



COMMISSION
FOURTEENTH REGULAR SESSION
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**PROPOSAL FOR ESTABLISHING A TARGET REFERENCE POINT FOR SOUTH
PACIFIC ALBACORE**

WCPFC14-2017-DP13
3 November 2017

Proposal by FFA Member CCMs



3 November 2017

Feleti P. Teo OBE
Executive Director
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
PO Box 2356, Kolonia
Federated States of Micronesia

Dear Feleti,

Proposal for Establishing a Target Reference Point for South Pacific Albacore

This proposal is made on behalf of the 17 members of the Forum Fisheries Agency. The proposal is for a brief and simple Conservation and Management Measure that will establish a Target Reference Point for the stock that reflects a management objective that will benefit all CCMs with a real interest in the fishery: that of increasing south Pacific albacore catch rates over a period of time.

This proposal has emerged from the discussion and evidence presented at WCPFC Scientific Committee meetings, the WCPFC Management Objectives Workshops and Harvest Strategy Workshop, the WCPFC Consultation on a Bridging Measure for South Pacific Albacore Tuna, as well as meetings of the Tokelau Arrangement and the FFA Management Options Consultation.

Following these formal meetings, and recent more informal meetings, FFA members feel that CCMs with an interest in fisheries for South Pacific Albacore now have a much better understanding of each other's objectives, concerns and constraints. We will be attending WCPFC14 with the objective of taking the views of other CCMs into account, but our priority is to maintain the long-term viability of what is a very important fishery for us, taking place mainly in our own waters.

We have attached responses to the questions posed under the CMM on Disproportionate Burden. CCMs will note that we are very aware of the effort reductions that are required in this fishery before it can be restored to a reasonable level of financial sustainability, and the undeniable development impacts that this will have on us. FFA members note that future allocation of reductions and the potential distribution of conservation burdens will need to be very carefully considered by the Commission in the design of management measures to achieve the TRP over time. A precautionary approach will need to be taken to avoid placing a disproportionate burden on developing small-island coastal CCMs.

We look forward to constructive and productive dialogue at WCPFC14 and would welcome any inquiries on the subject, which can be directed to the FFA Secretariat (wez.norris@ffa.int and tim.adams@ffa.int).

Yours sincerely

Chair
Forum Fisheries Committee

ATTACHMENT 1 –

Application of CMM 2013-06 to the FFA South Pacific Albacore TRP CMM proposal

The following information is offered to assist the Commission to meet the requirements of CMM 2013-06 in respect of this draft CMM.

a. Who is required to implement the proposal?

All CCMs will be required to implement this proposal in their cooperation to establish a harvest strategy for WCPO south Pacific albacore tuna.

b. Which CCMs would this proposal impact and in what way(s) and what proportion?

This measure concerns the South Pacific Albacore stock which, by definition, only occurs in the Pacific south of the equator. And in practice is taken primarily only by vessels fishing south of 5°S. It therefore concerns coastal States with EEZs extending south of the equator, and the flag or chartering CCMs of vessels fishing on the high seas south of the equator.

Achieving and maintaining a TRP that restores economic viability in the fishery will require reductions in effort. These reductions will be spread over time, but will undoubtedly come at some cost to stakeholders. The implementation of this proposal through future Harvest Strategy actions, in the course of restoring the fishery to sustainable levels of financial viability will therefore have a short-term impact on all CCMs involved in fishing for WCPO south Pacific albacore tuna.

Medium-term impacts will be greatest on SIDS in whose waters fishing for south Pacific albacore tuna largely takes place, noting that around 70% of the catch is taken in EEZs, and will particularly affect those for whom albacore fisheries are a significant proportion of the national economy. There are also several SIDS that have not yet developed fisheries for south Pacific albacore in their own waters, but do have intentions to take up the opportunities afforded to them under the WCPFC Convention. The longer-term impact on SIDS will depend on how the Commission implements the TRP in future Harvest Strategy mechanisms, noting the importance of the Commission giving full recognition to the special requirements of SIDS, but it is expected that the long-term benefit of a fully bioeconomically-sustainable fishery at the national scale will greatly outweigh the shorter-term impacts – by rebuilding profitability that has been eroded through lack of regulation of expanding catches in the past.

c. Are there linkages with other proposals or instruments in other regional fisheries management organizations or international organizations that reduce the burden of implementation?

Yes, a subregional standard for a South Pacific albacore interim TRP, of the kind referred to by Article 5c of the WCPFC Convention, has already been set by the Participants in the Tokelau Arrangement. FFA member are seeking a commission TRP that is compatible and comparable in effect with this, although expressed in different terms (catch rate rather than proportion of unfished spawning biomass). Tokelau Arrangement Participants are committed to developing and applying national EEZ management measures that support the achievement of the TKA iTRP, but would prefer to be aligned with a region-wide TRP adopted by the Commission, provided this can achieve a similar improvement in catch rate over time.

d. Does the proposal affect development opportunities for SIDS?

Yes. As described above, catch and/or effort reductions necessary to achieve a TRP, and will have some medium-term development implications for SIDS. The proposal will contribute to effective management and conservation of the WCPO south Pacific albacore tuna stock. Achieving the TRP will restore catch rates and profitability for fishing vessels, which contributes to development opportunities by ensuring a valuable fishery.

e. Does the proposal affect SIDS domestic access to resources and development aspirations?

Yes, as described above.

f. What resources, including financial and human capacity, are needed by SIDS to implement the proposal?

SIDS will need assistance in the further development and application of the precautionary approach to the conservation and management of WCPO south Pacific albacore tuna, including the application of the TRP that is adopted. This is a recognised priority, with assistance already being provided by the SPC, FFA, the PNAO and the WCPFC, through a range of workshops and technical advisory activities, including the WCPFC Management Objectives Workshops, supported also by Australia, New Zealand, GEF, Pew, WWF and the World Bank. Work in this area will need to continue to be recognised as a priority.

g. What mitigation measures are included in the proposal?

Not applicable to this specific measure, which balances short-term impacts on development activity against long-term improvement of development prospects. The Commission will need to monitor the implementation of this measure, and identify any specific mitigation measures for SIDS that are not already provided for by direct assistance from the donor community.

h. What assistance mechanisms and associated timeframe, including training and financial support, are included in the proposal to avoid a disproportionate burden on SIDS?

Current and projected programmes of assistance are expected to meet the medium-term needs for training and technical assistance to SIDS, provided the current priority is maintained.

ATTACHMENT 2

FFA Proposal for a Conservation and Management Measure for a Target Reference Point for South Pacific Albacore Tuna

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC):

Recalling that the objective of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (the Convention) is to ensure through effective management, the long-term conservation and sustainable use of highly migratory fish stocks of the Western and Central Pacific Ocean in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA);

Recalling that Annex II of UNFSA sets out guidelines for the application of precautionary reference points in conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks;

Recalling also that in article 5 (c) of the Convention, members of the Commission have committed to apply the precautionary approach in accordance with the Convention and all relevant internationally agreed standards and recommended practices and procedures,

Further recalling that Article 6.1 (a) requires members of the Commission in their application of the precautionary approach to apply the guidelines set out in Annex II of UNFSA and determine, on the basis of the best scientific information available, stock-specific reference points and the action to be taken if they are exceeded;

Noting that the Commission has adopted a Conservation and Management Measure on Establishing a Harvest Strategy for Key Fisheries and Stocks in The Western and Central Pacific Ocean and has committed to defer the possible adoption of an interim Target Reference Point for the South Pacific Albacore stock until December 2017 at the latest;

Desiring to make progress on the development of a harvest strategy for fisheries for WCPO south Pacific albacore tuna through the adoption of a Target Reference Point for this stock;

Mindful that many CCMs that are Small Island Developing States intend to develop sustainable fisheries for south Pacific albacore in their EEZs;

Adopts, in accordance with Article 10 of the Convention, the following conservation and management measure on a target reference point for south Pacific albacore:

1. Our shared objective is to deliver a fishery for south Pacific albacore that supports higher longline catch rates than have been obtained in the period 2010-2016.
2. Our targets for the future are as follows:
 - a. Interim Target: By 2028, the south Pacific albacore vulnerable biomass (a proxy for average albacore catch rate in the longline fishery) will be 10% higher than the fishery average in 2013; and

- b. Target: By 2038, the south Pacific albacore vulnerable biomass will be 17% higher than the fishery average in 2013.
3. The Commission shall amend or develop appropriate conservation and management measures to implement a harvest control rule, developed in accordance with CMM 2014-06, with the objective of maintaining the south Pacific albacore vulnerable biomass at the target levels and according to the timeframes specified in paragraph 2. The harvest control rule shall be designed such that the management control to be implemented would result in the target being achieved on average in the long term, taking account of uncertainty.
4. The Scientific Committee shall refer to the target reference points in its assessment of the status of the WCPO south Pacific albacore tuna stock and in reporting to the Commission on management advice and implications for this stock.
5. This targets specific to this CMM shall be reviewed by the Commission no later than 2023 and may be reviewed by the Commission any time relevant new information is made available, such as when any issues are identified resulting from the development of harvest control rules. The Commission shall pay particular attention to any future recommendations of the Scientific Committee relating to the target reference points.