

Trends in offshore fishery development of Sri Lanka as reflected by the fishing fleet

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Offshore fishery targeting large pelagic species such as tuna, shark and billfish is the fastest growing sector in the marine fishing industry of Sri Lanka. Around 1500 boats of 32 - 55 ft range are involved in this fishery, which now produce over 50,000 t per annum.

A recent study of the offshore fishing fleet reflects the development trends in the fishery in terms of fishing gear, communication, navigation, technology etc. While boat size and engine capacity have increased, the use of more and more longlines reflects a desire to diversity fisheries in the offshore. The use of satellite navigators and radio for navigation and communication are still limited to less than a 25% of the fishing fleet. The study also highlighted some continued constraints and limitations which need to be addressed in order to maximize the efficiency of the fishing fleet and obtain maximum economic benefits from the fishery.