



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
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A Proposal for the Peer Review of ISC and SC stock assessments

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Paper prepared by the Secretariat

Introduction

1. The 2008 *Independent Review of the Commission's Science Structure and Function* undertaken by MRAG (UK) recommended that periodic external peer reviews of the stock assessments undertaken by the Commission's Scientific Committee (SC) and the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) be arranged (paragraphs 26 and 42 of the Executive Summary, Independent Review Report):

26. The Commission should establish a programme of funded periodic external peer review of all contracted assessments; these should take place at suitable intervals, for instance once every 3 years. This process could include an element of reciprocity with other tuna RFMOs, particularly IATTC, however, we also recommend that expressions of interest are sought from leading stock assessment scientists worldwide. The peer review should include their participation in the stock assessment process as well as their review of the models and results. In order for such review to be undertaken within the current year of an assessment the actual assessment timetable for that year may need to be advanced by some months to allow the results to be available for discussion at the SC meeting.

42. In accordance with Article 13 paragraph 4 of the Convention, the Commission should establish a programme of funded external peer review of all ISC assessments of relevance to the Commission's work (see Paragraph 26 for additional detail). The Commission will have to make funding available for this purpose, and since these reviews will be in regard of northern stocks, then all costs might be defrayed by the NC members.

2. Following the presentation of the Independent Review Report to the Fifth Regular Session of the Commission (WCPFC5) at Busan, Korea in December 2008, the Commission requested the Secretariat to prepare a proposal that would support the periodic peer review of SC and ISC stock assessments for consideration of the 2009 sessions of the ISC, the Northern Committee (NC) and Commission (WCPFC5 Summary Report, Paragraph 64.c.). The matrix

below provides a starting point for discussion on options for supporting a peer review mechanism in both the SC and the ISC. In reality, it would be expensive if reviewers were to attend all stock assessment meetings. Therefore, practical options may include i) an independent review of the stock assessment report only, and/or ii) an independent review of the stock assessment report plus an interactive review workshop between the reviewers and the assessment team. Other possibilities include internal review by CCMs.

Options for peer review of SC and ISC stock assessments and indicative budget estimates

Options	Total budget estimates for two years¹
1. Independent experts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: Review of one species stock assessment report will require 2 weeks with a cost of USD 1,000/day. • Species: Key BET, YFT, ALB and SKJ. • Interactive workshop: If one or two day interactive review workshop be held between the reviewers and assessment team, additional costs will be required. • Time schedule: Stock assessment should be finished by May for review process in June and review report to be available in July. 	Cost/reviewer: 56,000/4species
2. Internal review by CCMs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: CCM experts will review stock assessment report and CCMs will be responsible for the cost. • Species: Key BET, YFT, ALB and SKJ. • Interactive workshop: If one or two day interactive review workshop be held between the reviewers and assessment team, meeting venue will be arranged. CCMs are responsible for their expert’s travel cost, while the Commission will provide travel costs for the assessment team (\$5000/assessment expert). • Time schedule: Stock assessment should be finished by May for review process in June and review report to be available in July. 	25,000 (Travel cost for the assessment team only)

Options for existing review providers

4. As noted during consideration of this matter at the recent Annual Session of the ISC at Kaohsiung, there are several independent peer review providers that may also be considered. Some examples of the providers are the Center for Independent Experts (CIE - www.ciereviews.com), the South East Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR - www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/) and the Marine Resource Assessment Group (MRAG -

¹ The Commission currently conducts full stock assessment for key tuna species once every two years per species. In the case of ISC, one species assessment may take 3-4 years.

www.mrag.co.uk). CIE is a group affiliated with the University of Miami that provides independent peer reviews of NMFS (USA) science nationwide, including reviews of stock assessments for fish and marine mammals while SEDAR, is a Regional Fishery Management Council process of the USA.

Selection of peer reviewers

5. The SC and ISC would be responsible for agreeing to, and adopting, Terms of Reference, a timetable, selection procedure, roles and responsibilities and supporting budget for each peer review for recommendation to the Commission.

Advice and recommendations

6. The Scientific Committee is invited to provide advice and recommendations to the Commission in relation to:

- i. The benefits and costs associated with supporting periodic peer reviews of stock assessments provided by the Scientific Committee, the ISC or scientific experts to support management decisions by the Commission;
- ii. Suitable options that could be considered to support periodic peer reviews of stock assessments undertaken by the Scientific Committee, the ISC or scientific experts; and
- iii. An agreed response to the recommendation of the Independent Review in respect of peer reviews of stock assessments undertaken by the Scientific Committee, the ISC or scientific experts for consideration by the Commission.