



Summary of WCPFC Outcomes 2023

GLOBAL TUNA ALLIANCE

HARVEST STRATEGIES

Our ask

Harvest Strategies

Accelerate development and implementation of comprehensive, precautionary Harvest Strategies, including precautionary Reference Points and Harvest Control Rules.






The Context

- The WCPFC is unique among RFMOs in that all of its tropical tuna stocks are “in the green”, or, not overfished or subject to overfishing. This has led to the attribution of Marine Stewardship Council certified status to many of its tuna fisheries.
- As such, the Western-Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) has been an attractive prospect for businesses looking to source sustainable tuna. However, without harvest strategies, there is a danger of stocks falling out of the green, the area losing MSC certifications and businesses reviewing their sourcing from the area.
- The WCPFC adopted its first-ever harvest strategy for skipjack at its last meeting in Da Nang in December 2022. However, the measure was non-binding, significantly denting its effectiveness. While progress was made on northern Pacific albacore, delegations fell short of adopting Target Reference Points for bigeye and yellowfin stocks.
- A number of proposals were on the table to advance harvest strategies at this meeting. There was also an opportunity following the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission’s passage of a management procedure for North Pacific albacore in the summer to adopt an historic pan-Pacific harvest strategy for the stock.



The Outcomes

This year, the GTA broke their harvest strategy asks down to be stock-specific. So to evaluate performance, this document explores how each stock fared:

Stock	GTA Specific Ask	Outcome	Rating
Bigeye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt CMM for tuna conservation that limits fishing mortality to interim TRPs. Adopt TRPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TRPs for these stocks and modelling results on the implications of different target levels were presented. Given their different stock statuses, it noted the difficulties in setting targets that can simultaneously achieve objectives for both bigeye and yellowfin. Many CCMs expressed concern about the impacts of fisheries in archipelagic waters (outside of WCPFC and owned by Indonesia) on yellowfin. No TRPs adopted for yellowfin or bigeye. 	 2
Yellowfin			 2
Skipjack	Accelerate the development and adoption of an updated binding skipjack management procedure that automatically implements the outcome of the harvest control rule included in the adopted management procedure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A tropical tuna measure (TTM) was adopted for skipjack, crucial in linking fishing efforts to the harvest strategy adopted last year. This approach allows for regulation, where fishing activities could be more closely aligned with the actual conditions of tuna populations. If tuna numbers are found to be declining, the TTM mandates a revision and stricter fishing limits to aid in recovery, although the mechanism for this is unclear. 	 4
North Pacific Albacore	Adopt a management procedure for North Pacific albacore.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Committee's recommendations for North Pacific albacore were agreed, implementing the first-ever pan-Pacific harvest strategy. 	 5
South Pacific Albacore	Accelerate the development of a harvest strategy for South Pacific albacore that will consider the entire South Pacific in the operating models.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stock status review identified a potential 'big dip' for South Pacific albacore, causing Scientific Committee to recommend TRPs for the stock. There were discussions around strengthening cooperation between WCPFC and IATTC for managing South Pacific albacore tuna, including inviting IATTC representatives as observers to future online meetings. An interim TRP was adopted for Southern Albacore, marking a crucial first step toward management procedure adoption. 	 3

GTA Reaction

A mixed bag of results for the market who are looking for urgent progress on the development of harvest strategies:

- **Bigeye and yellowfin:** While there were positive signals about continuing work to develop TRPs, the adoption of these are already greatly delayed, holding up the overall progress of harvest strategies for these stocks. In addition, the TTM increased Bigeye tuna catches with limited improvements in monitoring.
- **Skipjack:** The TTM helps strengthen the harvest strategy adopted last year, making it more effective at securing sustainable skipjack stocks.
- **North Pacific albacore:** Adopting the pan-Pacific harvest strategy is an historic achievement that makes Pacific-wide management increasingly coherent.
- **South Pacific albacore:** A potential 'big dip' in the stock has precipitated action to progress a harvest strategy. The resulting interim TRP is a good start, and conversations around coordinating with IATTC on Pacific-wide management of the stock is promising - but there's still lots of work to do.

SUCCESS RATING



ELECTRONIC MONITORING

Our ask

Electronic Monitoring

Adopt a CMM for an Electronic Monitoring Program as well as associated Minimum Standards.

The Context

- Observer coverage through an EM program is essential in effective fisheries management; the value of EM became apparent when the COVID-19 pandemic limited the ability to place human observers on fishing vessels.
- Last year, despite a proposal on the table, no progress was made.

The Outcomes

- The chair of the Electronic Reporting and Electronic Monitoring working group presented a proposed work plan and priorities for the group over the next two years, focusing first on developing simplified Standards, Specifications and Procedures (SSPs) for longline and transshipment vessels.
- A green light was given to establish interim voluntary standards for EM by next December.
- In addition, the TTM measure that granted longline fleet increased access to bigeye catch increased the observed level to 10%. This is far short of what is required but an improvement.

GTA Reaction

- The progress made represents slow but steady movement toward better practices.

SUCCESS RATING →



CREW LABOUR STANDARDS

Our ask

Labour Standards For Crew On Fishing Vessels

Support proposed CMM on Labour Standards for crew on fishing vessels.

The Context

- The seafood supply chain, and their customers, are concerned about ongoing instances of poor labour conditions and reports of human rights abuses on board fishing vessels.
- The GTA is fully supportive of the work of the Crew Welfare Intersessional working group to advance the issue under the leadership of New Zealand and Indonesia in support of transitioning WCPFC Resolution 2018-01 on Labour Standards for Crew on Fishing Vessels into a formal, binding measure.

The Outcomes

- Many expressed support for continuing the work to adopt binding conservation and management measures on crew labour standards by 2024. Several CCMs also mentioned steps they are taking domestically to improve labour standards and protections for fishing crews.
- Adopting standards this year was not feasible, given the complexity of implementing changes at the national level.
- Adoption could occur in 2024 with a potential delayed start date to allow more time for members to address requirements within their own countries.

GTA Reaction

- Despite there being much positive sentiment around improving labour standards, more onus needs to be given in meetings to developing a formal, binding measure.
- The GTA will continue to support the efforts of the Working Group.

SUCCESS RATING →



PORT STATE MEASURES

Our ask

Electronic Monitoring

WCPFC adopts port state measures (PSMs) that are aligned with PSMA requirements.

The Context

- The PSMA, adopted in 2009 by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), requires parties to place tighter controls on foreign-flagged vessels seeking to enter and use their ports to land or transship fish.
- Tuna RFMOs also regulate member nations' port State controls as part of their management measures. This ensures that these governments have minimum standards in place, regardless of whether they are a party to the PSMA.
- In December 2017 the WCPFC agreed to a CMM (2017-02) on Port State Minimum Standards with the stated purpose being "to establish processes and procedures for CCMs to request that port inspections be undertaken on fishing vessels suspected of engaging in IUU fishing or fishing related activities in support of IUU fishing."
- However, the WCPFC measure is largely for members to request port inspections to be undertaken and foreign-flagged vessels can enter any non-designated WCPFC member port without requesting access, providing information in advance, or being inspected.

The Outcomes

- No proposals were put on the table relating to Port State Measures.

GTA Reaction

- The issue of transshipped fish and IUU fishing are sources of deep discomfort to a market looking to source traceable, responsibly caught tuna. Six years after adopting a CMM on Port State Minimum Standards, little has been done to progress this measure past port inspections.

SUCCESS RATING →





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