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Status of Data and Data Gaps for Northern Stocks

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Status of Data

ISC addressed three aspects of improvement to the ISC database in 2010 through the following: (1) convening a metadata workshop to collect metadata from each member (for better understanding of the contents and features of the data collected by members) and unify the extent and contents of the database; (2) beginning work to complete the ISC data inventory; (3) reviewing the data reporting protocol (with regard to clarification of content of the ISC database, definition of public domain data, and streamlining data reporting procedures).

A permanent ISC Data Administrator (DA) was hired in 2010 with support from the Japanese Government. With the hiring of the DA and support from members, significant progress has been achieved in improving the consistency of ISC database and the efficiency of the ISC data reporting and monitoring (see ISC-STATWG meeting, 16-19 July 2010, report). All tasks assigned to the DA are expected to be completed in 2011, and the results will improve the consistency of ISC database and the efficiency of the ISC data reporting and monitoring.

After a review of the ISC public domain data policy, the policy was revised to the following to allow for greater transparency of ISC data: Category I (total catches) data, all fleet combined category II (catch/effort) data and all samples combined category III (size) data are public domain data. Public domain data will be made available through the ISC website.

Data Gaps

1. Biological data of key species

ISC9 noted that a major uncertainty in many of the stock assessments is associated with incomplete or outdated estimates of biological and life history parameters used in the stock assessment models. It recommended that investment be applied to updating and upgrading the estimates through a multilateral Biological Sampling Plan (BSP). That Plan was presented to NC5 for consideration and funding. Voluntary funding was adopted by the NC as a method to start the BSP. No voluntary funding has so far been offered for the plan.

Nonetheless, the ISC10 stressed that the BSP is needed to provide information critical to reducing significant sources of uncertainty in the stock assessments. Financial support for the BSP is encouraged.

2. Fisheries data from non-ISC-members

Progress was made in obtaining missing fishery statistics from non-ISC members, which was a concern raised at NC5. Northern albacore catches from non-Member countries were obtained from SPC for the 2004-2009 periods and incorporated in the ALBWG database. However, their catch/effort and size data are not yet available. Swordfish catches from Spain were acquired and incorporated into the BILLWG database, but some billfish size data from non-Member countries are still not available. No fisheries data for Pacific bluefin tuna from non-Members was recovered outside of the data already incorporated in the PBFWG database. ISC10 decided to address this issue with continued efforts by the Working Group Chairmen in contacting possible sources and, if necessary, through contacts with counterparts at relevant RFMOs. The ISC continues to be concerned about the lack of data on IUU and the impact this may have on stock assessments.

ISC10 also noted that there is still a need for catch-and-effort and biological data on non-ISC member fisheries for the key species as well as the other species that require monitoring to determine conservation concern. An example is the need for complete fishery data on Pacific blue marlin in order for ISC to plan on completing a stock assessment on this species in 2012.

3. Fisheries data coverage from ISC-members

ISC has adopted a fisheries data submission protocol but not all Members have submitted their data or submitted their data on a timely basis for an up-to-date annual review of fishery performance and for up-to-date stock assessments. In the course of developing the ISC data inventory, missing historical data from many Members were noted. The ISC DA is tasked with contacting Members to recover missing historical data with a data submission deadline of July 2011.

Members' performance in data submission was reviewed with a data report card developed by ISC9. Most Members submitted their 2009 data before the designated deadline (July 1, 2010) with some Members slightly delayed. The absence of data from China was noted.

4. Data Gaps between the WCPFC and ISC

A preliminary ISC data inventory was prepared and made available at ISC10. A more complete inventory is planned for completion in 2011 when all missing historical data will be due from Members (see above). The preliminary inventory was exchanged with WCPFC in SC6 to allow a comparison and determination of sources for the data gaps. In general, for the large-scale fisheries, WCPFC has more data than ISC and, for the small-scale fisheries, ISC has more data than WCPFC. Also, it was noted that Chinese fisheries data for Pacific bluefin tuna and striped marlin were reported to WCPFC but not to the ISC. This finding emphasized the usefulness of the inventory in determining gaps in the databases for both organizations as well as in providing the basis for each organization to work with its members to resolve the gaps.