



FFSAPI-SARGEN HANDLINE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

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July 26, 2023

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

PO Box 2356 Kaselehlie Street Pohnpei

Federated States of Micronesia, 96941

Thru: Ms. Rhea Moss-Christian
Executive Director

APPEAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HARVEST CONTROL RULES AND HARVEST STRATEGY FOR YELLOWFIN AND BIGEYE TUNAS

Dear Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission:

In the spirit of conservation, our group would like to appeal to the members of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

Our associations based in General Santos City, Philippines, **Fresh Frozen Seafood Association of the Philippines, Inc. (FFSAPI)** and the **Sargen Fishport Tuna Handline Fishing Association, Inc. (SARGEN HANDLINE)**, together we have endeavored to embark on the implementation of a fisheries improvement project which we refer to as the **FFSAPI-SARGEN HANDLINE FIP**. This comprehensive 5-year project seeks to make improvements both on the environmental aspect and social aspect of the yellowfin and bigeye tuna handline fisheries in the Philippine's Fisheries Management Areas 2 and 3, with the end in view of securing eco-label certification acceptable by the market to ensure Philippine tuna product's competitiveness in the world market. As of this writing, we have a total of 111 enrolled tuna handline boats, 67 from commercial sector and 44 from the municipal sector ranging in size from 3 gross tons to 66 gross tons.

While we want to keep the livelihood of the handline stakeholders and continuously provide support for the nations' food security, the **sustainability of our target fish stocks** which in this case yellowfin and bigeye tunas, is of *paramount importance* to us. It is in

this light that we are appealing to the members of the Commission on the upcoming Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Scientific Committee Meeting on August 15-24, 2023 in the Republic of Palau, **to make best effort possible to expedite the process of the development of harvest control rules and harvest strategy for yellowfin and bigeye in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.**

It should be recalled that WCPFC11 agreed to CMM 2014-06 Conservation and Management Measures to develop and implement a harvest strategy approach for key fisheries and stocks in the WCPO. In 2015 pursuant to paragraph 13 of the CMM, WCPFC12 agreed on a *Workplan for adoption of Harvest Strategies under CMM 2014-06*. It is acknowledged that delays in the execution of the workplan may occur, noting the complexity of developing harvest strategies for multiple species within the multilateral WCPFC environment as well as the capacity of member CCMs to understand and participate fully in the process.

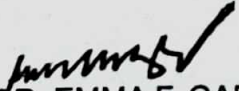
Based on latest WCPFC update, it is likely that the operating models for yellowfin and bigeye will require re-development following the 2022 yellowfin tuna stock assessment peer review and the incorporation of review findings into the 2023 assessments of these species. Development of the multispecies framework for evaluating these species is also ongoing. Adoption of target reference points (TRPs) for bigeye and yellowfin have been rescheduled to 2024. Further, the adoption of management procedures for these species has been tentatively scheduled for 2025.

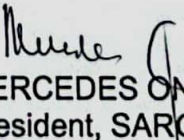
It is only with the establishment of harvest control rules and strategy can our handline fishery be ensured of its sustainability and finally pass eco-label certification's sustainability performance indicators. So again, may we respectfully appeal to the members of the Commission to support the earlier development and adoption whenever possible.

Let us help our fishers protect themselves and their livelihood while sustaining health fish stocks.

We look forward to the adoption of harvest control rules and harvest strategy in the WCPO.

Respectfully yours,


ENGR. EMMA F. GARAY
President, FFSAPI


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President, SARGEN HANDLINE