



FACT SHEET

What is the Billfish Problem?

- Billfish populations (marlin, sailfish and spearfish) are severely depleted and are in need of greater protection in international fisheries management:
 - White marlin has declined by as much as 90%
 - Striped marlin has declined by as much as 52%
 - Blue marlin has declined by as much as 65%
 - Sailfish, though data is incomplete, has markedly declined
- Billfish, which are highly migratory, are depleted because of commercial overfishing by other countries.
- Swordfish are not considered billfish by fisheries managers and are generally better managed than billfish.

Why Take Further Action in the US?

- The United States recognized the billfish problem in the Atlantic twenty-two years ago and tried to reverse this trend— by banning the commercial harvest and sale of Atlantic-caught billfish
- With the exception of striped marlin caught off the west coast, there is no similar ban on the sale of Pacific-caught billfish.
- There are no commercial fisheries targeting billfish in the US.
- But US imports of billfish remain a serious problem and contribute to overfishing — the US is the largest importer of billfish in the world.
- US billfish imports are approximately 1,335 metric tons annually, according to FDA data— about 30,000 billfish annually.
- The top five exporters of billfish to the US are: Costa Rica, Ecuador, Vietnam, South Korea and the Philippines.
- The US ban on the sale of Atlantic-caught billfish is undermined by a black market created by the Pacific-caught loophole.
- Banning the sale of Pacific caught billfish in the continental US will effectively end the importation of all billfish, and eliminate a sizeable market for exporting countries.
- Eliminating that market will help bring back billfish. It will also strengthen the US push for international measures to conserve billfish in the Pacific.

Will Banning The Sale of Billfish in The Continental US Be Good for The US Economy?

- The US recreational fishing economy generates billions of dollars of marine-related jobs and sales, from a fishery where virtually all billfish are released alive.
- Restoring billfish populations will improve recreational fishing opportunities both in the US and abroad, and that creates jobs and sales for US boat and gear manufacturers, and US marina and sports-fishing industries.
- Eliminating billfish sales in the continental US will not have negative impacts because the US seafood market is highly elastic and consumers can readily switch to other species.

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