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POSITION STATEMENT TO WCPFC14

**WCPFC14-2017-OP01
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WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC FISHERIES COMMISSION (WCPFC) MEETING, DECEMBER 3-7, 2017

Tuna Conservation

SKIPJACK, YELLOWFIN & BIGEYE TUNA

What are the issues?

Effective management measures — consistent with advice from the WCPFC Scientific Committee — are needed to ensure bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack tuna fishing mortality is maintained at sustainable levels.

Why are we concerned?

While the 2017 WCPO bigeye stock assessment is more positive than in recent years, active management needs to continue because there is still a good chance (16%) that the stock is below the adopted Limit Reference Point (LRP). Further, the Scientific Committee advised that the amount of uncertainty in the stock status results for the 2017 assessment is higher than for the previous assessment due to the inclusion of new information on bigeye growth and regional structures. The 2017 yellowfin assessment indicates that the stock is not overfished or being overfished.

Regarding skipjack tuna, there was no new stock assessment in 2017. The 2016 reference case assessment shows that the stock is around the interim Target Reference Point (TRP) adopted by WCPFC. However, without an effective means for limiting fishing capacity, fishing effort could increase in the near future.

Our Top Asks for WCPFC in 2017

- 1** Adopt effective and enforceable tuna conservation measures for all fleets to avoid an increase in fishing mortality of bigeye and yellowfin tuna.
- 2** Accelerate the development of harvest strategies for all key tuna species per the WCPFC Harvest Strategy Work Plan.
- 3** Increase the level of longline observer coverage to 20%, and finalize the development of the EM/ER standards for both longline and purse seine so that EM can be used to ultimately achieve 100% observer coverage in longline fisheries as well as the current requirement for the purse seine fishery.
- 4** Adopt science-based FAD management measures, including the use of non-entangling FAD designs.
- 5** Reform the WCPFC compliance assessment process to allow accredited observer participation.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

Consistent with the advice of the Scientific Committee, WCPFC should ensure the new tuna conservation measure:

- (1) Ensures fishing mortality on the bigeye and yellowfin tuna stocks does not increase from current levels to maintain current or increased spawning biomass until the Commission can agree on appropriate TRPs
- (2) Reduces fishing mortality in fisheries that take juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna
- (3) Adjusts fishing effort (fishing days) in the purse seine fishery to levels that will maintain skipjack around the TRP, preferably through a Harvest Control Rule

Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)

MONITORING & MANAGEMENT

What are the issues?

More data needs to be collected regarding the number of FADs being used and the details of fishing operations on individual FADs to better understand fishing capacity changes and likely impacts on WCPFC-managed stocks. That data should be used to develop science-based FAD management measures. Also, supply vessel activities related to drifting FADs increase the efficiency of the purse seiner by reducing the time needed by the purse seiner to search for or maintain FADs. Greater data collection is needed regarding supply vessels, as well as regulation and monitoring. Further, ISSF welcomed the creation of a WCPFC Working Group on FAD management options in 2014, and was pleased to participate in the 2015 and 2016 meetings.

Why are we concerned?

In the WCPO, FAD sets account for about 30% of tropical tuna catches. It's time for a concerted global effort to better monitor and manage FAD usage in every ocean region. Shark mortality and other FAD-fishing ecosystem impacts in the WCPO need to be reduced; using non-entangling FAD designs and moving towards biodegradable FADs are critical steps.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

- (1) Adopt the Scientific Committee recommendations to add a new section of "FAD Information" in the ROP Minimum Standard Data Fields that will include inventories of the FAD buoys on board at the start and end of each trip and field for FAD Identification.
- (2) Adopt the proposed text in the Rev5 of the Draft Bridging Measure for Tropical Tunas, either as part of the tuna measure or as a stand-alone CMM, that would require the design and deployment of non-entangling FADs as of 1 January 2019, and encourages further research on non-entangling and biodegradable materials.
- (3) Urgently adopt measures for the management of FADs in the WCPO, such as science-based limits on FAD deployments and/or FAD sets, and require that FAD buoy tracking data be provided to the Scientific Committee with appropriate time lags to ensure confidentiality.
- (4) With respect to supply and tender vessels:
 - (i) Ensure any FAD management measures fully cover supply and tender vessels.

- (ii) Adopt the Scientific Committee recommendation that the FAD data fields be reported by supply and tender vessels in addition to fishing vessels.
- (iii) Collect data on the number and use of supply vessels, including identifying which particular purse seine vessels each support, and the number of FADs being deployed and serviced by such vessels.
- (iv) Identify on the Record of Fishing Vessels what activities supply vessels are engaged in, whether they are working as bait boats, servicing FADs, or engaging in fishing.
- (v) Ensure observer coverage requirements apply to supply vessels so data from these fishing activities are collected and reported.

Harvest Strategies

What are the issues?

Last year, WCPFC adopted an initial set of performance indicators for tropical purse seine fisheries for the purpose of evaluating harvest control rules, guidance on estimated levels of risk of breaching a limit reference point, and an interim rebuilding time frame for bigeye tuna.

These actions pave the way for WCPFC to implement a comprehensive harvest strategy that fisheries can follow to ensure stocks are maintained at an optimal level.

Why are we concerned?

Harvest Strategies — which include target and limit reference points together with harvest control rules — provide pre-agreed rules for managing fisheries resources and acting in response to stock status changes. It is important to ensure that these pre-agreed rules are robust because these rules and strategies help to rebuild stocks or avoid overfishing. And they reduce the need for protracted negotiations and delays that can lead to further stock declines.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

ISSF urges the Commission to adhere to the updated [2015 harvest strategy work plan](#) and take the decisions necessary this year (e.g., a target reference point for yellowfin tuna and South Pacific albacore, and development of harvest control rules for skipjack, bigeye, South Pacific albacore and yellowfin tuna) to allow MSE and other work to proceed as scheduled in 2018.

Bycatch and Sharks

SHARKS, RAYS, SEA TURTLES & SEA BIRDS

What are the issues?

In 2016, the Scientific Committee recommended that the Commission reconsider [CMM 2010-07](#) that allows CCMs to exclude one mitigation technique (either wire trace or shark-lines) because it has the potential to severely weaken effectiveness. This year, the Scientific Committee recommended further work on the Shark Research Plan and safe release guidelines for rays. The Scientific Committee also noted that the WCPFC has not yet adopted guidelines for the safe release of silky and oceanic whitetip sharks.

Why are we concerned?

Shark lines are used in many fisheries and these catch mostly silky and oceanic whitetip sharks, whose retention is prohibited in the WCPFC. Additionally, requiring sharks be landed with fins naturally attached is the best way to monitor compliance with finning bans (given low observer coverage rates in some fisheries) while collecting species-specific data on shark catches that is vital to the long-term conservation and management of shark populations.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

- (1) Adopt the [SC12 recommendations on sharks](#) to prohibit the use of shark lines in order to improve compliance.
- (2) Adopt the [SC13 recommended Shark Research Plan](#) and future work plan and the safe release guidelines for rays.
- (3) Adopt a CMM to require that sharks be landed with fins still naturally attached to improve compliance and species specific data collection.
- (4) Direct the Scientific Committee to develop guidelines for the safe release of silky and oceanic whitetip sharks.

Monitoring, Control and Surveillance

OBSERVER COVERAGE AND ELECTRONIC MONITORING

What are the issues?

Comprehensive observer coverage is a critical component of monitoring and management for sustainable tropical tuna fisheries. For large-scale purse seiners, WCPFC implemented a 100% observer coverage requirement. Yet the requirement for longline fisheries is only 5%. The science committees for IATTC and ICCAT have recommended 20% longline observer coverage, a level appropriate to provide reasonable estimates of total bycatch. If human onboard observers are not possible for certain fleets or vessel sizes, including longliners, then guidelines for using electronic monitoring should be adopted. ISSF is pleased that in 2016, the WCPFC adopted operational logsheet data standards for electronic reporting and made progress in developing electronic reporting observer data standards.

Why are we concerned?

Available data on observer coverage in longline fisheries indicates some fleets are not even meeting the 5% mandatory minimum requirement. Observer data can be used for monitoring vessel compliance with management measures. The paucity of data on longline catches and interactions with non-target species prevents assessments — hindering scientific input on effective conservation measures.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

- (1) Strengthen CCM compliance with the existing 5% observer coverage requirement by identifying and sanctioning non-compliance through the Compliance Committee.
- (2) Increase the level of longline observer coverage to 20%, which has been recommended by the scientific committees of IATTC and ICCAT, in order to provide reasonable estimates of bycatch and to improve overall monitoring of the fishery.
- (3) Direct the WCPFC Electronic Reporting and Electronic Monitoring Working Group to convene in 2018 to finalize the development of the EM/ER standards for both longline and purse seine so that EM can be used to ultimately achieve 100% observer coverage in longline fisheries as well as the current requirement for the purse seine fishery.

(4) Adopt the Scientific Committee recommendations on electronic reporting and monitoring.

TRANSSHIPMENT

What are the issues?

Members do not provide required transshipment reports or advance notifications. ISSF also recognizes that electronic monitoring systems and e-reporting are being tested and developed, which could potentially be used to address some of these problems.

Why are we concerned?

Transshipment at sea can pose a high IUU risk if monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures are insufficient.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

Amend its transshipment measure (CMM 2009-06) in order to address these significant gaps in its effectiveness, which affect traceability of the products and could result in IUU fishing.

PORT STATE MEASURES

What are the issues?

Effective port State measures form an important component of a suite of MCS tools essential to combatting IUU fishing.

Why are we concerned?

Port State measures will be most effective if implemented on a regional basis by all those engaged in the fishery, and consistent with the standards prescribed in the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

(1) For all Members that have not yet done so, to ratify the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing

(2) Adopt a measure to give effect to it at a regional level.

TRANSPARENCY IN CATCH OR EFFORT LIMITS

What are the issues?

WCPFC has adopted catch or effort limits for bigeye, yellowfin, skipjack and albacore tunas. However, during a given year, there is no transparent mechanism for Member reporting when the total and/or allocated catch or effort limits are being approached and if Members are within the prescribed limits. This mechanism would allow RFMO CCMs and markets to make necessary conservation decisions during a given year if quotas are being achieved more quickly than anticipated.

Why are we concerned?

A lack of monitoring how Members are approaching, or possibly exceeding, annual individual catch or effort limits for particular tuna stocks, or a total allowable catch or total allowable effort for a specific tuna stocks, prevents rapid and precautionary conservation, management and purchasing decisions within a given year.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

Transparently report its in-season catch or effort status with respect to their Individual catch or effort limits and/or annual TACs or TAEs, where specified.

Compliance

COMPLIANCE PROCESSES

What are the issues?

In contrast to the other four tuna RFMOs, the WCPFC Compliance Monitoring Scheme (CMS) working group is closed to accredited observers. Further, the responses of Members to identified non-compliance are not released *publicly*. Member reports on the implementation of WCPFC measures, known as *Part II reports*, also remain confidential. Members must recognize that a strong compliance process improves fisheries management. In addition, the WCPFC does not yet have a scheme of responses to non-compliance.

Why are we concerned?

The CMS working group reviews and assesses Members' implementation of critical WCPFC conservation measures and determines if there has been non-compliance. And the group considers if measures are unclear, or if other factors are causing gaps in full implementation. Transparency in this process through the participation of accredited observers is essential for this work to be considered fair and trustworthy. If compliance discussions take place behind closed doors, with no openness or checks on accountability, the public and market can have little confidence in the sustainable management of the region's fisheries.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

- (1) Reform its CMS process so that accredited observers may attend the working group meetings and information on CCM's plans to address the areas of identified non-compliance be made public.
- (2) Develop a scheme of responses to non-compliance as soon as possible.

Capacity Management

VESSEL REGISTRIES & FLEET CAPACITY

What are the issues?

Experts agree that there is overcapacity in the global tuna fleets.

Why are we concerned?

ISSF continues to be concerned with the global growth of fishing capacity in WCPFC. Fishing fleet overcapacity increases pressure to weaken management measures, and eventually it leads to stock overexploitation.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

- (1) Establish limited entry through closed vessel registries, and develop a common currency to measure fishing capacity, such as cubic meters of well volume.
- (2) To impose and enforce, as a precautionary measure, measures to limit longliner capacity in the Convention Area and task the SC to make recommendations regarding the levels of longline capacity consistent with sustainable management of target tuna stocks.
- (3) Support the Kobe III call for creating mechanisms to transfer capacity to developing countries.

Did you know?

ISSF is leading research on biodegradable FADs in collaboration with fleets operating in the EPO, coastal nations, and other stakeholders.

ISSF develops resources for the vessel community, including skippers guidebooks on bycatch-mitigation techniques and as well as reports on electronic monitoring and vessel monitoring systems.

ISSF offers guidelines for implementing non-entangling FADs.

ISSF Global Priorities for Tuna RFMOs

Implementation of rigorous harvest strategies, including harvest control rules and reference points.

Effective management of fleet capacity, including developing mechanisms that support developing coastal state engagement in the fishery.

Science-based FAD management & non-entangling FAD designs.

Increased member compliance with all adopted measures adopted, and greater transparency of processes reviewing member compliance with measures.

Strengthened Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) measures and increased observer coverage, including through modern technologies such as electronic monitoring and e-reporting.



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