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WPEA-ITM Project Update

WCPFC-SC19-2023/RP-WPEA-01

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PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief update on activities under the Western Pacific East Asia Improved Tuna Monitoring Activity (WPEA-ITM project) over the past 12 months, for the information and noting of the Scientific Committee (SC19).

BACKGROUND

2. The tuna fisheries in the Pacific Ocean waters of Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam continue represent around 30% of the annual catches of key tuna species in the WCPO, including a significant proportion (40%) of the total yellowfin tuna catch in the WCPO. The lack of accurate data on catch, effort and the composition of catches in these waters has been highlighted as a key uncertainty in WCPO stock assessments at WCPFC for a number of years.

3. In an effort to improve understanding of these fisheries and increase the accuracy of data available for stock assessments, a series of projects have been implemented since 2005 to support data collection in Indonesia and the Philippines, and later in Vietnam. These projects have included the Indonesia and Philippines Data Collection Project (IPDCP), the West Pacific East Asia Oceanic Fisheries Management Project (WPEA-OFM), and the Sustainable Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the West Pacific and East Asian Seas (WPEA-SM). The last WPEA-SM project, implemented by the WCPFC Secretariat and the three countries, terminated on 27 April 2019.

4. Since these projects were first instituted in 2005, significant progress has been made on data collection, data analysis and verification, and the provision of catch estimates. Consequentially, the uncertainty in WCPO tuna stock assessments associated with tuna data in these three countries has been reduced. More detail on the activities and achievements of these projects can be found in WPEA updates to previous Scientific Committee meetings.

5. Recognising the importance to the WCPFC of continuing to improve tuna data from these three countries, the Government of New Zealand provided NZD 4.91 million over the period 2017-2023 for the

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Western Pacific East Asia Improved Tuna Monitoring Project (WPEA-ITM). The goal of the WPEA-ITM is to improve monitoring and management of tuna catches in Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam and contribute to reduced Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. Due to delays associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government of New Zealand has approved a no-cost extension of the project until the end of 2024.

6. The WPEA-ITM project is being managed by the WCPFC Secretariat, working closely with the national fisheries authorities in the three countries, and with SPC FAME playing a critical implementation role. Project components include expanding the capacity of enumerator programs to gather tuna landings and port sampling data, building the capacities and sustainability of fisheries observer programs, supporting additional national policy and legal reviews to improve catch monitoring and governance, and building the capacity of national fisheries data management and analysis efforts.

SUMMARY OF WPEA-ITM ACTIVITIES IN 2022-23

7. The WPEA-ITM Steering Committee met virtually on 3 February 2023 to review activities in 2022 and endorse the work plan and budget for 2023. Up until June 2022, the COVID pandemic had significantly disrupted implementation of planned WPEA-ITM activities in 2021 and 2022. With many activities in the Work Plan involving domestic and/or international travel, COVID-related travel restrictions meant that many activities were delayed or where possible, held online. As things are opening back up in mid-2022, activities in the work plan resumed.

8. Importantly, critical national tuna data collection programs have continued despite the disruptions, with enumerators and port sampling continuing in all three countries with support of the project, with a part year disruption of data collection in Indonesia. Other critical activities, such as the Annual Catch Estimates workshops have also been able to progress either remotely, in-person or using a combination of both. All three countries have also met their WCPFC reporting obligations, with the submission of their provisional data to WCPFC on time.

9. The WPEA-ITM Activity supports the development of catch estimates for the three project countries. The three countries have reported the following total tuna catches for all gears in the WCPFC Statistical area over the past 7 years:

Annual catch estimates as submitted to the WCPFC by each WPEA country							
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Indonesia							
SKJ	336,455	332,628	291,442	296,743	258,169	272,193	243,576
YFT	160,092	134,290	215,460	219,178	233,451	252,049	215,549
BET	28,344	12,095	19,573	19,163	22,899	22,618	36,629
Total	524,891	479,013	526,475	535,084	514,519	546,860	495,754
Philippines²							
SKJ	82,127	95,331	73,376	88,159	109,154	90,286	89,215
YFT	58,584	70,001	66,599	59,846	74,618	83,799	55,086
BET	2,845	4,454	2,364	4,464	4,035	2,653	3,014
Total	143,556	169,786	142,339	152,469	187,807	176,738	147,315
Vietnam							
SKJ	93,561	86,295	91,528	87,357	81,009	68,822	81,581
YFT	21,811	<u>22,407</u>	24,704	19,499	17,587	17,020	19,218
BET	5,704	<u>3,923</u>	4,301	2,458	3,730	3,175	2,254
Total	121,076	112,625	120,533	109,314	102,326	89,017	103,053

² Philippine catch figures do not include catches of Philippine flagged distant-water purse seine vessels.

10. Since the last update to the Scientific Committee, key activities of the WPEA-ITM have included:

Policy and legal frameworks

- Vietnam: The development of a new National Tuna Management Plan 2022-2030 and vision to 2045 was supported by WPEA-ITM. This included a consultation with 37 participants from DFISH, RIMF, industry, NGO's and universities.
- Vietnam: Based on the NTMP, a Provincial Tuna Management Plan 2022-2025 and vision to 2030 for 10 coastal provinces was developed. This included consultations with over 40 representatives from the 10 provinces.
- Vietnam: On December 5, after WCPFC19 in DaNang, DFISH hosted a workshop on the introduction of a quota-based management system approach to the Vietnamese tuna fisheries. Experts from WCPFC (NZ), Australia, Cook Islands and WWF (USA) attended sharing QMS experiences from their countries.
- WPEA-ITM: On 28 November 2022, key stakeholders in the WPEA-ITM project including WCPFC Secretariat and representatives from NZ MFAT met in the margins of WCPFC19 to discuss progress and challenges of the project. SPC also worked with the national coordinators to plan a stock assessment training workshop for 2023.

Data collection and catch estimates

- Enumerators were supported by WPEA-ITM in Indonesia and Vietnam in 2022, with more than 130 enumerators at 26 tuna fishing ports in 12 provinces supported in Vietnam and 12 enumerators at 1 site (Bitung) supported in Indonesia up to May (July with BRIN support). The Philippines supported 595 enumerators at 747 port sampling sites in 14 regions from their own budget. Enumerator support in Indonesia (Bitung) resumed in June 2023.
- Annual Data Review Workshops and Catch Estimation Meetings were supported in all three countries, with final catch estimates produced from each workshop and submitted to the WCPFC. The workshops demonstrated continued improvements in the collection and analysis of data on the total oceanic tuna catches that the countries and the Commission need to ensure sustainable management of tuna stocks and species. They also identified key issues compromising further improvements in the data, with recommendations made across all three countries for further action in 2023 and 2024.
 - Indonesia: The 14th Indonesia Annual Tuna Fisheries Catch Estimate Review Workshop (ITFACE-14) was held in person in Bogor from 30-31 May 2023.
 - Philippines: The 16th PTUNASTAT Annual Catch Estimates Review Workshop was held in person in Legazpi City from 25-26 May, 2023.
 - Vietnam: The 12th Annual Catch Estimates Workshop (VTFACE-12) was held in person in DaNang from 3-4 April, 2023.

Capacity building in IT area

- Philippines: The development of the Philippines National Stock Assessment Project (NSAP) database system which was completed in June 2021 continued with the roll-out of the system by SPC in January 16-19, 2023 which was attended by 60 people from NFRDI and BFAR. Additional IT equipment including tables for this rollout was sourced by the WPEA-ITM project. This new system has been developed on a web-browser/cloud hosted platform and will facilitate

the entry and management of Philippines landings and port sampling data collected from hundreds of landing sites in Philippines provinces.

- Indonesia: Procurement of 5 new laptops, 3 portable hard drives and data projector were supported by the WPEA project.
- Vietnam: 52 staff from the provinces were trained by SPC in June 2022 on how to access to, to entry the data and to report data from that TUFMAN2 system

Capacity building in fishery monitoring

- Philippines: Supported 8 Observers to undertake data collection in the Philippine EEZ with focus in Species of Special Interest. The Observers went through a 3-day orientation and were supported by debriefing all of their trips.
- Philippines: The Philippines was supported to host an Observer Cost Recovery tour for Indonesia and Vietnam from 28 August to 2 September 2022. A series of workshops and site visits helped Indonesia and Vietnam understand how the Philippines operates its Observer Programme. A key result of this trip is that Observer training for Indonesia and Vietnam is planned in the Philippines for 2023.
- Indonesia held an online workshop in November to discuss estimates of tuna catch in the “large-fish” handline fishery sector and consider potential improvements and refinements to data collection and analysis.
- Vietnam: WCPFC and SPC conducted an observer training in October for 15 representatives from DFISH, RIMF, VIFEP and Nha Trang University focused on purse seine and gill net fisheries

WPEA support by the SPC-OFP

- The contract for SPC’s continued support under the project was maintained in 2022, allowing SPC to provide a range of forms of assistance in 2022. In addition to the support listed above, SPC also:
 - Continued development and implementation of specific components of TUFMAN 2 to support Vietnam's customized logbook, port sampling and unloadings data;
 - Installed and completing training on the Philippines National Stock Assessment Project (NSAP) database system;
 - Conducted in person TUFMAN2 and data collection workshop for Vietnam, and supported Vietnam in the entry of logbook data for 1,612 trips/6,076 MT catch and landings data for 2,193 trips/8,979 MT catch for 2021 and logbook data for 4,170 trips/24,452 MT catch and landings data for 8,725 trips/37,586 MT catch in 2022;
 - Continued technical advice provided to Indonesia fisheries data manager;
 - Technical advice/assistance contributed to refine meeting papers related to other commercial fisheries of Philippines and Indonesia, including recommendations regarding applicability of WCPFC CMMs to these fisheries;
 - Facilitated submission of 2022 scientific data submissions from three countries into WCPFC databases;
 - Conducted a hybrid Advanced Stock Assessment Training Workshop in Noumea from 4-8 July 2022 that WPEA countries were able to attend virtually.
 - Continued ad hoc remote support/advice regarding reporting from database systems and preparation of annual national catch estimates.

11. An end of project gap analysis was started in April 2023 with a view to understanding what WPEA project components have been achieved, which activities can be mainstreamed into national budgets and which activities are likely to require ongoing technical and funding support through the WCPFC. The findings of this report are presented to SC19 in paper SC19-RP-WPEA-02.

12. Recommendations in the end of project gap analysis are to be considered at SC19, TCC19 and at WCPFC20. This will give the WCPFC WPEA project the year of 2024 to secure resources and funding commitments for a future phased of this important work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

13. SC19 will review and endorse the following recommendations:

- a. Based on the End of Project Gap Analysis (SC19-RP-WPEA-02), SC19 recommends development of a new project proposal for the next phase of WPEA work that is relevant to the WCPFC to begin immediately after the current WPEA-ITM project expires at the end of 2024.**