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**Industry Letter to WCPFC on Swordfish and Mahi Mahi**

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**WCPFC15-2018-OP21  
14 December 2018  
1530**

**Submitted by  
SFP**

# PROPOSAL FOR DEFINING SPECIES-SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR COMMERCIALY IMPORTANT MIGRATORY LARGE PELAGIC FISH STOCKS IN THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC OCEAN

**To: The Attending Representatives of Commission Member States, Cooperating Non-Member States, Participating Territories and Observers to the Fifteenth Regular Session of the Commission for Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPFC15)**

**From: List of Signatories, Appendix 1**

**December 3, 2018**

Dear representatives to the WCPFC15:

The undersigned, representatives of seafood industry businesses involved with large pelagic fisheries in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, want to highlight the need to reinforce the recognized excellent work that the commission is already doing by suggesting the adoption of further conservation measures related to species other than tuna that are also highly migratory and of great commercial value and importance, such as swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) and mahi mahi (*Coryphaena hippurus*).

## **1. Proposal regarding Swordfish**

In August 2018, WCPFC released a new “Stock Assessment for Swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) in the Western and Central North Pacific Ocean through 2016 WCPFC-SC14-2018/ SA-WP-07 Rev. 1 (11 August 2018)”. In the section titled “Abstract”, on page 1 of this document it is stated that “Overall, the base case model indicated that the WCNPO swordfish stock is not likely overfished and is not likely experiencing overfishing relative to MSY-based or 20% of unfished biomass-based reference points”. This is, undoubtedly, very good news.

It is also noted on page 2 and 3 of this document, under “Status of Stock”, that the Western and Central North Pacific Ocean (WCNPO) swordfish “population biomass (age-1 and older) averaged roughly 98,000 mt between 1974-1978, the first 5 years of the assessment time frame, and has declined only 20% to about 72,000 mt in 2016”, which reveals an modest exploitation rate.

In the outcomes document, the Scientific Working Group has suggested some biological reference points, and the agenda for the WCPFC15 put on the table a discussion about a harvest strategy for this species. We congratulate the Commission for this, as globally recognized good management practices strongly recommend having target and limit reference points and harvest control rules. This is also important for getting a practical approach to ecosystem-based management.

With swordfish under the scope of the WCPFC, and having an accepted stock assessment for this stock, we respectfully propose to discuss how to advance further to have the aforementioned tools in place and operative as soon as possible.

Such measures will also greatly contribute to what has been established in Paragraph 7 of WCPFC CMM 2009-3: “Recognizing the need for both Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATCC) and WCPFC to adopt conservation and management measures to provide for the sustainable management of swordfish stocks across the Pacific Ocean.”

## **2. Proposal regarding Mahi Mahi**

Currently WCPFC does not require mahi mahi (mahi) catch data from Member States, Cooperating Non-member States or Participating Territories and has not provided any species or stock-specific management measures for this species.

However, WCPFC Resolution 2005 – 03 notes “the importance of many non-target fish species such as mahi mahi, rainbow runner and wahoo for sustainable livelihoods in many communities in the Convention Area”.

Further, in the introduction section to WCPFC–SC2–2006/EB WP–1 “Ecological Risk Assessment for species caught in WCPO tuna fisheries: Inherent risk as determined by Productivity-Susceptibility Analysis”, it is stated that “There is a general acceptance that *highly migratory species* (UNCLOS Annex 1) are the primary group of species that the WCPO Convention and Commission have been designed to manage”. Mahi is one of these species and was included in the PSA in WCPFC–SC2–2006/EB WP–1, where it was assessed as having a moderate to moderately high ecological risk.

While mahi is an important by-catch species for the industrial tuna fisheries in the area of the convention, it is an undervalued species for many small scale fisheries in South East Asia.

With all of this in mind, the undersigned ask the Commission to (i) make binding the catch reporting for mahi from Members and Cooperating Non-members with immediate effect, and (ii) task the Scientific Committee to plan stock assessment work for this species with the goal of completion within the next three years and (iii) to define minimum management measures based on the PSA results of WCPFC–SC2–2006/EB WP–1, while waiting for the results of the future stock assessment.

Improving the management of this species will help protect these fisheries against potential over-exploitation in the future. It will also help provide the benefits of well-managed and internationally recognized sustainable swordfish and mahi fisheries to fishing communities throughout the WCNPO, especially those depending on small scale fisheries.

These measures are also an increasing requirement of the markets where these products are sold, so adopting them, aside from the benefits to conservation, will also help maintain the value chain and the great number of livelihoods depending on them. For small scale mahi fisheries, reaching the best sustainable standards for management can be a powerful tool to gain new markets and therefore to improve the incomes of thousands of fishers, their families and their communities.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned

Appendix 1: List of Signatories



Centro Desarrollo y Pesca Sostenible  
Center for Development and Sustainable Fisheries  
Trung Tâm Phát Triển và Thủy Sản bền Vững

*Ernesto Godelman*



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