

**The Commission for the Conservation and Management of
Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean**

**Scientific Committee
Twelfth Regular Session**

Bali, Indonesia
3-11 August 2016

Process for the independent review of stock assessments

The Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stock in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean,

RECOGNIZING the importance of sound scientific advice as the central piece for the conservation and management of tuna and tuna-like species in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean;

AWARE that the availability of adequate scientific information is fundamental to carrying out the objectives of the WCPFC Convention laid down in its Article 2;

NOTING the role of the Oceanic Fisheries Programme of the Pacific Community (SPC-OFP) which is contracted to provide independent scientific advice;

ACKNOWLEDGING the need to ensure that relevant, professionally independent and objective scientific advice, based on the best available and peer-reviewed scientific analysis, be provided by the Scientific Committee to the Commission;

Implements the following processes for the independent review of WCPFC stock assessments conducted by the SPC-OFP and encourage a comparable process¹ for non SPC-OFP WCPFC stock assessments:

Scientific Committee's recommendation to the Commission

1. The Scientific Committee should recommend a multi-year schedule for independent peer review of stock assessments.
2. The Scientific Committee will recommend to the Commission a specific independent peer review for a stock assessment, with an associated budget. The peer review panel will comprise three (3) independent experts. The budget will include consultancy fees, pre-workshop study, travel costs etc. and the peer review chair's attendance to report at the following Scientific Committee meeting.

Commission's approval of the peer review

¹ It is noted that the science provider to the Northern Committee, the ISC, is developing an interactive independent expert peer review process informed in part by this document.

3. The Commission at its annual meeting will consider the recommendation (Para 2. above) from the Scientific Committee for an independent peer review of a stock assessment and the associated budget.

4. Subject to the Commission's approval, the Scientific Committee will be tasked to develop Terms of Reference for the upcoming peer review and the Secretariat to implement the peer review process.

Selection of the independent peer review panel

5. The WCPFC secretariat is responsible for administering the selection and timely contracting of the three (3) independent peer reviewers.

- 1) The Secretariat will distribute a Circular seeking Member's nomination of candidate experts.
- 2) Each Member may recommend a maximum of two candidates² through their official WCPFC contacts.
- 3) Subject to the availability of the recommended experts and agreement with the terms of reference, the Science Research Sub-Committee comprising the SC Chair, the SC Theme Conveners and the Chief Scientist SPC-OFP will select eight candidates for short listing, and circulate the shortlist with their curriculum vitae to all Members.
- 4) Each Member will rank the eight candidates with scores 1 (most preferred) to 8 (less preferred) and submit these rankings to the Executive Director.
- 5) The Secretariat will finalize the list of the peer review panel and contract with the three (3) experts. If any of the selected three (3) individuals are unable to undertake the review, the shortlisted candidate next in rank will be invited to join the peer review panel.

Panel's review process

6. At the start of the review process, SPC-OFP will prepare a procedural plan including detailed schedules, activities, provision of assessment results (possibly including all the input data, modeling software, output of basic runs as well as all the sensitivity runs) and provide these to the panel for advanced reviewing.

7. Once the review process is finished, a draft review report will be provided to SPC-OFP for their review and response. If time permits, this step may be concluded towards the end of the peer review workshop.

8. The final panel report, incorporated with SPC-OFP's response(s) and the panel's feedback to SPC-OFP if needed, shall be submitted to the WCPFC Executive Director, in advance of the following Scientific Committee meeting as scheduled in the contract.

² The nomination may be for an individual or it may be to approach an organisation e.g. IATTC to provide an appropriate expert.

9. The Chair of the independent peer review panel will be expected to present the results of the review to the following Scientific Committee meeting.

10. In preparing and conducting the review process, due considerations will be devoted to the following elements.

a) Location

Peer reviews of stock assessments will be conducted at the headquarters of SPC-OFP in Noumea, New Caledonia.

b) Duration

Subject to species, a five (5) day workshop is proposed, comprising a two (2) day period for peer reviewing the stock assessment, and a further three (3) day period for iteratively reviewing and advising on various aspects of subsequent assessment runs developed in light of the first two days.

c) Scheduling

Timing is dependent upon existing schedules of the SPC-OFP, the WCPFC Secretariat and the selection process and availability of the independent expert peer reviewers. The Chair of the peer review panel will present the review to the following Scientific Committee.

d) Composition

The peer review panel should comprise three (3) independent scientists that have significant expertise and experience in all aspects of stock assessments, preferably in relation to the stock assessment under review; one of whom will be assigned the role of Chair. The reviewers should not be directly involved with current WCPFC stock assessments.

Attendance to the peer review workshop will be limited to the peer review panel members, scientists directly involved in the relevant assessments, and the Secretariat as a coordinator of the whole process.