



**DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW WCPFC TROPICAL TUNA MEASURE
WORKSHOP 1 (TTMW1)
Electronic Meeting
26-30 April 2021**

**FFA SUBMISSION TO THE 1ST WCPFC WORKSHOP ON THE TROPICAL TUNA
MEASURE**

**WCPFC-TTMW1-2021-DP02
26 March 2021**

Submitted by FFA Members



FFA

26 March 2021

Jung-Re Riley Kim
Chair
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
PO Box 2356, Kolonia
FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

Dear Ms Kim,

FFA submission to the 1st WCPFC workshop on the Tropical Tuna Measure

FFA members thank the Commission Chair for arranging the first workshop and providing the FFA with an opportunity to present our views on the Scope and Objectives of the Tropical Tuna Measure, the primary focus of this workshop. In addition, we also put forward our initial views on other key components of the tropical tuna measure, noting that these views may be subject to change.

We emphasise that the critical requirement of any revised Tropical Tuna Measure is that it must be compliant with all of the provisions of the Convention, including through accurate and comprehensive accounting of SIDS related issues such as specific elements of Articles 10(3) and 30 and a full analysis in relation to CMM2013-06 requirements. FFA members welcome dialogue pursuant to these requirements with any CCMs wishing to propose amendments to the Tropical Tuna Measure.

Items to be addressed under the Agenda of the 1st WCPFC Tropical Tuna Workshop

General

FFA members advocate a precautionary approach to changes to the current measures in the CMM, noting that:

- the current CMM is working well and provides a carefully balanced approach to the sustainable management of the WCPO tropical tuna stocks;
- the current CMM has been confirmed by the WCPFC Scientific Committee (SC) to be maintaining the status of the bigeye and yellowfin stocks at sustainable levels and is continuing to achieve the objectives for the fisheries on the key tuna stocks;
- the impact of the changes made to the CMM in 2017, including the removal of the 4th month FAD closure, the reduction of the high seas FAD closure and the increased longline bigeye catch limits won't be properly known until the next round of assessments;
- the SC has advised that, given the level of uncertainty in the new assessments of bigeye and yellowfin stock status, peer reviews of the stock assessments are pending; and
- the SC recommends that fishing mortality on the bigeye tuna stock should not be increased from the level that maintains spawning biomass at 2012-2015 levels until the Commission can agree on an appropriate target reference point.

The FFA takes the advice of the SC very seriously and therefore adopts a precautionary approach to any changes to the existing measure. We also note that, following the significant technical concerns of the SC, there will be an independent review in 2022 of the stock assessments for bigeye and yellowfin tuna and until the outcomes of this review are available any revisions to the Measure should strengthen rather than weaken its provisions.

FFA members attach high priority to maintaining the current careful balance of interests between fisheries (ie. longline and purse-seine), and between CCMs in relation to conservation burden, that has been achieved in the current measure arising from careful and considered negotiations over many years. If there are to be changes within the CMM, that balance needs to be maintained.

The CMM needs to continue to reflect the importance of the rights and interests of coastal States, especially small island developing States that are highly dependent on the regional tuna resources. In this respect, the CMM needs to reflect the responsibilities of the Commission under Article 30 and CMM 2013-06.

Scope

FFA members would like to make the following proposals on scope and duration of the measure:

Geographical area - This CMM shall apply to the high seas and to the EEZs of coastal States and participating territories in the WCPF Convention Area, except where otherwise stated in the Measure.

Stocks - This CMM shall apply to the skipjack (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), yellowfin (*Thunnus albacares*) and bigeye (*Thunnus obesus*) tuna stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.

Duration of the Measure - FFA members support a three-year duration for the new Measure. There should continue to be a requirement for annual review on the implementation and effectiveness of the measure.

Objectives

FFA Members see the CMM as continuing to provide a bridge to the adoption of harvest strategies for bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin tuna stocks in the manner laid out in the Harvest Strategy Workplan. Noting the work in the near term to review the yellowfin stock assessment and components of the bigeye assessment, FFA members maintain our support of the current objectives for these stocks pending the outcome of these reviews.

- General purpose of the measure: ‘The purpose of this measure is to ensure the sustainability of bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin tuna stocks’ pending the adoption of a harvest strategy for those stocks and/or fisheries in accordance with the work plan and indicative timeframes set out in the Agreed Work Plan for the Adoption of Harvest Strategies under CMM 2014-06, which includes the development of management objectives and target reference points.
- BET: Maintain current objective: ‘Pending agreement on a target reference point, the spawning biomass depletion ratio (SB/SBF=0) is to be maintained at, or above, the average SB/SBF=0 for 2012-2015.’
- YFT: Maintain current objective: ‘Pending agreement on a target reference point, the spawning biomass depletion ratio (SB/SBF=0) is to be maintained at, or above, the average SB/SBF=0 for 2012-2015.’
- SKJ: FFA propose new text, basing the objective on maintaining the fishery relative to 2012 conditions: ‘Maintain spawning biomass at the 2012 levels, on average, and effort across the fishery should be maintained at a level consistent with the level of purse seine fishing effort for skipjack in 2012.’

Other issues

FFA Members take this opportunity to highlight two areas of particular focus in the development of the new Tropical Tuna measure. These are the areas that were specified in CMM2018-01 as requiring decisions by the Commission and that represent gaps in the current management arrangements.

High Seas Purse Seine Limits FFA members expect the Commission to agree to an overall purse seine effort limit to apply on the high seas of the Convention Area.

FFA Members will be seeking an allocation of the high seas limit that reflects key provisions contained in Article 10 and Article 30 of the Convention, as well as Article 25 of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement.

Long line limits FFA members can no longer support a measure that does not provide adequate controls on longline fishing in the high seas. Instead, the new Tropical Tuna measure must specify a specific limit on longline bigeye tuna catch and/or effort in the high seas that is compatible with measures implemented by FFA members for management of longline fisheries within our EEZs.

FFA members will also be looking to incorporate a range of longline monitoring related elements into the new measure. These include strengthening data reporting and observer coverage (including through electronic reporting and electronic monitoring), transshipment reform, bigeye catch verification via CDS (catch documentation) to the first point of sale, and greater transparency with respect to movement of vessels between EEZs and the high seas.

Concluding remarks

We thank you for your efforts on the scheduling arrangements for the Tropical Tuna Workshop. However, FFA Members were disappointed that, again, the strongly stated position of the FFA that meetings of the Commission, and its subsidiary bodies, must be held during the normal business hours of the WCPFC Secretariat was not taken into account when scheduling the meeting, resulting in more time spent on this issue.

FFA Members look forward to engaging with other CCMs on the important issues relating to the Commission's key tuna conservation measure at the upcoming WCPFC Tropical Tuna Measure workshop, under your direction and leadership.

Yours sincerely,



Eugene Pangelinan,
Chair
Forum Fisheries Committee

CC: Feleti Teo, WCPFC Executive Director