



SECOND SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE ALLOCATION WORKSHOP

22 October 2026

Virtual Meeting

Chair's Paper on Flexibility

WCPFC-SPAA02-2026-04

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Submitted by SPAA02 Chair

Rationale

1. The albacore MP has produced a recommended TAC of 56,096 tonnes. This compares to a 2024 catch of 60,794 tonnes and a highest ever catch of 73,173 tonnes.
2. It is clear that allocation outcomes will result in reductions to recent catch, historical catch or aspirational catch for most, if not all relevant CCMs.
3. The short- and long-term impacts of that can be mitigated to some extent through flexible application of the system.

Caveats

4. As generally agreed at SPAA01, the suggestions in this paper are specific to the south Pacific albacore fishery only. They do not set precedent for any other fishery or species.
5. Throughout the paper, all references are to CCMs managing catch. This is without prejudice to national decisions that each CCM may make as to how it goes about implementing its proportional share of the overall catch.

Principles

6. This paper builds on the general agreement at SPAA01 that flexibility is in the common interest. It seeks to provide that flexibility while upholding:
 - The MP outcomes.
 - The mix of EEZ, high seas and developing States requirements in the convention.
 - The benefits that come from the security of longer term and stable limits.

7. This paper recognises that there is a fundamental difference between who 'owns' a limit and who 'uses' that limit. That distinction has been well proven by the PS VDS through strengthened bilateral and sub-regional licensing arrangements and prolific trading between Parties.
8. This paper promotes a free-market approach that allows each CCM opportunities to use its own limit to maximum advantage while also facilitating enhanced partnerships between CCMs.
9. While the rules below maximise flexibility, they also ensure that the TAC produced by the MP is not exceeded on average, across years. While the over and undercatch rules create opportunity for individual CCMs to catch more than their nominal limit in any one year, that is simply a temporal realignment of their total catch across years. Such arrangements are commonplace in domestic and international catch and effort quota schemes. The change to the timing of when each CCM accesses its allowable catch is unlikely to undermine the performance of the MP, but this warrants testing.

Rules for Attribution

- I. High seas catch by non-chartered vessels shall be attributed to the flag CCM.
- II. Catch in EEZs by any vessel shall be attributed to the coastal state.
- III. High seas catch by chartered vessels shall be attributed to the chartering CCM as per CMM 2024-03.

Rules for Transferability

- I. CCMs may only engage in temporary transfers of catch limit that apply to a particular calendar year (no permanent transfers),
- II. All transfers must be notified to the Secretariat and will be published on line,
- III. A CCM must use all of its own limit before using any catch limit transferred from another CCM,
- IV. Catch limits may be transferred between high seas and EEZs but may only be used in accordance with the attribution rules above. That is, catch transferred from high seas to an EEZ is used at the sole discretion of the relevant coastal state, not the originating state. CCMs cannot transfer high seas catch to another CCM's EEZ for their own use,
- V. Transfers can take place at any time during a calendar year,
- VI. Transfers can take place up to 1 March in the year following the relevant calendar year for the purposes of catch reconciliation and in accordance with the over and under catch rules.

Rules for Overcatch and Undercatch

- I. If a CCM's annual total available catch is under-caught, that CCM may carry forward some unfished catch to the following year. However, the total catch carried forward from one year to the next shall not exceed 10% of that CCM's catch limit for the year from which it is being carried forward.

- II. If a CCM exceeds its annual catch limit by up to 10%, that CCMs catch limit in the following year shall be reduced by the amount of the overcatch.
- III. If a CCM exceeds its annual catch limit by more than 10%, that CCMs catch limit in the following year shall be reduced by two times the amount of the overcatch.

Rules for Reporting and Reconciliation

- I. All transfers of catch limits, carry-forward amounts and overcatch deductions shall be recorded by the Secretariat and published online for CCMs.

The Workshop is invited to consider:

- a. Whether the proposed arrangements for transferability, overcatch and undercatch could provide a basis for flexibility in implementing South Pacific albacore catch limits;
- b. The proposed rules for catch attribution and transferability, including between EEZ and high seas components;
- c. The proposed overcatch and undercatch provisions, including any implications for the performance of the MP; and
- d. Any further work or guidance required to progress these arrangements for consideration at WCPFC23.