Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)
Annual Meeting, August 31–September 4, 2026

This Position Statement outlines issues that we urge the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) to act on at its upcoming meeting.

COMPLIANCE PROCESSES

2026 Asks

In implementing its revised compliance assessment process, the Committee for the Review of Implementation of Measures should:

- Adopt a system to categorize non-compliance statuses and identify specific follow-up actions.
- Develop and adopt performance metrics for IATTC measures.

Background

A strong and transparent compliance process improves fisheries management by holding regional fisheries management organization (RFMO) members accountable. In 2024, the IATTC adopted a time-bound work plan to strengthen the procedures and outcomes of its Committee for the Review of Implementation of Measures (COR). In 2025, IATTC agreed to develop a system to categorize non-compliance status and follow-up actions. The COR working group has made good progress on this work in 2026. ISSF and Pew Charitable Trusts have specific recommendations to improve RFMO compliance processes in workshop reports: 2020 report, 2021 report, 2022 report.

Priorities to Progress

- Strengthen annual follow up and reporting on investigations and/or remediation of identified non-compliance.

RFMO Compliance Information & Resources

TUNA STOCK CONSERVATION

2026 Asks

- Adopt, for 2027-2028, a management procedure, as recommended by the IATTC Scientific Staff, where any reduction of the fishing closure is implemented gradually.
- Maintain the Individual Vessel Limit (IVT) measure and support the Integrated Port Sampling Program (IPSP) as a scientific data collection platform to support management of the tropical tuna fishery in the EPO.

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- Amend C-03-05 to require mandatory reporting of operational data (at the vessel and set-by-set level) that covers all available years from the year the fleet began operating through the most recent possible year (the current year or the previous year), and to harmonize fields with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

Background

Resolution C-25-01 established two pathways for scientific advice in 2026: 1) continuation of the 2026 measures into 2027–2028 if the MSE process confirmed their effectiveness; and 2) updated recommendations based on new bigeye stock assessment and MSE process.

The 2026 update assessment indicated a substantially improved bigeye stock status and risk analyses and showed that all three stocks are in healthy condition. In 2026, the IATTC Scientific Staff (Staff) completed a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for bigeye tuna and concluded that the scientific conditions specified in Resolution C-25-01 have been met and that the conservation measures established for 2026 could remain in force during 2027 and 2028.

In addition, the MSE evaluated eight candidate harvest control rules (HCRs) and identified three that best met the management objectives discussed during the IATTC MSE workshop; including safety, status, stability, yield, effort, and abundance. An interim multi-species, multi-stock MSE (MS-MSE) conducted by the Staff concluded that the implementation of any of these three HCRs would not adversely affect the status of yellowfin or skipjack tuna stocks.

Finally, detailed set-by-set and vessel-specific catch and effort data, both historical and current, from longline fisheries are needed to develop reliable indices of abundance and strengthen scientific advice.

Priorities to Progress

- Conduct a comparative analysis of catch composition estimates derived under Traditional Port-Sampling (TPS), Enhanced Monitoring Program (EMP), and IPSP protocols, and assess the implications of those potential differences for consistency with historical data and stock assessments.

FAD MANAGEMENT

2026 Asks

In line with ISSF's established approach to strengthening FAD management:

- Strengthen the monitoring of remote deactivation and reactivation events and the reasons for deactivation, including the possibility of remote automatic reporting.
- Develop and implement standardized marking systems for both FAD structures and buoys, and adopt clear rules for FAD ownership to improve FAD traceability.
- Establish a timeline to develop a FAD register, harmonized with WCPFC, that will integrate all FAD-related data monitoring.
- Collect historical FAD position and biomass data from echosounder buoys to produce indices of abundance independent from the fishery.

Background

Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs), when lost and abandoned, contribute to marine debris and damage sensitive marine habitats. In response, the IATTC has adopted a phased transition to fully biodegradable FADs beginning in 2026. Voluntary FAD retrieval programs have also been initiated in the Pacific Ocean. However, these projects are still in their early stages. Thus, additional efforts are required to improve FAD management, including the adoption of science-based limits on FADs, clear rules for FAD ownership, and enhanced marking and tracking systems to monitor FAD movements and fate, all of which can be integrated into a FAD register to facilitate monitoring. Also, data from echosounder buoys used to track FADs—particularly biomass estimates—can support the development of fishery-independent indices of tuna abundance and selective fishing.

Priorities to Progress

- Continue and strengthen research on acoustic data interpretation to accelerate its integration into scientific applications (i.e., selective fishing strategies, tuna behavior studies, and the development of abundance indices).
- Develop and implement science-based limits on FAD deployments and FAD sets.
- Develop FAD retrieval program performance indicators and a binding FAD-recovery policy.

FAD Management Information & Resources

ELECTRONIC MONITORING (EM) AND REPORTING & OBSERVER COVERAGE

2026 Asks

- Adopt measures to begin increasing observer coverage on large-scale longline vessels (human and/or electronic in accordance with the adopted interim EM Standards) to an interim level of 20% from the minimum 5% and adopt a timeline to progressively reach 100% coverage.
- Adopt measures to begin observer coverage (human and/or electronic in accordance with the adopted interim EM Standards) of at least an interim level of 20% for small-scale purse seine vessels (class 1-5) and adopt a timeline to reach 100% coverage.
- Implement electronic logbooks in the IATTC convention area for longline vessels greater than 24m that is harmonized with the WCPFC.

Background

Comprehensive observer coverage is critical to effective fisheries management, compliance monitoring, and independent verification of catch, effort, species composition and bycatch. 100% observer coverage (human and/or electronic) is feasible and necessary. IATTC's minimum 5% observer coverage requirement for longline vessels is not being fully met and there are gaps in the reporting of longline operational observer data. There is no requirement for observer coverage on class 1-5 purse seine vessels. Catch estimates of bycatch species are unlikely to be reliable at 5% coverage, a rate also insufficient for estimating the total catch of bigeye and yellowfin tuna. In 2024, IATTC adopted minimum EM standards and program requirements for both purse seine and longline fisheries. Electronic logbooks improve the accuracy and timeliness of data collection and reporting.

CPCs with longline fisheries and class 1-5 purse seine vessels should embrace EM and electronic reporting technologies to improve monitoring and data collection and reporting.

Priorities to Progress

- Require 100% observer coverage (human and/or electronic) in industrial tuna fisheries, and all those vessels engaged in at sea transshipment.

Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Information & Resources

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES (HARVEST STRATEGIES)

2026 Asks

- Accelerate the development and implementation of Management Procedures (MP) for tropical tuna stocks, including the development of exceptional circumstance criteria to ensure the MP is correctly implemented, the inclusion of management measures for longline, and further refinement of tropical tuna management objectives.
- Adopt a harvest strategy and reference points for the Pacific bluefin tunas developed by the IATTC-WCPFC/NC Joint Working Group.
- Develop and define management objectives for South Pacific Albacore, taking into account the management procedure adopted by WCPFC in 2025 and the mandate for harmonization.

Background

In 2026, the staff completed a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for bigeye tuna and advanced the development of multi-species MSE for bigeye, yellowfin, and skipjack. Although the IATTC has made notable progress over the past year in developing management procedures for bigeye, further work is needed to continue progressing on multi-species MSE. For example, including longline management measures in the MSE process would allow the MSE to evaluate the impacts and trade-offs among fisheries. Moreover, tropical species management objectives are still preliminary and further work and dialogue is needed to agree on permanent management objectives for the three stocks. In addition, exceptional circumstance (i.e., an unforeseen event or condition not tested under MSE where overriding of the output from a MP should be considered) criteria have not been yet developed. The Joint IATTC-WCPFC and Northern Committee Working Group has advanced the development of Pacific bluefin tuna harvest strategies. And in 2025, the IATTC and the WCPFC established a joint working group to further collaborate on South Pacific Albacore management. The Commission must continue building on this progress by developing robust management procedures for tropical tunas and other targeted stocks.

Priorities to Progress

- Ensure continued support, and secure funding, for all target tunas MSE.
- Continue the development of, comprehensive, precautionary management procedures for all tropical tuna stocks, and other targeted stocks, including the incorporation of environmental and climate considerations.

BYCATCH MITIGATION & SHARK PROTECTIONS

2026 Asks

- Amend Resolution C-25-08 to require that all retained sharks be landed with fins naturally attached **without exceptions** and include the best handling and release practices updated by the IATTC Scientific Staff in 2026.
- Adopt a revised seabird measure (C-11-02) to reflect the current state of scientific knowledge on seabird mitigation measures and align their specifications to meet the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) standards.
- Revise sea turtle Resolution C-19-04 to require longliners to simultaneously use circle hooks and finfish bait, as well as to implement the best safe-handling and release practices updated by the IATTC Scientific Staff in 2026.

Background

Sharks, rays, sea turtle species and seabird species are declining in abundance or are threatened. IATTC resolutions for these species must be updated to reflect the current state of scientific knowledge for best-practice mitigation and safe-handling and release techniques, as recommended by the IATTC Staff and outlined in papers presented to the IATTC Ecosystem and Bycatch Working Group and SAC. The above bycatch mitigation asks are required by ISSF Conservation Measures 3.1(c), 3.4 and 3.6 and best handling and release practices are reflected in the ISSF Sustainable Tuna Fishing Guidebooks for Skippers and Observers.

Priorities to Progress

- CPCs continue investigating the effect of circle hook sizes in reducing bycatch while optimizing target species catch rates to recommend a minimum hook size under Resolution C-19-04.
- Continue collecting shark catch data from both small-scale and industrial fisheries and organize data exchange workshop to enhance shark stock assessments.
- Support the shark research plan outlined in the document SAC-17-09.

Bycatch Reduction Information & Resources

TRANSSHIPMENT REGULATION

2026 Asks

Adopt revisions to Resolution C-22-03 to strengthen the regulation of at-sea transshipment and align it with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines, and adopt amendments to Resolution C-21-07 to enhance port State measures implementation:

- For Resolution C-22-03, improvements, in line with best practice standards, include:
    - Expand formal procedures for sharing transshipment data between RFMOs and enhance public disclosure of transshipment event information;
    - Align the transshipment declaration to fully meet the Annex I of the FAO Guidelines; and
    - Amend C-14-02 to apply VMS requirements to all longline vessels engaged in at-sea transshipment.

- For Resolution C-21-07, improvements, in line with best practice standards, include
    - Adopt amendments to Resolution C-21-07 to align it with the FAO PSMA, including by adding minimum standards for port inspector training and for inspection reports, establishing provisions on the denial of use of ports, and requiring reporting on all port inspections.

Background

Transshipment at sea presents risks for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and other illicit activities if not well-managed and transparent. IATTC has a solid foundation for managing at-sea transshipment; adoption of specific amendments to Resolution C-22-03 would bring it further in alignment with the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment — resulting in a stronger framework that would ensure complete data collection and timely reporting and combat IUU fishing activities. Transshipment controls and port State measures are mutually reinforcing components of an integrated MCS framework. The FAO Voluntary Guidelines explicitly recognize this interdependency by recommending that in-port transshipments take place in ports operating in accordance with the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA). Resolution for an IATTC Scheme for Minimum Standards for Inspection in Port (C-21-07) does not currently meet best practice standards as it is not fully aligned with the PSMA. Targeted improvements are needed.

Priorities to Progress

- Establish minimum standards or criteria, using a risk-based approach, that flag states must follow before approving any vessel for at-sea transshipment operations (both donor and receiving) to engage in at-sea transshipment operations.

LABOR & SOCIAL ISSUES IN TUNA FISHERIES

2026 Ask

- Develop and then adopt a binding crew labor and safety resolution.

Background

Tuna RFMOs must adopt binding measures to protect crew that work in tuna fisheries worldwide that align with relevant international frameworks for worker rights in global fisheries.

CAPACITY

Background

Although IATTC is the only tuna RFMO with a closed purse seine vessel registry, its current capacity is well in excess of resource productivity. Operative purse seine capacity has continued to increase since 2015 due to latent capacity being activated.

Priorities to Progress

- Implement the 2014 Technical Experts Workshop on the Capacity of the Tuna-fishing Fleet in the EPO recommendations to strengthen the 2005 Plan for the Regional Management of Fishing Capacity and reduce the current capacity.