The Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean

SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP (SPAMWS02)
SECOND SESSION

Electronic Meeting
10:00 – 14:00, Pohnpei Time, 5 November 2025

CHAIRS' SUMMARY REPORT

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I. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The Co-Chair, Mr Moses Mataika (Fiji) opened the meeting by recalling the outcomes of SPAMWS01, confirming the objectives of SPAMWS02, and emphasizing the importance of finalizing advice and any decisions for consideration at WCPFC22. Participants were reminded that the session was limited to four hours. Discussions must therefore remain focused on concluding decisions regarding the candidate management procedures, including the six priority requests assigned to the Scientific Services Provider (SSP) for further analysis, as well as any associated implementing CMM proposals, if available (see paragraph 18 of the SPAMWS01 Report).

II. REVIEW OF SPAMWS01'S REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL CANDIDATE MPS

2. SPAMWS01 considered seven candidate MPs (catch-based HCRs 7, 10, 13, 14–16, and effort-based HCR 9). Annex A of the SPAMWS01 Report summarizes the six requests to the SSP that were selected for further analysis. SPAMWS02 reviewed the results of the additional requests and provided recommendations to the Commission, as appropriate. Below was the list of six requests that were ranked highest at SPAMWS01.

#	SPAMWA01's priority requests to the SSP	Notes
1	Re-tune all 7 candidate MPs operating south of 10°S, with exclusion of TK and TV catches that are south of 10°S.	
2	Perform sensitivity analyses described in SPAMWS01-WP-01 on re-tuned MPs in #1	
3	Develop additional MPs based on the current modified HCR 7 proposal (AU proposal) and HCR 13, which treat troll catch as an assumed and constant "external catch" in the MP. These MPs would be tuned to achieve the appropriate associated TRP. In developing these MPs, the "external troll catch" could be set at 2000-2004 average troll levels (in line with the baseline referenced in CMM 2015-02)	Equates to 4 new MPs Assume ONLY HCR7 is excluding TK/TV catch south of 10°S here; #1 will need to be done first
4	Develop an MP equivalent to HCR 14 (EPO at 22,500) but with 0-10°S on fixed effort (2014-2023) instead of catch, and that achieves the iTRP in the long-term.	

5	Run HCR7 with no constraint	If the new baseline excludes TK and TV, #1 will need to be done first
6	Update SPAMPLE to include the full suite of considered MPs	
	Essential SSP activities prior to WCPFC22	**Notes**
	Run the estimation method using data up to 2023 and calculate the output from all candidate MPs	This needs to be done to meet the harvest strategy workplan timetable.

3. The Co-Chair, Ms Emily Crigler (USA), opened Agenda Item 2 by introducing the additional analyses of candidate management procedures (MPs) prepared by the SSP, following requests from SPAMWS01. The SSP presented updated evaluations contained in SPAMWS02-WP-01.

4. The SSP's presentation focused on three "streams" defined by the area of application of the SPA MP and the assumption made about future levels of albacore catch. The presentation focused on the stream that excludes the Tokelau and Tuvalu EEZ slivers south of 10°S, noting that the results were highly similar to those of the stream that includes them, allowing a common MP to be used across both. Four main MPs were evaluated using consistent baseline assumptions for future albacore catches in the EPO (18,000 t) and the 0–10°S region (9,000 t plus 667 t for Tokelau/Tuvalu's southern slivers). These MPs—three catch-based and one effort-based—were each designed to achieve different target reference points (lower, upper, or interim TRP) under specified stability constraints. All four MPs maintained a probability above 0.8 of staying above the limit reference point (LRP), meeting the WCPFC requirements; however, HCR10 showed the lowest probability and approached the threshold more closely. Results also demonstrated expected trade-offs between long-term catch levels and stock status indicators such as $SB_{F=0}$ and vulnerable biomass.

5. A series of sensitivity tests examined the robustness of the MPs under higher assumed future catches in the tropical longline fishery (up to 12,000 t plus 667 t) and the EPO (up to 22,500 t). These tests showed modest declines in $SB_{F=0}$ and vulnerable biomass, especially when both catch assumptions were increased simultaneously, but MPs generally performed within acceptable bounds and remained above the LRP.

6. The additional six MPs requested at SC21 and SPAMWS01 were also evaluated. These MPs differed from the main set because they were specifically tuned to achieve defined objectives—mostly the interim TRP—and incorporated alternative assumptions such as fixed future longline effort levels, higher EPO catch assumptions, and scenarios where the troll fishery in the WCPFC area is not managed through the MP. Despite different underlying assumptions, all additional MPs (except the ones targeting the upper TRP) produced similar biomass outcomes due to the shared tuning target of iTRP, with significant differences arising primarily in projected future catches.

7. The estimation method was run using the most recently available data, through 2023, and produced a relative $SB_{F=0}$ value of 1.180 (relative to 2017–2019). This was then applied to each candidate harvest control rule to generate the actual catch or effort limits that would apply for the 2026–2028 management period (with constraints applied where relevant).

8. The presenter clarified that catch indicators include total catches south of 10°S—even when specific fisheries (e.g., troll fishery or Tokelau/Tuvalu's southern EEZ slivers) are not governed by the MP.

9. Additional discussion addressed questions about catch north of 10°S (which is captured within assumed longline catch levels), historical EEZ/high seas distribution of catch, and the feasibility of producing further analyses requested by CCMs, including reconstructing controlled catches back to 2000 and providing caveats for older effort data.

10. Further refinements to the working paper will be undertaken to ensure that only harvest control rules recommended for the Commission's consideration are carried forward to WCPFC22.

11. Australia emphasized that retuning HCR7—after excluding the small Tuvalu and Tokelau EEZ portions—was a priority request from the first workshop. Australia noted that results showed HCR7 still meets the interim TRP, with similar long-term catch outcomes and only a slight reduction in allowable catch when the Tokelau and Tuvalu EEZ slivers are excluded, reinforcing the robustness of HCR7 and validating the FFA's assumptions. Australia cautioned that fixing troll catch at higher historical levels (e.g., ~5,000 t) could mask significant reductions required of longline fleets. They requested calculation of an additional performance indicator that provides the catch taken by fisheries directly controlled under the MP to interpret performance correctly. Australia also acknowledged data limitations for reconstructing historical effort and encouraged the SSP to include necessary caveats in its reporting.

12. The United States thanked the SSP for the analyses, including those requested by the US. It highlighted that HCR18 and HCR19 perform virtually identically to HCR7 and HCR13 for the available indicators, including that reporting total albacore catch in the WCPFC-CA, south of 10°S.

13. Japan sought clarification on the implications of HCR18 and HCR19, particularly whether similar outcomes would result if other fisheries—beyond troll—were excluded from the MP as long as the same 9,000 t catch assumption is used. They asked the SSP to confirm whether differences in average fish size between longline and troll fisheries could materially change outcomes when equal tonnages are excluded. The SSP responded that troll fisheries catch smaller individuals, and for a given catch tonnage, more individuals would be removed in the troll fishery compared to the longline fishery.

14. Some delegations reiterated their preference for an MP area beginning at the equator, consistent with previous MP practice and the biological range of the stock. Still, they indicated willingness to consider the FFA-proposed south-of-10°S scope in conjunction with broader implementation CMM discussions. They highlighted that restricting consideration only to HCRs applying south of 10°S is premature, given differing member views on spatial scope.

III. CMM ON THE SPA MP

15. Under Agenda Item 3, the Co-Chair, Ms Emily Crigler, outlined the objective of narrowing the large number of candidate MPs to be forwarded to WCPFC22.

16. FFA presented a comprehensive overview of their proposal for the South Pacific Albacore Management Procedure (SPALB MP), which is posted on the Commission website as WCPFC22-2025-DP02a. The proposal maintains the adopted interim TRP, uses an HCR tuned to that TRP, and sets a total catch level (convertible to effort where needed). On spatial assumptions, FFA stressed the principle that the MP should control as much southern albacore catch as possible, while treating catches in the EPO and equator–10°S area as external and fixed at 2014–2023 levels (18,000 t and 9,000 t, respectively). They emphasized the need to avoid conflicting requirements between the albacore MP and the future bigeye

MP in shared tropical and southern areas. To reduce operational burdens on SIDS, FFA proposed shifting the small Tokelau/Tuvalu zones south of 10°S into the tropical region and fixing their catches at historical levels (667 t). They highlighted the SSP findings showing that excluding those small zones does not materially affect MP performance. FFA's implementing measures include robust monitoring, such as strengthened reporting, transshipment monitoring, observer/EM requirements, and data verification needs. The MP uses a –5% / +10% change constraint, which the FFA argues maintains stability without compromising responsiveness. They concluded by urging CCMs to support the adoption of the proposal at WCPFC22.

17. New Caledonia first sought clarification on whether it was procedurally acceptable to discuss a paper that had not been posted on the South Pacific Albacore Working Group website, although it appeared on the WCPFC22 website. After the Chair's response, they accepted this but noted the procedural concern.

18. China thanked the FFA for its comprehensive MP proposal and provided several detailed comments. China noted that it is still conducting internal consultations on HCR options and therefore cannot endorse HCR7 as a preferred option at this stage. Instead, it expresses a preliminary preference for HCR13 due to its lower risk of dropping below the LRP. China also indicated that the EPO catch assumption of 18,000 t remains under review and that a higher level—around 22,500 t—may be more appropriate. China has not yet reached a consensus on whether the 0–10°S area should be excluded from the MP, emphasizing the importance of maintaining unified management south of the equator. After further internal consultation during the meeting break, China requested that HCR17 be reserved for continued consideration, while preferring that HCR10 and HCR14 remain in the narrowed list from now on and expressing flexibility in excluding Tokelau and Tuvalu EEZ slivers from the MP.

19. New Caledonia expressed preference for catch-based HCRs, supporting HCR 7 as proposed by FFA, and stated preliminary openness to a broader geographic scope, while remaining flexible.

20. Chinese Taipei thanked FFA for the proposal and followed up on earlier comments from China. Their key concern is that several HCRs, including 7 and 13, may not provide sufficient total allowable catch to accommodate all CCMs, especially if some large fleets seek future entry or expansion. Because of this concern, they stated that they cannot support any HCR more conservative than HCR 7, and in fact, they do not currently support HCR 7 or 13 either. Their current preference is HCR 10, which they view as maintaining more adequate catch levels for allocation discussions.

21. The US reiterated its long-standing position that the MP should apply from the equator south, noting concern about proposals to remove the 0–10°S band from MP but expressing willingness to explore implications before WCPFC22. The US stated it is prepared to engage in detailed discussions on HCR7, 13, 18, and 19, while cautioning that HCR10 poses significant risks to vulnerable biomass that may not be acceptable to many in the Commission, including the American Territories.

22. The Cook Islands provided further explanation regarding the practical considerations of applying MPs across overlapping geographic areas. They noted that the skipjack MP does not apply to the entire stock range, highlighting that MPs are sometimes implemented with geographic limitations. They argued that using two different MPs (albacore and bigeye) over the same geographic zones would create significant management complexity for CCMs, especially for those with unified longline arrangements across tropical and southern waters. Therefore, they supported excluding the equator–10°S zone from the albacore MP to ensure more apparent separation between the albacore MP and the future bigeye MP.

23. Members discussed key outstanding issues, including geographic scope (south of the equator vs south of 10°S), treatment of Tokelau and Tuvalu EEZ catches, constraints on inter-period changes, and preferred harvest control rules. **After extensive interventions, the workshop agreed to forward to the Commission a** narrowed **set of HCRs 7, 10, 13, 14, 17, 18, and 19—applying south of 10°S and excluding fisheries operating in the slivers of the EEZs of Tokelau and Tuvalu that are south of 10°S, along with resubmission of all previously evaluated MPs, presented at WCPFC21, covering south of the equator (including both catch- and effort-based MPs).**

24. The SSP also received requests for additional information ahead of WCPFC22:
1) From 2000-2023, South Pacific albacore catches, broken down by EEZ and high seas, showing: total catch, catch between the Equator and 10°S, and south of 10°S; and
2) From 2000-2023, for the area between the Equator and 10°S, south of 10°S, the number of hooks (or other effort indicator) set on the high seas vs. the number of hooks set within EEZs.
3) Calculation of an additional performance indicator that reports the total albacore catch of fisheries directly managed through the MP.

25. The Agenda Item 3 closed with an acknowledgement that substantial work remains and encouragement for members to undertake bilateral consultations before the Commission meeting.

IV. CMM ON THE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SPA MP

26. Cook Islands, on behalf of Tokelau and FFA, formally introduced the FFA proposal in WCPFC22-2025-DP02b. They emphasized that the proposed measure would replace CMM 2015-02, support implementation of the albacore MP, and strengthen key management components. The proposal recognizes existing zone-based limits and high seas limits, affirms the rights and interests of coastal States, including binding zone-based allocations, and respects pre-existing national and sub-regional arrangements. It also incorporates flexibility tools such as transferability, multi-year reconciliation, and pooling to help manage variability in the fishery. Monitoring is strengthened through enhanced electronic reporting, improved oversight of transshipment, increased observer/EM coverage, and more robust unloading data submission. On allocation, they outlined a two-step process—first determining the overall EEZ/high seas proportional split, then allocating the high seas portion. They proposed 75% EEZ / 25% high seas split based on Convention principles (Articles 10(3) and 30) and the special requirements of SIDS, while acknowledging climate-related distribution shifts. They underscored that the transition to an MP will require shared adjustments but will ultimately support economic and social benefits for all CCMs. The Cook Islands concluded by noting that PNA+ will require further consideration regarding the application of effort-based MPs between the equator and 10°S, given the existing effort control regimes in that zone.

27. Japan also queried details of the FFA's draft allocation approach—specifically the 75% EEZ / 25% high seas split—and requested the SSP to provide long-term EEZ vs high seas catch and effort data (ideally 2000–2023) to support equitable allocation discussions at WCPFC22.

28. The Cook Islands confirmed that the 75/25 EEZ/high seas split appears in WCPFC22-2025-DP02b, welcomed comments by email, and provided further justification for differing monitoring obligations.

29. China requested the removal of observer-related issues from the CMM that could hamper its adoption and proposed that the SSP compile comprehensive historical catch and effort data (by EEZ/high seas and by area between the equator and 10°S) to support discussions at WCPFC22.

30. Chinese Taipei expressed broader concerns with the FFA proposal, including issues relating to allocation proportions, operational-level data submission requirements, catch-retention rules, and observer coverage requirements. They noted, however, their appreciation for the proposal's inclusion of a transferable quota mechanism.

31. Regarding the FFA's draft CMM on allocation and implementation, the US emphasized the need to avoid diverting the SSP resources away from finalizing the MP and raised concerns about the zone-based allocation approach, although it welcomed certain flexibilities such as transferability. The US supported continued discussion of implementation after MP adoption.

32. New Caledonia raised concerns regarding several obligations in implementing CMM, especially proposals for observer coverage and discard reporting, which they felt had not been previously discussed in the relevant subsidiary bodies (e.g., TCC) and therefore required careful review. They also questioned the rationale for different monitoring requirements between the equator–10°S area and the area south of 10°S, particularly why obligations were not uniform across the entire management area. They requested clarification on the assumptions underlying these distinctions.

33. Cook Islands stressed that the albacore MP south of 10°S is catch-based, requiring strong monitoring and independent verification, particularly in the high seas, where data gaps are significant. Thus, differentiated measures may be necessary. They also reminded members that tropical longline areas between the equator and 10°S will ultimately be governed under the bigeye MP through arrangements similar to the tropical tuna CMM.

34. Tokelau clarified that their earlier intervention was not about retaining HCR 9 for the area south of 10°S or about excluding the small portions of Tuvalu and Tokelau EEZs. They reaffirmed support for the FFA proposal, consistent with the co-chairs' explanation. Their key point was that if management proposals are being put forward for the equator–south area, then it is important to maintain effort-based HCRs for that region.

V. CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY AND CLOSING OF THE WORKSHOP

35. The Co-Chairs confirmed that the outcomes under Agenda Item 3 include **forwarding the following to the Commission:**

1) **HCRs 7, 10, 13, 14, 17, 18, and 19, applying south of 10°S and excluding fisheries operating in the slivers of the EEZs of Tokelau and Tuvalu that are south of 10°S,** and
2) **all previously evaluated MPs, presented at WCPFC21, covering south of the equator, including both catch- and effort-based MPs.**

36. Additional information requested from the SSP before WCPFC22 includes:

1) From 2000-2023, South Pacific albacore catches, broken down by EEZ and high seas, showing: total catch, catch between the Equator and 10°S, and south of 10°S; and
2) From 2000-2023, for the area between the Equator and 10°S, south of 10°S, the number of hooks (or other effort indicator) set on the high seas vs. the number of hooks set within EEZs.

3) Calculation of an additional performance indicator that reports the total albacore catch of fisheries directly managed through the MP.

37. The WCPFC Chair thanked participants and emphasized that adoption of the SPA management procedure remains a priority for WCPFC22. The WCPFC Chair encouraged continued dialogue and bilateral discussions before the Manila meeting to help narrow outstanding issues and support efficient decision-making, given the heavy agenda.

38. The workshop adjourned at 12:38 PM (PNI time) with appreciation to participants and the Science Service Provider for their contributions and to the Co-Chairs for guidance.