



WWF/TRAFFIC Position Paper
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)
Sixth Regular Session
7-11 December 2009
Papeete, Tahiti

PACIFIC BIGEYE TUNA

WWF and TRAFFIC note that the WCPFC Scientific Committee (SC) supported the evaluation of the Conservation and Management Measure (CMM), document CMM2008-01 (WCPFC-SC5-2009/GN-WP-17). This evaluation concluded:

...CMM2008-01 is highly unlikely to meet its objectives of a 30% reduction in bigeye tuna fishing mortality from the 2001–2004 level, or maintenance of the bigeye tuna stock at a level capable of producing Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) over the long term. The measures are predicted to result in little, if any, reduction in bigeye tuna F/F_{msy} from the high levels in excess of 2.0 estimated for 2007–2008, and accordingly, SB is predicted to fall to around 0.4-0.6 of SB_{msy} .

The SC requested that the Science Service Provider (SPC) provide analyses to WCPFC6 of a range of scenarios including adjustments of the current CMM to remove exemptions, as well as other measures to reduce fishing mortality on bigeye tuna to 30% below 2001–2004 levels.

According to the report provided by the SPC (WCPFC6-2009/IP18), the following scenario was the only one that ended overfishing and prevented bigeye from becoming overfished by 2018: a 50% reduction in longline catches from 2007 levels, an 80% reduction in fish-aggregating device (FAD) effort from 2007 levels, and a 50% reduction in effort from the domestic fisheries in Indonesia and the Philippines for 2007 levels.

WWF and TRAFFIC note the SC management advice that a 34% to 50% (average of 43%) reduction in fishing mortality for bigeye tuna from 2004–2007 levels is required to end overfishing. The SC report also states that

the results of more conservative assumptions are that a 61% reduction in fishing mortality is required to end overfishing.

The findings of the SPC and the SC demonstrate significant uncertainty, and therefore precautionary management decisions are necessary.

WWF and TRAFFIC support conservation and management measures that achieve an immediate 43% reduction in fishing mortality of bigeye tuna, in accordance with SC advice.

PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA

WWF and TRAFFIC note the advice to WCPFC's Northern Committee (NC5) from the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) included a recommendation that the current level of fishing mortality on juvenile Pacific bluefin tuna be reduced below 2002–2004 levels. NC5 was unable to reach consensus on this recommendation, but did reach consensus on a draft CMM that seeks to ensure that total fishing effort for Pacific bluefin tuna not be increased from the 2002–2004 level in 2010, taking into account the need to reduce fishing mortality on juvenile Pacific bluefin tuna (WCPFC6-2009-DP07). This represents progress from the voluntary agreement currently in place, but falls short of scientific advice.

WWF and TRAFFIC recommend adoption of WCPFC6-2009-DP07, along with a commitment to adopt a 3-year management plan in 2010 that follows scientific advice to reduce fishing mortality of juvenile Pacific bluefin tuna below the 2002–2004 level.

SHARKS

WWF and TRAFFIC note that the CMM for sharks still needs strengthening further than just adding silky shark to the list of “key species” (WCPFC6-2009/IP14). It needs to be made mandatory, the term “key species” needs to reflect species at high risk, and the finning measures need strengthening to naturally attached, with the introduction of a product-labelling scheme to monitor compliance with the measures.

MANAGEMENT ADVICE AND IMPLICATIONS

WWF and TRAFFIC note the range of management advice provided by the SC on bigeye tuna. Management advice to WCPFC 6 included:

- “SC recommends a reduction in fishing mortality of 30% from the 2001–2004 level in order to return fishing mortality to MSY levels (F_{msy})”,
- “SC recommends that the Commission note that recent estimates of F/F_{msy} (1.51-2.01, reference years 2004–2007) indicate that fishing mortality has increased significantly since 2001-2004; therefore, the

2009 streamlined assessment indicates a reduction in fishing mortality of 34%–50% from the 2004 to 2007 levels would be required, though there are some uncertainties”.

The current management advice and interpretations of stock status are confusing and difficult to compare from year to year. Without clear guidance from the Commission on the objectives of fisheries management decisions, it is difficult for the SC to provide management advice that informs fisheries managers of the probability of conservation and management measures achieving the objectives.

WWF and TRAFFIC recommend that WCPFC set Biological Reference Points for the species it manages, including sharks.

WWF and TRAFFIC remind WCPFC that the Second Joint Meeting of Tuna RFMOs (Kobe II) in June 2009 recommended the use of the Kobe II Strategy Matrix to improve the presentation of scientific advice, making it simple and useful to fisheries managers. In November 2009, ICCAT requested scientific advice related to the conservation and management of Atlantic bluefin tuna be provided in the format of the Kobe II Strategy Matrix.

WWF and TRAFFIC recommend that WCPFC request Management Advice and Implications for the 2010 assessment of bigeye tuna and skipjack tuna in the format of the Kobe II Strategy Matrix.

INDEPENDENT PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The First Joint Meeting of Tuna RFMOs (Kobe I) in January 2007 agreed to pursue a 14 point “Course of Action” to improve management of all tuna stocks. Point 9 of that action plan was an agreement that the five tuna RFMOs should have their performance reviewed according to a common methodology and a common set of criteria. The goal of the reviews is to help the RFMOs improve their effectiveness in achieving their objectives. These reviews were to commence as soon as practicable and conducted by a team that includes individuals already associated with the RFMO as well as outside experts.

Kobe II encouraged WCPFC and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) to conduct performance reviews as soon as possible to the commitment made in 2007.

WWF and TRAFFIC call on WCPFC to follow the recommendation of Technical and Compliance Committee (TCC) TCC5 and agree to conduct an independent performance review to begin early in 2010.

REGIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAM

WWF and TRAFFIC were encouraged by the technical improvements made to the WCPFC Regional Observer Program (ROP) at WCPFC5, as well as the recent progress on the ROP at TCC5 including an agreement to

establish a Technical and Operational Advisory Group. Establishing a solid foundation on which to operate such a program is vital, but the absence of any specific discussion such as a phase-in period for regional observer coverage or increasing the overall coverage from 5% is disappointing. Global attention by fishing nations is now focused on the western and central Pacific Ocean (WCPO), and it is urgent that WCPFC implement critical fisheries management measures such as systematic observer coverage.

Current levels of observer coverage, and even the 5% goal to which WCPFC aspires, do not come close to providing adequate data to support robust stock assessment and management. In 2008, WWF and TRAFFIC recommended a 5-year timetable to phase-in 100% ROP coverage for all fishing vessels, starting with 100% coverage for purse-seine vessels and support vessels for high seas fishing. ROP coverage for longline fishing vessels could be phased in over five years. WWF and TRAFFIC's position is that there are no reasonable impediments to immediate introduction of 100% observer coverage for purse seine catcher vessels and all support vessels, while full observer for longliners is phased-in over five years.

WWF and TRAFFIC call on WCPFC6 to implement a phase-in plan to achieve 100% observer coverage as soon as practically possible.

CATCH DOCUMENTATION SCHEME

WWF and TRAFFIC recently produced a joint report, *The Case for a Catch Documentation Scheme in the Western and Central Pacific*, which provides recommendations for the implementation of an electronic Catch Documentation Scheme (eCDS) in the WCPFC. It is time for the WCPFC to take urgent action to address overfishing and to support and enforce that action by the introduction of an eCDS. WCPFC needs to ensure that all high seas fish stocks it manages be subject to the eCDS as a proactive precautionary measure.

WWF and TRAFFIC note the recommendation from TCC5 to create an intersessional working group on catch documentation to advance the development of a CDS during 2010. This working group is an opportunity for WCPFC to overcome the challenges of implementing a CDS, rather than using those challenges as an excuse to implement second-best solutions.

WWF and TRAFFIC recommend that WCPFC6 agree to create a formal Intersessional Working Group to develop a CDS measure for bigeye tuna to be reviewed by TCC-6, with a date of implementation of 1 July 2011.