



Scientific Outputs from the Pacific Tuna Tagging Project SC22-SA-WP-04

PTTP Steering Committee and SPC-OFP

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Context for this Document

Paragraph 54 of the **FAC19 report recommended** that WCPFC22 *request the Scientific Services Provider examine **options to improve cost efficiency** in the tagging programme (P42) and to **report these options and their scientific implications** to SC22, FAC20 and WCPFC23.* FAC19 also recommended that the Scientific Committee *...**clearly flag projects that leverage significant co-funding** or in-kind contributions* (FAC19 report, Para 55).

Paper Overview

- **A draft document for this response was prepared by SPC-OFP and was presented for consideration to the PTTP Steering Committee on July 2nd 2026**
- **Comments and additions were incorporated into this draft before submission of the final SA-WP-04 document to SC22**
- **Document includes summary of project 42 PTTP core work, leveraged secondary work, costs and co-financing, options and implications of reduced funding, and proposes an updated terms of reference to reflect what the project is currently delivering**

Paper Overview

- The PTTP **continues to deliver** fully against its **core objective**
- It also **underwrites an at-sea sampling platform** that supports a variety of **secondary activities for WCPFC** scientific work
- The **cash contribution** to the PTTP from WCPFC **does not fund the project in isolation**: both primary and secondary work **mobilise significant cash and in-kind co-financing**
- In the recent period, **non-WCPFC sources met ~63%** of the total cost of core activities only (most consistent **cash contribution from the Rep. of Korea**)
- Over the **lifetime of the project**, non-WCPFC **cash co-financing alone has met ~77%** of the cost of core activities

PTTP Core Activities

- **Field Operations**

Dedicated tagging research cruises appropriate to the target species, region and fishing mode. Requires vessel charter, technical staff travel, liaison with industry partners, tags and equipment

- **Recovery Network and Data**

Multi-level reward networks sustains timely, high quality and well characterised tag reporting, supported by stake-holder engagement across canneries, fleets and industry bodies through both wild and seeded tag recovery. All data curated and validated by SPC.

- **Analysis**

Preparation and integration of tagging data for stock assessments, harvest strategies and SEAPODYM climate projections, alongside auxiliary analyses of reporting, tagging condition effects, and tag mixing

PTTP Secondary Work: Multi-purpose Scientific Platform



Field operations component of the PTTP supports wide range of outputs for **other WCPFC projects** on the biology of tunas and bycatch species

- **Collection of Hard and Soft Tissues**

Supports work on age and growth, connectivity, pollutants and toxicology, trophic ecology, reproductive biology and stock structure

- **Development of New Protocols**

Undertake controlled contamination studies, protocol development and training

- **High-quality Tissue Collection for Genetics**

Collection of tissue samples requiring specialist equipment and/or protocols

Both **core and secondary work** rely on **infrastructure assets funded and maintained by SPC** using external co-financing sources

Options for Reduced Costs

When considering options to reduce costs:

- Costs associated with **maintenance of tag recovery** network, tag **seeding, training**, custody and validation of **data**, and data preparation and **analysis** are considered **fixed costs**
- Only viable **option is to reduce number of charter days**, either per year or with an annual schedule, which are **currently ~50% cash co-financed**
- Alternating **annual schedules increase the relative costs** of maintaining technical staff, industry collaborations, tag recovery networks and tagging vessels during “off” years

Implications of Reduced Costs

- A **reduction in charter** would **degrade the quality of tagging data** from core activities, and **collection of tissues** for secondary activities
- It would **further reduce SPCs capacity to leverage significant co-financing** (currently 63% of PTTP budget, ~50% for field operations)
- **Major implications** on WCPFC science areas of **stock assessment, harvest strategies, climate projections** and at least **seven other projects** relying on the Pacific Marine Specimen Bank

Implications of Reduced Costs

The removal of tagging data, or reduction in data quality and ability to leverage co-financing, would impact the following projects

- **Stock assessments:** reduced tagging data for movement, fishing mortality and population scale estimates
- **Harvest strategies:** alternative to SKJ estimation method required, changes to BET and YFT operating models
- **Climate projections and P62:** poor estimates of SEAPODYM movement parameters under shifting climate regimes
- **35b Pacific Marine Specimen Bank:** reduced collection of specialist samples
- **100d CKMR:** reduced samples and ability to test protocols
- **120 YFT Reproductive biology:** reduced samples
- **121 Ecosystem and climate indicators:** reduced data for tuna feeding indicators
- **123 Next-gen tuna assessments:** tagging data presence or quality impacts model options
- **125 Billfish biology:** reduction in large suit of samples from billfish
- **128a Tuna connectivity:** reduction in tagging data and isotope/microchemistry data
- **129 Age-length data:** reduced samples for development of novel ageing techniques

Cost Implications of a Reduced PTTP Budget

Current **WCPFC contribution to the PTTP is USD 950,000** per year (37% of project budget), incrementally increased from USD 730,000 during the previous 3 years

Preliminary analyses suggest that **cessation or serious reduction** in field operations would **financially impact other projects**:

- **USD 1,300,000** per year in alternative data sources for stock assessment, harvest strategies, climate projections and WCPFC target species biology projects
- **USD 100,000** per year for reduction in samples for the Pacific Marine Specimen Bank
- **USD 250,000** to support redevelopment of the management procedure for WCPO skipjack tuna

Approximately USD 1.5 million required to support shortfall, with **reducing co-financing implications from SPC**

Proposed change to Terms of Reference

This paper also proposes an **updated Terms of Reference**

- Better **reflects what the PTTP is already delivering** during the previous ~5 years
- Does **not change the scope** of core PTTP activities and has **no increased budget** implications
- Proposes **increased focus on WCPO skipjack** tuna tagging
- These Terms of Reference describe:
 1. Background and purpose
 2. Objectives
 3. Scope, scheduling and requirements of PTTP activities
 4. Secondary scientific outputs and the sampling platform
 5. Funding and co-financing
 6. Governance and review

Response to FAC19: Recommendations

We invite SC22 to:

- **Note the technical value of the PTTP** in underpinning tuna **stock assessments**, the **management procedure** for WCPO skipjack tuna, **climate projections** and wider **WCPFC science** work
- Respond to FAC's request noting that the **PTTP programme represents integrated body of work** that does not offer a menu of activities that can be scaled
- **Endorse the updated Terms of Reference** for the project to reflect current scientific output and WCPFC science needs
- **Forward this paper and any desired commentary to FAC20 and WCPFC23**