

**The Pew Charitable Trusts**  
**Statement to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission**  
**16<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Scientific Committee**  
**12-20 August 2020, online**

The Pew Charitable Trusts appreciates the opportunity to participate as an observer at the 16<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Scientific Committee (SC16) of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. We appreciate the work of the Secretariat, scientific services provider, SC16 chair and theme convenors, and all members to convene SC16 virtually due to the extraordinary situation stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge all members to consider how to ramp up the introduction of new technologies and approaches, such as electronic monitoring and harvest strategies, which, once implemented, would provide greater resilience and stability to the management of the region's fisheries, and help 'shock proof' management to the disruptions caused by situations such as COVID-19. Regarding the limited items on SC16's agenda, we urge members to:

- **Consider the results of the 2020 assessments of bigeye and yellowfin tunas and provide advice to enable the Commission to maintain those stocks at or above the average SB/SB<sub>F=0</sub> for 2012-2015**, as specified in the stock specific objectives of the tropical tuna bridging measure (CMM 2018-01).
- **Provide advice to enable the Pacific Community to advance its harvest strategies development analyses, including by offering input on candidate harvest control rules for skipjack and South Pacific albacore and the range of settings to be used in further analysis of potential bigeye and yellowfin target reference points.**
- **Reemphasize the prior recommendation for the Commission create a working group or alternative approach to facilitate harvest strategies-related discussions among managers, scientists and stakeholders.** Working paper SC16-MI-WP-03 notes that a dialogue process is needed to allow for the WCFPC to further clarify its management objectives and eventually select the 'best performing' management procedure.
- **Recommend that the Commission adopt a conservation and management measure for a Regional Electronic Monitoring Programme and approve the use of accredited EM programs to collect necessary datasets.** Papers submitted to SC16 show how an EM programme would help address the current differences in the coverage of longline and purse seine observer data (SC16-ST-IP-02), provide data for a potential mobulid assessment (SC16-SA-IP-12), and collect more comprehensive information on cetacean interactions (SC16-ST-IP-12).
- **Advise against increasing catch limits for Pacific bluefin tuna**, since the stock remains severely depleted, at just 4.5% of its unfished level, and rebuilding trajectories rely heavily on a highly uncertain assumption that recruitment will increase when the first rebuilding target is achieved.

Lastly, we urge SC16 members to consider ways to make progress in developing scientific advice for other pressing matters that are not included for discussion in the meeting agenda, such as the status and management of bycatch species, including, but not limited to, oceanic whitetip shark and north Pacific striped marlin, to enable the Commission to take action at the earliest possible opportunity.