



TO ALL COMMISSION MEMBERS, COOPERATING NON-MEMBERS,
PARTICIPATING TERRITORIES AND OBSERVERS

Circular No.: 2025/21

Date: 25 April 2025

No. pages: 7

Subject: Draft Terms of Reference for the establishment of the IATTC-WCPFC JWG on the management of the South Pacific albacore fishery and an announcement of an Initial Informal Virtual Meeting

Dear All,

Recalling the Commission's decision at WCPFC21 (*Paragraphs 735-738, [WCPFC21 Summary Report](#)*) on the establishment of a Joint Working Group (JWG) between the WCPFC and the IATTC on the management of South Pacific albacore fishery (JWG-SPA), the attached correspondence from the United States outlines their proposed approach as the Commission's lead on progressing intersessional work.

Following initial exchanges between the WCPFC Chair, Secretariat, and the United States in January 2025, the Secretariat engaged with the IATTC Secretariat to support implementation of the WCPFC21 decision. The United States advised the WCPFC Secretariat that it would progress the development of a draft Terms of Reference (TOR), including the objectives and proposed workplan for the JWG-SPA, and indicated its intention to circulate this to CCMs in February. Later, the United States also proposed 20 May 2025 as the timeframe for a virtual meeting between WCPFC and IATTC.

This Circular presents the most recent advice received from the United States as of today, including draft TOR materials and their proposed way forward for consideration. In addition, the IATTC Secretariat independently prepared a draft TOR for review by its members in March 2025. The United States provided both drafts, attached to this Circular, for comment by WCPFC CCMs. Shortly, the Secretariat will establish a dedicated meeting page for the WCPFC-IATTC JWG-SPA to support ongoing document and information exchange.

For easy reference, the Commission's decision and tasking at WCPFC21 follows:

Decision

735. The Commission agrees in principle to the establishment of a JWG for SP Albacore and endorses the framework in [WCPFC21-2024-DP14b](#) as a guide for progressing the development.

736. The Commission requests the WCPFC Chair to engage with the IATTC Chair in early 2025 on the establishment of a JWG for SP Albacore, with the objective of establishing an informal initial meeting of the JWG in the first half of 2025 and adopting the Terms of Reference by WCPFC22 in 2025.

737. The Commission requested the Chair to cooperate with the United States and others in developing the terms of reference.

Task

738. The Commission tasks the Secretariat to provide support to the WCPFC Chair in developing the workplan and timeline for the JWG for SP Albacore, and to keep members and stakeholders informed on developments.

Per the attached correspondence from the United States, CCMs are requested to provide their feedback on the two draft TORs, including the objectives and workplan, no later than 9 May 2025, Pohnpei time. The United States requests that comments and feedback be directed to Dr. Alex Kahl (alex.kahl@noaa.gov), with a copy to the WCPFC and IATTC Chairs:

- WCPFC Chair Dr. Josie Tamate <josie.tamate@gmail.com>
- IATTC Chair Dr. Andres Arens <aarens@iattc.org>

Please also include the WCPFC Secretariat (wcpfc@wcpfc.int) when providing your feedback.

Yours sincerely,



Rhea Moss-Christian
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

From: Alex Kahl <alex.kahl@noaa.gov>
Sent: Friday, April 25, 2025 12:00 PM
To: Josie Tamate; aarens@iattc.org
Cc: Andrew Lawler - NOAA Federal; Sarah Malloy; Ryan Wulff - NOAA Federal; Jason Philibotte; afranco@iattc.org; Rhea Moss-Christian
Subject: South Pacific Albacore Joint Working Group Virtual Discussion Regarding Draft Terms of Reference (TOR)
Attachments: IATTC Draft SPA TORs March 2025.docx; WCPFC Draft SPA-JWG TORs for Input March 2025.docx

Dear Chairs,

Below is correspondence from the United States' Head of Delegation to both Commissions regarding the development of a Joint Working Group on south Pacific albacore. Please share the correspondence from DAS Lawler with your members.

We look forward to working with everyone towards the establishment of the Joint Working Group.

Aloha
alex

Dear All

The United States would like to acknowledge the shared interest of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) to cooperate on south Pacific albacore through a WCPFC/IATTC Joint Working Group on south Pacific albacore (SPA JWG). Both commissions recognize the need to develop Terms of Reference in 2025 as an initial step in the formation of the SPA JWG with the IATTC Secretariat circulating an initial draft TORs for consideration (attached) and with WCPFC members developing an outline of a draft TOR during WCPFC21 in Fiji (attached).

As a member of both RFMOs, the United States has coordinated with both Secretariats and with other members and parties to understand various perspectives on this issue. As a result, there are currently two draft TORs that will need to be reconciled and consolidated for adoption by both Commissions. In the spirit of transparency, the United States is sharing both versions of the TORs (one developed out of an IATTC process and the other developed during WCPFC21). Over the coming weeks, the United States will work with both Commission Chairs to consolidate the TORs into a single document for consideration by members and parties of both Commissions **at a virtual discussion proposed for May 20, 2025 west of the dateline (May 19, 2025 east of the dateline)**. The United States welcomes feedback from individual members and parties on both draft TORs no later than May 9, and in consultation with the Chairs, will circulate the consolidated TOR no later than May 13, 2025. This timeline will allow time for review of the TORs before the proposed virtual discussion of the consolidated draft TORs on May 20, 2025 west of the dateline (May 19, 2025 east of the dateline).

The United States understands that the Secretariats have coordinated support for a potential virtual discussion of the consolidated draft TORs on May 20 (west of the dateline and May 19 east of the dateline). The virtual review is intended to result in draft TORs that are available for each RFMO's subsidiary body meetings to review and update throughout the summer. Ideally, this process will support adoption of the TORs at the IATTC meeting in September, with adoption by the WCPFC in December.

Any feedback on the TORs should be sent to the United States <alex.kahl@noaa.gov> no later than May 9, 2025, copying both Commission Chairs:

- WCPFC Chair Dr. Josie Tamate <josie.tamate@gmail.com>
- IATTC Chair Dr. Andres Arens <aarens@iattc.org>

Sincerely,

Drew Lawler
NOAA Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Fisheries
U.S. Head of Delegation to the WCPFC and IATTC

DRAFT DEVELOPED DURING WCPFC21 UPDATED FEBRUARY 2025

South Pacific Albacore Joint Working Group
DRAFT Terms of Reference

Purpose

To establish a South Pacific Albacore Joint Working Group (SPA-JWG) to enhance cooperation between WCPFC and IATTC for South Pacific albacore tuna research and management. The SPA-JWG will endeavor to develop recommendations for consideration by both Commissions regarding scientific cooperation and, as appropriate, harmonized or coordinated management of SPA across the range of the stock.

Objectives

The objectives of the SPA-JWG will be to:

- develop a common understanding of the management objectives for SPA in both convention areas;
- enhance the harmonization of harvest strategies thorough, inter alia, the development of a joint SPA workplan;
- coordinate scientific analyses and facilitate the collection and exchange of relevant fisheries data, scientific knowledge and expertise;
- identify priority areas for improvement in monitoring, reporting, and data sharing;
- develop compatible management arrangements for SPA across all fisheries, including the coordination of catch and/or effort levels between the two Commissions;
- collaborate to identify ways to streamline the timelines of technical and decision-making sessions to ensure efficient progress towards the robust management of SPA. This should include opportunities for intersessional decision-making, where necessary.

Composition

The SPA-JWG will be co-chaired by one person appointed by each commission.

All interested WCPFC CCMs and IATTC CPCs are encouraged to participate in the SPA-JWG. Observers of both commissions may also participate in the work of the SPA-JWG.

The Secretariats of both commissions will coordinate any fora and engagements required by the SPA-JWG. This includes any SPA-JWG meeting arrangements, development, translation and dissemination of SPA-JWG meeting documents, and facilitation of information sharing in accordance with existing rules and provisions of each organization. Most meetings will be held virtually, with presential or in-person meetings to be focused on targeted outcomes, as appropriate.

Workplan

Pending agreement in 2025 by IATTC and WCPFC to establish the SPA-JWG and endorse its Terms of Reference, the SPA-JWG will have its first meeting in early 2026 to develop its Workplan. The Terms of Reference and Workplan should be reviewed by each Commission and revised as appropriate, annually.

CHAIR'S TEXT

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR AN AD HOC IATTC-WCPFC JOINT WORKING GROUP ON SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE TUNA

Taking into account the mandates for cooperation and coordination between the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) with respect to the South Pacific Albacore tuna (SPA) contained in, *inter alia*, IATTC Resolution C-24-04 and the recommendation adopted by WCPFC21 instructing the Chair of the WCPFC to help develop Terms of Reference for the establishment of a Joint Working Group for SPA;

Recognizing that SPA is an important tuna species harvested by members of both Commissions;

In accordance with the provisions of Article XXIV of the Antigua Convention and Article 22 of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean;

Agree:

To establish an *Ad Hoc* IATTC-WCPFC Joint Working Group (JWG) on South Pacific Albacore tuna (SPA-JWG), with the following terms of reference:

1. The SPA-JWG shall be composed of representatives designated by Members of both Commissions, and who may be accompanied by such experts or advisors as each Member may deem appropriate. The SPA-JWG may also include, as observers, representatives of relevant intergovernmental organizations as well as non-governmental organizations accredited to either Commission. Organizations or individuals with recognized scientific or practical fisheries experience in matters related to the work of the SPA-JWG may also be invited to participate.
2. The functions of the SPA-JWG shall be the following:
 - (a) To develop a common approach for the conservation and management of SPA in both convention areas;
 - (b) To enhance the harmonization of harvest strategies and other conservation and management actions through, *inter alia*, the development of a joint workplan for SPA;
 - (c) To develop compatible and/or harmonized management arrangements or measures for SPA, as appropriate, across all fisheries, including the coordination of catch and/or effort levels between the two Commissions;
 - (d) To coordinate scientific research and analyses and facilitate the collection and exchange of relevant fisheries data, scientific knowledge and expertise;
 - (e) To identify priority areas for improvement in monitoring, reporting, and data sharing;

- (f) To collaborate in the identification of ways to streamline the relevant decision-making processes within each Commission to ensure efficient progress towards the robust conservation and management of SPA;
 - (g) To undertake additional tasks related to SPA, as appropriate and pursuant to corresponding requests from both Commissions;
 - (h) to report to each Commission on the advances of its work.
3. Each Commission will appoint a co-chair of the SPA-JWG for the term each will determine.
 4. The Secretariats of both Commissions will coordinate the adoption and implementation of all arrangements needed for the work of the SPG-JWG. This includes the preparation, translation and dissemination of meeting documents, information sharing, in a manner consistent with the applicable rules and procedures of each Commission. Unless otherwise provided for, the IATTC Secretariat shall be responsible for providing simultaneous English Spanish interpretation for meetings of the SPA-JWG, and the translation of meeting documents between the two languages, as appropriate.
 5. Meetings of the SPA-JWG will be convened by the Co-Chairs, consistent with the relevant rules of procedure of both Commissions, and in consultation with the Chair and Director of each Commission, in a format to be decided on a case-by-case basis (virtual, presential or hybrid), taking into account the matters to be discussed and *inter alia*, the availability of funding.
 6. The SPA-JWG shall endeavor to adopt its conclusions and recommendations by consensus. If efforts to achieve consensus fail, the meeting reports shall so indicate and shall reflect the views of the majority and minority.
 7. The conclusions and recommendations adopted by the SPA-JWG:
 - (a) where appropriate, shall be submitted first to the scientific bodies of each Commission, for their consideration and/or endorsement and later submission to each Commission;
 - (b) may be submitted to the Commissions directly, whenever they could not be considered and/or endorsed by the respective scientific bodies or as directed by the Commissions themselves.
 8. In order to optimize its work, as appropriate, the SPA-JWG, through the Co-Chairs:
 - (a) will ensure coordination with other relevant subsidiary bodies of both Commissions, particularly with a view to seeking their inputs;
 - (b) may seek appropriate inputs from all relevant stakeholders, such as inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations or natural persons such as scientists, researchers, managers, fishers, etc.
 9. These Terms of Reference shall enter into force at the time of their adoption by both Commissions.