



Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)

Annual Meeting, 30 November – 4 December 2026

This Position Statement outlines issues that we urge the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) to act on at its upcoming meeting.



COMPLIANCE PROCESSES

2026 Asks

- Renew CMM 2023-04 to ensure the Compliance Monitoring Scheme (CMS) does not expire
- Review the Commission's data rules and procedures used in the CMS and develop guidelines for the participation of accredited observers in the CMS for adoption by the Commission in 2027

Background

A strong and transparent compliance process improves fisheries management by holding regional fisheries management organization (RFMO) members accountable. Transparency is an essential part of a modern and well-designed compliance process, yet the WCPFC is the only tuna RFMO that closes its compliance assessment process to observers. In 2024, developing a process for the participation of observers was included in the [TCC Work Plan](#) for 2027. It was also agreed that developing such guidelines will be preceded by a review of the non-public domain status of those data used in the CMS. Best practice recommendations to improve RFMO compliance processes are available in reports from ISSF and Pew Charitable Trusts: [2020 report](#), [2021 report](#), [2022 report](#).

Priorities to Progress

- Develop and adopt corrective actions to encourage and incentivize CCM compliance with the Commission's obligations, where non-compliance is identified

[RFMO Compliance Information & Resources](#)



TUNA STOCK MANAGEMENT

Tuna Conservation Measures

2026 Asks

- Continue to manage skipjack tuna and North Pacific albacore based on the Management Procedures in place
- Adopt a new conservation and management measure for South Pacific albacore for the period 2027-2029 that implements the outputs of its Management Procedure (catch advice of 56,096 t)



EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES (HARVEST STRATEGIES)

2026 Asks

- Adopt a management procedure for bigeye tuna to ensure sustainable catch and/or effort levels
- Adopt a mixed fishery Management Procedure approach for yellowfin tuna that will ensure the stock remains sustainable and yellowfin tuna management objectives are achieved
- Adopt Target Reference Points for bigeye and yellowfin tuna that will guide Management Procedure adoption
- Adopt a Management Procedure for a long-term harvest strategy for Pacific bluefin tuna

Background

WCPFC has made notable progress in advancing harvest strategies. In 2025, the Commission adopted a management procedure (MP) for South Pacific albacore, which was implemented for the first time in 2026 and generated catch advice of 56,096 mt for fisheries covered by CMM 2025-01.

New bigeye and yellowfin tuna stock assessments were conducted in 2026, but uncertainty regarding the treatment of tagging data affected their consideration by SC22. For bigeye, SC22 did not reach consensus on the final ensemble grid, although both proposed grids indicated that the stock was neither overfished nor subject to overfishing and recent biomass was slightly below the 2012–2015 interim management objective. Both also indicated greater depletion than reflected in the current operating models (OMs) and risks values exceeding the Commission's acceptable levels. The bigeye OMs, and candidate Management Procedure evaluations, are therefore being updated to encompass the more depleted stock scenarios for further management strategy evaluation (MSE). These issues will be considered at a special SC meeting adjacent to WCPFC23.

Consideration of the yellowfin assessment was deferred to 2027, due to its delayed submission, but its uncertainty range was encompassed by the updated OM grid, which was adopted for further MSE evaluation. Although yellowfin will be managed indirectly through the MPs for skipjack, bigeye and South Pacific albacore, it should continue to be evaluated through MSE to ensure the stock remains sustainable and its management objectives are achieved.

For Pacific bluefin tuna, progress toward a long-term harvest strategy continued, but the Northern Committee did not agree on an MP recommendation, and newly proposed harvest control rules (HCRs) had not yet been tested through MSE or reviewed by the Scientific Committee. These issues will be also considered at the special SC meeting before WCPFC23. IATTC adopted an Interim Management Procedure for Pacific Bluefin tuna that was developed by the Joint IATTC-WCPFC-Northern Committee Working in September 2026.

Priorities to Progress

- Continue to refine the harvest and monitoring strategies, including clear protocols for exceptional circumstances, using the latest information and advice from the Scientific Committee

[Tuna Conservation Information & Resources](#)



2026 Asks

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

- Adopt a timeline for transitioning to 100% biodegradable FADs consistent with the timeline agreed by the IATTC (noting that ICCAT and IOTC have also adopted transition timelines)
- Adopt a requirement for provision to WCPFC of near real-time FAD position and acoustic biomass records data for scientific use with a maximum time lag of 90 days to protect confidentiality
- Develop FAD loss and abandonment mitigation options, including both prevention measures and incentive/disincentive-based policies
- Request SPC to undertake an analysis in 2027 of buoy deactivation practices and dFAD deployment patterns in assessing the effectiveness of, and effects on, the current dFAD active limit to inform the development of a revised tropical tuna CMM

Background

Fishing with FADs has a risk of loss and abandonment of these devices, which can negatively impact the ecosystem. WCPFC has taken some steps to mitigate these impacts by requiring non-entangling FADs with no netting or meshed materials as of 1 January 2024. Additionally, recovery programs are being initiated in several areas in the Pacific Ocean. However, crucial steps are still needed to manage FADs effectively.

Notably, the WCPFC is the only tuna RFMO that has not yet adopted a transition timeline for use of biodegradable FAD designs. IOTC, ICCAT and IATTC have all begun implementation of their phased transitions. WCPFC must act this year to adopt a biodegradable FAD transition timeline. Results of WCPFC biodegradable FAD projects indicate the availability of biodegradable materials and that a transition to non-entangling and biodegradable dFADs is feasible, while research continues on additional materials, standards and monitoring.

Other actions include requiring submission of position and biomass data from echo-sounder buoys used to track FADs, assessing the impact of buoy deactivation practices on dFAD active limits, deployments and dFAD loss and fates, and implementing better marking of FADs to understand their dynamics and fate. These steps would enable the establishment of more effective management measures, such as science-based FAD limits.

Priorities to Progress

- Develop and adopt a FAD marking scheme, including requiring the marking of the buoy and the FAD structure, and clear rules for FAD ownership and for FAD buoy activation and deactivation
- Develop and implement science-based limits on FAD deployments and FAD sets
- Establish a timeline to develop a WCPFC FAD register
- Develop a submission deadline for historical data gaps on FAD buoy data transmission



ELECTRONIC MONITORING (EM) AND REPORTING & OBSERVER COVERAGE

2026 Asks

- Increase observer coverage (human and/or electronic in accordance with the adopted [minimum EM standards](#)) on large-scale longline vessels to an interim level of 20%
- Adopt a robust audit and quality assurance framework to support implementation of the EM Technical Standards
- Develop a CMM for a WCPFC Electronic Monitoring Program, consistent with the SC22 recommendation

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. Sea turtle species, as well as sharks, seabirds and cetaceans, are vulnerable to overfishing, and many face considerable uncertainty in their biological status due to data limitations. SC22 noted the need for improved observer data collection to inform monitoring of those species' abundance trends and post-release survival. For example, the SC22 indicated that coverage of at least 10% of effort would allow for reasonably good estimates of bycatch for frequently caught species, and that higher levels would be necessary for less frequently caught species, especially sea turtles and cetaceans.

Priorities to Progress

- Adopt a timeline to progressively reach 100% observer coverage in industrial tuna fisheries, including all vessels engaged in at-sea transshipment
- Develop potential changes to the interim EM standards to improve harmonization across RFMOs, as recommended by the [Electronic Monitoring \(EM\) Minimum Standards Harmonization Workshop under the FAO Common Oceans Tuna Project](#)

[Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Information & Resources](#)



MONITORING, CONTROL & SURVEILLANCE

Transshipment Regulation and Port State Measures

2026 Asks

Adopt revisions to CMM 2009-06 to strengthen the regulation of at-sea transshipment and [align it with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines](#), and adopt amendments to CMM 2017-02 to enhance port State measures implementation:

- For CMM 2009-06, improvements, in line with [best practice standards](#), include:
 - Align the transshipment declaration to fully meet the Annex I of the FAO Guidelines
 - Require the use of AIS as a complement to VMS and prohibit at-sea transshipments during ALC failures
 - Ensure notifications and declarations are sent to all relevant flag States, coastal States, intended landing States and the Secretariat

- Improve monitoring and verification, including through the introduction of an Independent Transshipment Regional Observer Program, consistent other tuna RFMOs
- For CMM 2017-02, improvements, in line with [best practice standards](#), include:
 - Requiring advance notice of port entry
 - Provisions for denial of port entry and use
 - Establishing minimum inspection levels

Background

If not well-managed, transshipment at-sea can be a conduit for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fish to enter the supply chain. CMM 2009-06 is not aligned with the FAO's transshipment Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment and lags substantially behind other tuna RFMOs in implementing best practices. Gaps include the absence of risk-based approaches, authorization criteria, timely pre-event verification, comprehensive declaration requirements, and prohibition of at-sea transshipments during ALC failures.

The WCPFC Secretariat [reports](#) that current data sources and analytical capacity can only partially verify member implementation of CMM 2009-06. WCPFC data shows that 83% of vessels authorized to undertake high seas transshipments are longline vessels. [WCPFC's minimum 5% observer coverage requirement for longline vessels is insufficient and not being fully met.](#)

The [FAO Agreement on Port State Measures](#) (PSMA) was a significant achievement for global efforts to combat IUU fishing activities. [CMM 2017-02 does not align with the PSMA.](#) Gaps include requirements for advance notice of port entry, denial of port entry or use, minimum inspections levels, and reporting aspects. In 2024, the WCPFC established a Working Group to review the CMM and make recommendations; the working group has made limited progress. The WCPFC must adopt significant revisions to bring its CMM in line with the PSMA to strengthen global and regional efforts to combat IUU fishing.

Priorities to Progress

- Develop electronic reporting standards for transshipment observers or providers through the ER and EM IWG



BYCATCH MITIGATION & SHARK PROTECTIONS

2026 Asks

In line with ISSF's established approach to strengthening bycatch mitigation, shark conservation and non-target species management in tuna fisheries:

- Amend CMM 2018-04 on sea turtle conservation to require all longline vessels to simultaneously use circle hooks and finfish bait so to reflect up to date scientifically proven bycatch mitigation measures and safe handling and release best practices
- Amend CMM 2025-06 to require that all retained sharks be landed with fins naturally attached without exceptions
- Agree to review, in 2027, CMM 2025-05 on seabird conservation to ensure it meets ACAP recommendations for simultaneous use of tori lines, weighted branch-lines, and night setting, when used as an alternative to hook shielding devices, and includes specifications fully aligned with ACAP standards

Background

WCPFC needs to adopt improved and science-based measures to limit fishing mortality on seabirds, sharks, rays, and marine mammals and strengthen data collection and reporting requirements.

The Commission agreed to review and revise the sea turtle CMM (2018-04) in 2026 to clarify reporting requirements and consider expanding bycatch mitigation best practices. The current measure applies mitigation requirements only to shallow-set longlines, even though deep-set longlines account for around 85% of WCPO longline effort and may generate greater overall turtle mortality due to their higher effort and higher at-vessel mortality than shallow set. WCPFC/ABNJ analyses found that combining large circle hooks (16/0 or larger) with finfish bait significantly reduces turtle interactions and ingestion and improves post-release survival in both shallow and deep-set fisheries. The CMM also lacks mandatory training in safe handling and release. Requiring such training for skippers and crews could further improve sea turtle survival.

The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) recommends simultaneous use of tori lines, weighted branch-lines, and night setting, or the use of hook shielding devices as a stand-alone measure. CMM 2025-05 does not fully meet ACAP recommendations. SC22 agreed to include seabirds on its 2027 agenda. The recently expanded [ISSF Conservation Measure 3.6](#) requires, in southern temperate latitudes, use of at least two of the following seabird mitigation methods: weighted branch lines, night-setting, tori lines; or use hook-shielding devices.

Priorities to Progress

- Adopt a plan to substantially improve observer data collection in longline fisheries to inform monitoring of sea turtles, seabirds, and shark abundance trends and post-release survival
- For sea turtles, expand Regional Observer Program data collection to include hook type and size, bait type, branch line material, and estimated remaining gear to better inform bycatch mitigation measures

[Bycatch Reduction Information & Resources](#)



CAPACITY

Background

Experts agree that there is overcapacity, too many vessels, in the global tuna fleets. Fishing fleet overcapacity increases pressure to weaken management measures, and eventually it leads to stock overexploitation.

Priorities to Progress

- Establish limited entry through closed vessel registries and develop a common currency to measure fishing capacity.



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