

WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC FISHERIES COMMISSION (WCPFC) VIRTUAL MEETING, DECEMBER 8-15, 2020

The impacts of COVID-19 have presented challenges to regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) in conducting meetings in 2020. The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission cancelled its in-person Scientific Committee, Technical and Compliance Committee and Commission. These meetings are all being held virtually.

Even under these challenging circumstances, WCPFC must ensure the uninterrupted, sustainable management of the tuna stocks and marine ecosystems under its purview. In particular, there are several critical measures and issues that require immediate attention by WCPFC this year.

This Statement focuses on those critical measures and issues on which WCPFC must take action in 2020 or advance work in 2021, which align with the ISSF global priorities for tuna RFMOs.

Our Top Asks for WCPFC in 2020/2021:

1. Ensure that the existing tuna conservation measure (CMM 2018-01) does not lapse.
2. Adopt a work plan for FADs with a timeframe to transition to FADs without nets and made primarily with biodegradable materials, develop recovery policies and a marking scheme, and require FAD position data and acoustic records.
3. Adopt minimum standards for the use of electronic monitoring in WCPFC fisheries.
4. Advance the adoption of target reference points for bigeye and yellowfin and adopt a harvest control rule for skipjack.
5. Accelerate the remaining work to reform the CMS, including allowing observer participation.

Tuna Conservation

What are the issues?

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

Why are we concerned?

In 2020, SC16 conducted new assessments of bigeye and yellowfin tuna and found that they remain healthy. SC16 recommended that fishing mortality on 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 current tuna conservation measure (CMM 2018-01), is only effective until February 10, 2021. The WCPFC must ensure that a measure at least as effective continues to apply throughout 2021.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

Ensure that CMM 2018-01, which is only effective until February 10, 2021, does not lapse.

FADs Management

What are the issues?

In the WCPFC, FAD sets account for about 33% of tropical tuna catches. Given the high risk of ecosystem impacts, it is essential to report the number of FADs being deployed and FAD position data and trajectories to develop science-based management measures.

Why are we concerned?

Currently deployed FADs should be lower-entangling and fleets should be moving towards fully non-entangling using biodegradable materials to mitigate ecosystem impacts. Requiring additional FAD data and FAD marking mechanisms also are critical.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

- (1) Amend CMM 2018-01 in 2020, or include in a new CMM in 2021:
 - (i) A clear timeframe to transition to FADs without nets and made primarily with biodegradable materials.
 - (ii) A workplan to design and adopt FAD-recovery mechanisms and incentives by 2022.
 - (iii) A requirement for vessels to provide complete FAD position data and acoustic records from echosounder buoys.
 - (iv) A workplan to develop and adopt a FAD marking scheme by 2022 for all new FAD deployments, regardless of vessel type, that requires that FADs be marked on both the buoy and the FAD structure.
- (2) Request the Scientific Committee to provide science-based limits on FAD deployments and/or FAD sets.

Harvest Strategies

What are the issues?

Harvest Strategies — which include target and limit reference points together with harvest control rules — provide pre-agreed rules for managing fisheries resources and acting on stock status changes.

Why are we concerned?

The timeframes in the original Harvest Strategy Work Plan (CMM 2014-06) have lapsed. The 2019 assessment of skipjack indicates that biomass has been below the target level for a decade and this needs to be managed through a Harvest Control Rule (HCR). The MSC established deadlines for harvest strategy (HS) and HCR (Principle 1) conditions, after which certifications will be suspended. In the WCPFC: (i) HCRs must be adopted by **June 2022** for southern albacore and by **May 2024** for northern albacore; (ii) a HS must be in place by **June 2022** for western Pacific skipjack; and (iii) an HCR must be adopted by **June 2022** for western Pacific yellowfin.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

- (1) In 2020, decide what additional work, if any, is required of the Scientific Committee to advance target reference points for bigeye and yellowfin, so that the work can be undertaken in 2021.
- (2) In 2020 or 2021, adopt a harvest control rule for skipjack.

Monitoring, Control and Surveillance

OBSERVER COVERAGE AND ELECTRONIC MONITORING

What are the issues?

Comprehensive observer coverage is critical to effective fisheries management, compliance monitoring, and independent verification of catch, effort and species interactions (e.g., sharks, sea turtles and whale sharks).

Why are we concerned?

Some CCMs do not meet the minimum 5% observer coverage requirement for longline vessels adopted in 2007 — 13 years ago. The paucity of longline fishery data hinders both scientific assessment and management. Although 100% observer coverage is required for purse seine vessels between 20N and 20S, information presented at the Scientific Committee reveals the actual coverage is ~85%.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

- (1) Adopt the Longline Electronic Monitoring Standards developed by the EM/ER Working Group.
- (2) Direct the EMER WG to finalize a draft Electronic Monitoring CM for consideration by the Commission in 2021 so 100% observer coverage can be ultimately achieved for all vessels engaged in at-sea transshipment, and in the longline fishery.

TRANSSHIPMENT

What are the issues?

If not well-managed, transshipment at-sea can be a conduit for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fish to enter the supply chain.

Why are we concerned?

Reports presented at TCC16 show the number of reported high seas transshipment events has increased from 656 in 2011 to 1,472 in 2019. As of June 2020, 62% of the vessels on the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels are authorized to transship in the high seas. The Secretariat also reported that CCMs are not fully meeting their reporting obligations. The WCPFC transshipment CMM is not consistent with best practices.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

- (1) Direct the Working Group to complete the review of CMM 2009-06 and present amendments to the Commission in 2021.
- (2) In 2021, adopt best practice amendments to CMM 2009-06, such as to:
 - (i) Require real time, or as close to near real-time, reporting for all transshipment activity.
 - (ii) Use AIS data to complement VMS information.
 - (iii) Automatically include in the draft IUU vessel list any vessels that breach the transshipment CMM;
 - (iv) Set criteria for authorization of at-sea transshipment and establish a process for Commission review against those criteria.

Compliance

What are the issues?

Strong compliance processes improve fisheries management by holding members accountable. ISSF publishes best practices for improving RFMO compliance processes.

Why are we concerned?

The WCPFC is the only tuna RFMO that closes its compliance assessment process to accredited observers. The WCPFC has a CMS work plan with outstanding items that must be accelerated, including enabling accredited observers to participate.

What is ISSF asking WCPFC to do?

Progress in 2021 the remaining items identified in the CMM 2019-06 work plan through the CMS Working Group, including a risk-based framework, finalizing audit points for the remaining obligations and guidelines for the participation of observers.

ISSF Global Priorities for Tuna RFMOs

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

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

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

Increased member compliance with all adopted measures, 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.

Adoption of best-practice bycatch mitigation and shark conservation and management

Did You Know?

ISSF is collaborating on biodegradable FAD research with fleets , coastal nations, and other stakeholders.

ISSF resources for vessels include skippers guidebooks on bycatch-mitigation techniques as well as reports on electronic monitoring and vessel monitoring systems.

ISSF offers guidelines for implementing non-entangling FADs.

Three ISSF conservation measures focus on shark bycatch.



iss-foundation.org

1440 G Street NW
Washington D.C. 20005
United States

Phone: + 1 703 226 8101

E-mail: info@iss-foundation.org

