



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
TWENTY SECOND REGULAR SESSION**
Apia, Samoa (Hybrid)
11 – 19 August 2026

**ACTIVITIES ADDRESSING CHALLENGES IN THE DELIVERY OF STOCK ASSESSMENTS IN TIME FOR
MEMBER'S PEER REVIEW**

**WCPFC-SC22-2026-GN-IP06
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Graham Pilling¹, Tiffany Vidal, Paul Hamer, and the WCPFC Secretariat

¹ Oceanic Fisheries Programme of the Pacific Community

Executive Summary

1. This paper updates SC22 on progress in increasing the efficiency of activities prior to the SC that are of relevance to four specific outcomes from WCPFC22 (WCPFC22 summary report, para 261, subparagraphs (c) to (f)) and highlights areas where further improvements might be made. The Commission considered issues raised in WCPFC22-2025-18 that led to outcomes and taskings addressed in this paper. The following updates are provided for SC22 consideration:

- a. Earlier engagement with CCMs during assessment development (c)**

The SSP implemented short online 'pre-PAW' meetings (Nov 2025) to gather initial feedback, along with the hybrid PAW in March. Feedback from CCMs on this process is welcomed. The SSP highlights the need to balance input with assessment execution, noting that not all avenues of analysis can be addressed each year.

- b. Prioritisation of SC work (d)**

SC22-GN-WP-05 presents options for prioritising SC activities. The SSP supports the principle for managing the assessment process workflow through benchmark and update assessments, noting this needs to be considered in relation to the proposed peer review process and associated workload.

- c. Modifications to the SciData submission deadline (e)**

Standardised SciData reporting templates and a new web-based data submission portal were implemented this year. The process has highlighted areas for SciData revision for SC consideration. The expectation is that following initial uptake and process adjustments by CCMs and the SSP, the approach will increase data availability timeliness of in future. CCM feedback is sought so that refinements can be made. Further discussion on achieving data provision prior to the current deadline - as requested by WCPFC22 - remains relevant, noting ER provides a clear solution.

- d. Adjusting WCPFC meeting timetables (f)**

Options to shift WCPFC meetings have been pursued but are not a solution in the short-term.

2. We note the number of short-term SC projects, which come with additional time requirements for the SSP, Secretariat, and CCMs. Following FAC19 observations on 'increased scientific financial ask', SC may consider options to prioritise fewer/larger high impact projects.
3. SC22 is invited to:
 - i. support early submission of data by CCMs who are able, with those facing challenges to continue to explore and identify solutions to accommodate earlier data submission, noting the opportunity provided through the implementation of electronic reporting.
 - ii. provide feedback to the SSP on performance of the standardised data submission process to allow further refinement.
 - iii. consider the number and prioritisation of SC projects put forward to the Commission for funding, in particular a process of prioritising funding of projects that contribute directly to Commission priorities as identified in relevant CMMs, the Convention, and other decisions. This could form part of the discussion of staged processes around SC22-GN-WP-05.

Introduction

4. In recent years the Scientific Committee has discussed mechanisms to address challenges in the delivery of SSP outputs in sufficient time to allow member's peer review prior to the start of the SC meeting each year. Issues were raised at WCPFC22 in [WCPFC22-2025-18](#) and the Commission agreed to the following outcomes (WCPFC22 summary report para 261, sub-bullets (c) to (f)):
 - c) requested SC22 and the SSP to review the current assessment workflow and identify realistic steps to improve efficiency, including earlier engagement with CCMs during assessment development, while maintaining the quality and integrity of scientific advice.
 - d) requested the SC Vice-Chair to lead intersessional work to develop options for prioritizing the work of the Scientific Committee for consideration by SC22 and further requested SC22 to report its recommendations on prioritization to WCPFC23.
 - e) requested the SC22 to further consider potential modifications to the current SciData submission deadline to a date earlier than 30 April.
 - f) tasked the WCPFC Secretariat, Commission and Subsidiary Body Chairs, and SSP to evaluate options for adjusting meeting timetables for consideration by WCPFC23 and its subsidiary bodies in 2026.
5. To support discussions at SC22 in response to Commission requests, this paper summarises recent activities to improve the SSP's delivery of assessment papers, highlights remaining challenges, and raises additional SC-related activities for consideration.

Earlier engagement with CCMs during assessment development (c)

6. WCPFC22 requested the identification of *realistic steps to improve efficiency, including earlier engagement with CCMs during assessment development, while maintaining the quality and integrity of scientific advice*.
7. As discussed at SC21, there is a need to balance collaboration and CCM input into regional stock assessments with the need to ensure all CCMs could contribute, while respecting WCPFC's approach to ensuring independent scientific analysis.
8. To this end, the SSP engaged with CCMs on the 13th and 20th November 2025, through two online 'pre-pre-assessment' workshops (pre-PAWs) that aimed to gather initial feedback from interested CCMs on the development of stock assessments scheduled for presentation to SC22 (WCPO bigeye and yellowfin). This was followed by the hybrid Pre-Assessment Workshop held in Noumea during the week of the 23rd March 2026 (see [SC22-SA-IP-01](#)).
9. To ensure transparency, the SSP ensures these SPC meetings are open to all interested CCMs through hybrid approaches. Further liaison with interested CCMs has occurred on an *ad-hoc* basis following those meetings. Noting that this is the first year of applying this approach, feedback from CCMs on the utility of this process is welcomed.

10. The SSP highlights that there is also a need to ensure time is available for the assessment scientists to deliver results. Although CCMs have provided useful suggestions through the processes described in the previous paragraph, there remains limited time available to deliver the assessments, and not all avenues of analysis can be explored. There is a decision point at which the primary development path of the assessment must be set and implemented each year. Each assessment represents improvements on the past, and potential areas for future investigation are documented in the individual assessment and SC reports for future research. Where required, specific research activities are captured in the Tuna Assessment Research Plan. This provides a clear mechanism to ensure CCM inputs are not lost.

Prioritisation of SC work (d)

11. WCPFC22 requested that SC22 identify *options for prioritizing the work of the Scientific Committee for consideration by SC22 and... to report its recommendations on prioritization to WCPFC23.*
12. SC22-GN-WP-05 presents an option for prioritising the activities of SC, including the stock assessment work, taking account of the timetables of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies' meetings. This option reflects the changing role of the stock assessment from serving as the basis of management decision making to one of several inputs used to monitor the performance of adopted management procedures.
13. SC22-GN-WP-05 provides an appropriate option for managing the workflow of the assessment process through benchmark and update assessments, a principle which the SSP supports, and which is consistent with the increasing role of assessments as part of the harvest strategy's monitoring strategy. However, this needs to be considered in relation to the proposed peer review process (SC22-GN-WP-06) and associated workload, given that preparing for and holding the peer review process, along with implementing the recommendations, can represent the same level of time commitment as undertaking an individual assessment.
14. At WCPFC22, the Commission did not directly respond to a query from SC21 (SC21 summary report para 829) for the Commission to consider the utility and feasibility of including data from the previous year in stock assessments. We suggest this question can be revisited following implementation of any changes resulting from discussions at SC22 and the skipjack assessment in 2028.

Modifications to the SciData submission deadline (e)

15. WCPFC22 requested SC22 *consider potential modifications to the current SciData submission deadline to a date earlier than 30 April.*
16. Given the short period between the deadline for provision of annual data sets, processing of those data, and the deadline for stock assessment papers to SC, this has been an area of considerable Commission focus. Two key areas of development have been:
 - The efforts of distant water CCMs to provide updated historical longline data by the end of the previous calendar year.

- The adoption at WCPFC22 of standardized data submission templates contained in [WCPFC22-2025-38](#) for SciData submissions.
17. The implementation of standardized SciData reporting templates combined with a new web-based data submission portal represents significant potential toward more timely processing and preparation of CCM's data for stock assessments (SC22-ST-WP-03). The approach extended beyond standardizing the submission format by subjecting all CCM submissions to an initial validation before data could be successfully submitted. Once submitted, the raw data were then reviewed in a second stage validation process with more rigorous testing relating to referential integrity and data errors. There was a transparent feedback process with CCMs by which submissions could be revised and resubmitted to address potential issues. The process has also highlighted areas where the SC may wish to consider revising the SciData, to ensure sufficient clarity around the guidelines (SC22-ST-WP-05).
 18. Initial feedback from CCMs has generally been positive, in that the standardized process has provided a level of clarity and transparency around data submissions that will enable more streamlined data processes in future. As these changes necessitated CCMs and the SSP to modify certain workflows in the first year of implementation, updated data were made available only slightly earlier than in 2025 – on average, members took 18 days from first data submission to final accepted version (SC22-ST-WP-03) - but given the rigor of the data pipelines, we anticipate fewer changes to be made later in the process, which will expedite paper preparation in future. The overall expectation from the approach is that greater timeliness in data availability will be achieved in subsequent years as processes become more embedded and familiar.
 19. We look forward to CCM feedback on the data submission process so that refinements to further ease reporting burdens whilst continuing to increase efficiency can be made.
 20. In previous discussions, some CCMs have outlined challenges they face in meeting an earlier data provision deadline, but no alternatives have been offered outside the status quo for addressing the need for earlier data submission. SC22 has an opportunity to have further discussion focused on identifying potential solutions to individual challenges, noting that an increase in the use of electronic reporting, as facilitated through the ER and EM IWG, represents a clear solution.

Adjusting WCPFC meeting timetables (f)

21. WCPFC22 requested an evaluation of *options for adjusting meeting timetables for consideration by WCPFC23 and its subsidiary bodies in 2026*.
22. While progress has been made in increasing the timeliness and efficiency of data provision, the timing of the SC meeting together with the deadline for submission of assessments (18 days before the start of SC as specified by [SC21-GN-WP-03](#)), remains a constraint.
23. The Secretariat and the SSP have consulted with other tuna RFMO Secretariats on their meeting timetables to explore options for shifting the timing of WCPFC's SC meeting. CCSBT's SC meeting is currently held in late August and discussions with the CCSBT Secretariat indicate that rescheduling their SC meeting is not feasible.

24. Past discussions have also evaluated the potential to swap the timing of WCPFC TCC and SC meetings, which has implications on the time available to the Secretariat and SSP to adequately prepare the draft Compliance Monitoring Report for review by TCC.
25. In addition, September is a busy month in the tRFMO calendar, with the IATTC Commission meeting and ICCAT SCRS meeting being science-relevant events that would interact with the timing of the current WCPFC TCC meeting and have implications for CCMs that participate in all three of these tRFMOs. Re-arranging tRFMO meeting calendars therefore appears a longer-term objective requiring negotiation between multiple tRFMO Secretariats, and needs several years to implement.

Other observations

26. Discussions between the Secretariat and SSP have explored the potential for occasional additional resources in peak periods which could help alleviate some of the challenges experienced by the SSP in meeting deadlines. Increased human resources could enable delivery of some tasks (for example, longer-term data preparation, evaluation of size data, etc.) and help with some time pressures. However, short term consultancies beyond those already implemented, the use of students or interns, etc. would require a period of dedicated training – each time with new students - and would not be a short-term solution.
27. The SC project process remains an important component in improving the scientific advice provided to managers and has led to significant enhancements. It is notable that the number of short-term SC projects being put forward to FAC has increased over recent years – in part due to the successful implementation of the tuna, billfish, and shark research plans. Discussions at FAC19 noted the ‘increasing scientific financial ask’ each year against limited financial resources. In turn, each SC project comes with administrative and implementation overheads for the Secretariat and the SSP, and incurs time at SC meetings for the review of their reports and outcomes. Further prioritisation of SC projects - including the identification of larger, longer-term high-impact projects along with fewer specific short-term effective and targeted projects which both clearly contribute to delivering Commission priorities - may offer an effective approach. SC22 may consider this issue as part of any sequenced process arising during discussions of SC22-GN-WP-05 under agenda item 11.1.

Recommendations

28. SC22 is invited to:
- i. support early submission of data by CCMs who are able, with those facing challenges to continue to explore and identify solutions to accommodate earlier data submission.
 - ii. provide feedback to the SSP on performance of the standardised data submission process to allow further refinement.
 - iii. consider the number and prioritisation of SC projects put forward to the Commission for funding, in particular a process of prioritising funding of projects that contribute directly to Commission priorities as identified in relevant CMMs, the Convention, and other decisions. This could form part of the discussion of staged processes around SC22-GN-WP-05.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the SC paper preparation process

No AI technologies were used in the preparation of this paper.

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