as Belize, we still mainly use the age-old method of live, fresh and chilled fish for direct human consumption immediately after landing or harvesting from aquaculture.

In conclusion, fish production has increased over the years from 110 million tons in 2006 to 171 million tons in 2016. It shows that humans have a very high demand of fish products whether for consumption or other purposes. The next report with the latest statistics will definitely show an increase in fish production. Therefore, we must continue to be responsible by respecting fisheries regulations and support sustainable fisheries so that fish can continue to be a part of our future!

That the purse seine is a net that is used to encircle a school of fish. The net is then drawn together to retain the fish by using a line at the bottom, allowing the net to be closed like a purse.



Photo by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)



### WHAT IS A BLUE ECONOMY

By: Ernie Howe  
Fisheries Officer

What is the first thought that come to mind when we hear the word Blue Economy? The Blue Economy is a new concept that has emerged and speaks

to the use of ocean resources for economic growth and the over-all economic health of a country. The Blue economy incorporates several activities such as sustainable fisheries management to generate more income, more fish and to rebuild depleted fish stocks. Best shipping practices to lessen the impacts on the environment and contribute to further trade in goods by sea. Water Management to help ensure oceans recover from marine litter and ocean pollution. At the same time oceans are vital carbon sink that can help alleviate climate change. Similarly, it places an important role in harnessing renewable energy for social and economic development. And finally, its impact on tourism allows for improved livelihood by increasing jobs and economic growth. Belize's own economic growth is impacted by its tourism industry as we receive thousands of visitors each year.

Blue Economy is far more than just viewing the ocean as an instrument for economic growth. Industrialized nations through shipping, commercial fishing and the extraction of crude oil have enriched their economies. Coastal developing countries such as Belize should maximize on the ocean's resources to alleviate unemployment, poverty and food security. In so doing we need to remain steadfast in our responsibility to restore, protect and manage our oceans resources for it to continue to support human development in the future.



### *Fun Facts about Belize*

**After the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, Belize ranks second in the world with its longest barrier reef which features an abundance of marine life.**