

Referent: Mr. Tomislav Šegedin, dipl. oec. – IGFA Representative Croatia

Ladies and gentlemen

I would like to thank the organizing committee for the privilege and honor of inviting me to this meeting.

I would also like to convey to all of you warmest wishes from the Croatian Sea Game Anglers and especially from Jezera – the center of Big-Game fishing of the Croatian Adriatic Sea coast.

Croatia and neighboring Italy are sharing the largest part of the Adriatic Sea coasts and have the greatest number of boats for professional and recreational fishing. Off shore fishing with rod and reel has a short history.

The traditional way of fishing on our coast and islands is so called “fishing by hand” using live bait and from small wooden boats, and lately on artificial lures. It is only in the last 20 years, just after the last war, that we are noticing a growth in interest for modern recreational fishing – with rod and reel.

It was in a geographically ideally positioned little fishing village Jezera on the island called Murter that the modern ways of fishing with trolling and drifting techniques, using out and down riggers sounder, fish finders and plotters started to be more organized.

Jezera is positioned in the middle of the Croatian coast of the Adriatic Sea, on the edge of the national park Kornati with a nice protected harbor. This is the maybe, because of sea bottom configuration, richest fish territory along our coast.

In 1999, the small local Sport Fishing Club “Punta Rata” organized the first Croatian international Big Game competition participating 35 modern fisherman boats. The competition was organized this year with 60 participating boats from Croatia, Slovenia, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Czech Republic and Hungary. We also have participants from other continents, like the anglers from South African Republic taking part in last four competitions.

As the “leader of the organizational team” I have enrolled SFC “Punta Rata” into IGFA, and for 4 years now this competition is one of the qualifying tournaments for the Rolex/IGFA tournament in Cabo San Lucas in Mexico.

The winning teams in 2004 and 2006 from Croatia and Slovenia took that journey. Even though the rules of IGFA we try to follow in the competitions, the rule of C&R is not yet enforced. The majority of the catch is given to humanitarian causes, and the remainder is served up to the participants and tourists at the traditional fish-grilling dinners following the meteorologically most suitable fishing days. This competition is always held at the end of September.

In the last 5 years the average catch was between 3500 and 4500 kg altogether.

I must underline that the minimal pointed fish weight on our competition is very high – multiple times bigger than the shamefully allowed weight for the professionals. Just for an example, the most common Bluefin tuna will not be pointed if it is less than 50kg; this is the case also for the Blue and Thresher sharks and swordfish (*Xipias Gladius*). For the Mediterranean Spearfish the minimal weight is 20kg, for all other fish, Albacore, Little tuna, Amberjack (*Seriola dumerilii*) and Dorado the minimal weight is 5 kg. Just for the sake of comparing, I will say that the minimal weight for Bluefin tuna for professional fisherman is only 7 kg, and it is a known fact that tuna is fertile only after their weight reaches 50 kg!

Fishing charter boats can get their status only if their owner is a professional fisherman. That is why our charter - skippers spend a certain time of the year serving domestic and foreign recreational fisherman, and the rest of the year fishing as common professional fisherman.

Routinely the fish caught by recreational fisherman belong to the charter boat and usually ends up on a market. Seldom the skipper will give a portion of the catch to the charterer, or sell it to him for the fraction of its cost. This is not yet regulated by law, but I personally believe that it will be precisely regulated before Croatia is accepted into EU.

My recommendation to foreign fisherman who want to keep some of the tuna, swordfish or spearfish to ask for a special license for that group of fish on specific day or days, and let the skipper know. This way they can keep one fish of each kind and on that day they can keep on fishing for the second and third and so on fish with the skipper's license.

In this case, sport angler has to pay attention and make sure that the skipper is a professional fisherman. He will be the one if the registration on his boat starts with a number which is followed by the alpha identification of the port.

If the registration on a boat begins with a port alpha identification followed with number that means that the skipper is an amateur, private skipper (so called "rent a boat" person often without any license - doesn't have the license like professional fishing charterist! The charterer has to have a daily permit for fishing and is entitled for a single fish of the minimal allowed weight.

Fishing under a foreign flag without a daily permit is not recommended, since one could run into all sorts of trouble with police, coast guard or customs.

A good advice for foreigners is: if you are chartering a fishing boat, you should have a daily pass for the days you are fishing.

The price for permits varies depending of the length of the permit, and is dependant of the type of fish; license for tuna, swordfish, and spearfish fish are considerably higher.

There are two available kinds of licenses: a “sport fishing license” which allows the use of underwater guns by snorkeling without air tank and them cost 7E more, you can get in any Croatian Fishing Club than the other kind of license, the “recreational fishing license”.

Prices for license are as follows: for 1 day 8E, for 3 days 20E, for a week 45E and for a month 95 E.

Licenses for fish group “Tuna, Swordfish and Spearfish” for one day cost 17E, for 3 days 42E, for a week 85E and for a month 200E.

It is important to mention that there is a new law in Croatia which prohibits fishing with live bait. In my opinion, this is impossible to regulate on the open sea or even in the in-shore fishing because of tradition and habits. Exception is the salamonid rivers (trout) where this law is long ago obeyed without reserve.

Fishing charter boats are by a norm from 7.5 to 16 meters long, often with a flight-bridge, well equipped with sounders, plotters, radar and out and down - riggers.

Fishing equipment is good and modern different rods with Shimano and Penn reels 15 to 130 lbs and all additional equipment.

It is not rare for the boat to be equipped with a chumming machine which allows more elegant drifting.

Prices are between 400 and 800 E for a group of usually 4 fishermen daily. For more or less fisherman it has to be discussed. The drinks and meals are usually included, but that is also something that has to be agreed upon.

The biggest number of charter boats is available in Jezera, on Murter Island between cities Zadar and Sibenik .Closest airport is in Split, or for charter plains in Zadar. Murter island is connected to land via a bridge which is open and easily accessible all trough the year.

Since the best time for fishing is when there’s no wind, the best season would be between July and November. For Tunny - little the best time is around Easter, but fishing is also good in winter months like January and February when the sea is calm.

Certainly, a day without wind is good all through the year.

If you are interested in chartering a boat in Jezera, you can contact me personally. For information on any other Adriatic port in Istria, towns Rijeka, Zadar, Vodice, Split or Dubrovnik I don’t have detailed information, but I can help with Internet links so please do not hesitate to contact me between October and June. I will be happy to answer all E-mails.

And now I would like to say a few words about the types of fish most frequently found along our coast and the coast of some 1100 Croatian islands.

Apart from the already mentioned kinds from the Tuna family (more than 350 kg), different sharks (>200 kg) and Amberjacks (>45 kg) there are some interesting

types like Dentex (> 10 kg), and in the last few years Dolpfinfish (Dorado, Lampuga >20 kg) different sorts of so called blue fish like Mackerel, Calamari and other.

I would like to mention that Swordfish can be caught during the day while drifting or better at night with trolling technique on depths about 60 to 70 m using down-rigger and light sticks.

Fishing for the fish of best quality from a drifting or anchored boat in the big depths on the bottom can be very rewarding. Especially fishing around some of the most distant, often unpopulated, islands like Jabuka, Svetac, Bisevo or Palagruza. These islands are positioned on underwater cliffs and are surrounded by water of vast depths, often up to 120 m.

If you were wondering about tourist chartering, I do not know the details of the latest regulations. Their main purpose is to put a stop to unfortunately very present so called black or gray charter on the boats sailing under foreign flags.

It is required that all boats are registered in Croatian boat registry and every change of boat personnel be noted to local Harbor Captaincy. The levies are high for tourist charters so are the penalties for an unregistered crew.

The best place to enquire about information's and laws are marinas and local Harbor Captaincies.

In conclusion, I hope that I have fulfilled this charter theme answered interest about and some of your questions – for any additional information I will be available in the halls of this congress. With the entrance of Croatia to the EU I would imagine lots of things are going to be changed and precisely regulated. Considering sea fishing, it will be more regulated when a decision is made about the ecological belt between Croatia and Italy.

Once again I would like to thank the organizers of this congress for the chance to participate and visit this beautiful island.

Thank you for your attention and I would like to invite you to visit our Croatian coast, one of the most beautiful coasts of the world, which is often referred to as the “the little country for great holidays”

Thank you very much!

Jezerca, island Murter, Croatia – September 2006