



LDAC ADVICE

Recommendations for the 20th Regular Session of the Commission of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC20)

Rarotonga, Cook Islands - 4-8December 2023

Date of adoption: 30th of November 2023

Ref-10-23/WG1

Adopted by consensus with one individual organisation statement:

Seas at Risk was unable to participate in the discussions at the technical Focus Group level on this subject and therefore abstains from supporting this recommendation.

1. Tropical tunas: Revision of Conservation and Management Measures in force (CMM 2021-01)

1.1. Revision of the purse seine high seas effort

In order to integrate the Management procedure for Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) skipjack, the chair proposes to implement hard limits for purse seiners fishing efforts in high seas. This might also imply a modification of the allocation framework. While the current levels of effort are around 7000 days, there are various proposals on the table.

Japan (in the chair's document) proposes not to touch the fishing days and EEZs and to lower those in high seas to the levels of 2012, which represents approximately 2000 days. FFA proposed 2300 days, on the same principle. While recognizing the need to regulate the effort, the PNA leave the discussion open on the allocation scheme. Korea proposes a global limit of approximately 10 000 days which would include 4750 days for CMM that have actually no limit, and a decrease of existing limits down to 4750 days. EU limit would be lowered from 403 to 212 days. USA and the American Samoa propose to exclude from any limit US flagged vessels operating as an integral part of the American Samoa.

The LDAC supports the revision of CMM 2021-01 in order to correctly integrate and implement the harvest strategy for skipjack and reminds that the EU effort barely reach 5% of the total effort. To remain viable, the purse seine fleet need to keep the totality of its 403 days, noting that the EU has restored its full purse seine capacity in the WCPFC area, at four purse seiners.

The LDAC notes that the stock status are good for yellowfin, skipjack, and bigeye; and promotes a mixed model of allocation of vessel days on the high seas. CPCs that had days allocated in CMM 2021-01 should maintain those days, as recorded, and a new allocation should be decided for those CPCs which did not have. Once established hard limits for all, they could vary accordingly to the harvest control strategy.



The LDAC supports further work on management strategy evaluation towards the adoption of a multi-species management procedure, covering the three stocks of tropical tunas in the WCPFC area.

1.2. Technical measures on Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)

The LDAC advocates for the integration in the WCPFC of the IATTC resolution C-23-04 on the design and biodegradability of drifting fish aggregating devices (DFADs) in the IATTC area of competence, which elaborates a clear calendar towards bio-FADs and precises conditions for non-entanglement¹.

The LDAC also supports to keep the current limit of 350 FADs which ensure consistency with the FAD limit in IATTC, as vessels operate in both RFMO's areas of competence.

Regarding FAD retrieval programs, the LDAC promotes to task the FAD working group (FADMO-IWG) to assess how to efficiently recuperate FAD to prevent their beaching and to propose a regional mechanism to achieve this goal.

This Working Group should also initiate a dialogue with IATTC in view of implementing common rules on FADs ownership, buoys activation and deactivation process, as well as position and biomass data transmission for scientific purposes.

2. Observer coverage for tropical tunas

There is a proposal from The Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) to improve monitoring and control measures for skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye tuna stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (in Tropical Tuna measure CMM 2021-01), introducing entry and exit reports for those vessels fishing in the high seas and the recognition of the entry into force of CMM 2022-06 for daily catch and effort reporting. It is also proposed to increase longline observer coverage, through on-board or electronic observers, up to 30%.

The LDAC recommends adopting the proposal from PNA above indicated as a first step towards a 100% observer coverage for skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye tuna fisheries. Furthermore, the LDAC recommends the EU to support the chair of the ER/EM IWG's proposed scope of work for 2024² and provide to WCPFC funding for an in-person meeting of the IWG in 2024.

¹ It must be noted that a transition to non-entangling designs without netting or meshed materials used is already required from 01 January 2024 as outlined in CMM 2021-01.

² The work would be to draft EM SSPs and an EM program CMM as stated on the document "Update and Proposed Work Priorities for the ER and EM IWG" (available at WCPFC Meetings site).



3. Monitoring of transshipments at sea

The LDAC supports a process to eliminate transshipments at sea as soon as possible. However, for practical reasons, the LDAC promotes as a minimum requirement to start with the adoption of the following measures to better monitor transshipment at sea:

- endorse the prioritisation of TS IWG over the next two years and task the IWG with reviewing the WCPFC Transshipment CMM against the FAO Guidelines on Transshipment and presenting a strengthened CMM to WCPFC as soon as possible this year;
- implement real time, or near real-time, reporting requirements for all components of transshipments, including electronic verification and validation tools;
- adopt the WCPFC ROP Minimum Standard Data fields identified in forms FC-1 and FC-2 as data fields to be collected by observers during transshipment events for direct submission to the WCPFC Secretariat; Ensure data fields on date, location, catch and duration of the transshipment are added to those fields recommended for adoption in FC1, 2. In a possible oversight, those critical data fields were not included in the forms;
- support 100% observer coverage on delivering and receiving vessels engaged in at-sea transshipment;
- prioritise the development and application of EM for transshipment monitoring; and
- support or endorse the use of technology to verify and validate transshipment activity.

4. Climate change considerations

The United States has tabled a proposal that the WCPFC Secretariat conducts a climate vulnerability assessment of active CMMs and that TCC20 establishes a small working group on Climate in order to evaluate the findings on CMM climate vulnerability and to support the work of TCC on developing climate change recommendations to the Commission.

The LDAC supports such an initiative from the US and emphasises the importance of both evaluating the impact of climate change and incorporating its findings into the management strategies processes for each stock.

-END-