



**NORTHERN COMMITTEE
Fifth Regular Session
Nagasaki, Japan
7-10 September 2009**

**ABSTRACT OF DISCUSSIONS ON THE PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA IN THE
MEETINGS OF THE NORTHERN COMMITTEE AND THE COMMISSION**

**WCPFC-NC5-2009/IP-07
3 September 2009**

Paper prepared by Japan

In 2006

1. Northern Committee 2nd Regular Session (11-13 September 2006)

(P.26 Proposed Work Programme)

Pacific bluefin tuna

2008: Obtain and review complete assessment (ISC, w/ WCPFC data) and consider management action

In 2007

2. Northern Committee 3rd Regular Session (11-13 September 2007)

(P. 3-4 Conservation and management measures for northern stocks)

Pacific bluefin tuna

17. Recalling the commitment from NC2 in 2006, the Chair invited CCMs to provide reports on national level actions that they had taken in response to the concerns about the stock status.

Summaries of action are listed below.

- Japan: Catches are mostly confined to the EEZ. An internal conference was established, with support from the government, to promote consultation between industry, scientists and administrators for the purpose of improving data collection and discussing management options.
- Chinese Taipei: Reported that it is planning to improve data quality, in part through an increase in the number of personnel dedicated to data collection from the fishery. The number of fishing vessels catching Pacific bluefin has declined.
- The Philippines: No Philippine flag vessels are targeting Pacific bluefin although several vessels claiming to Philippine flag ships, may be targeting bluefin, and, are currently under investigation.
- USA: Bluefin is not currently a major fishery for US fleets. Bluefin is taken opportunistically

by purse seiners that target sardines throughout the year.

- Korea: Bluefin is not a target species for Korean fleets, although they are being caught by purse seiners that target mackerel in coastal areas in the southern part of the Korean peninsula.

18. The Chair noted that Mexico also supports a significant fishery for Pacific bluefin but does not participate in the NC. He suggested that the Secretariat write to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and ask that NC discussions about Pacific bluefin be relayed to Mexico.

19. With regards to possible management options for Pacific bluefin, some participants were of the view that, as a precautionary measure, some effort at limitation was required, even as a voluntary measure as an interim arrangement. Others considered that, because a full stock assessment was scheduled for 2008, consideration of any management action could be postponed until the results of that assessment were available without adverse implications for the stock. It was also noted that the ISC had recommended no increase in fishing mortality and that some CCMs considered that the NC needed to respond to this advice.

20. The NC **agreed** to consider conservation and management measures for Pacific bluefin at its Fourth Regular Session, based on results of stock assessments, which will be conducted in 2008. Until that time, the NC **advised** its members to make the best effort, on a voluntary basis, *not* to increase the fishing mortality rate of Pacific bluefin (i.e. catch or effort). The NC also **requested** that members collect and submit scientific data to the ISC in order for it to better assess stocks.

(P.28 Work Programme)

Pacific bluefin tuna

2008: Obtain and review the status of the stock based on provisional stock assessment from ISC. Review reports from CCMs on their domestic management measures, and consider management action.

2009: Obtain and review available stock assessment (ISC, w/WCPFC data) and consider management action.

3. WCPFC Commission 4th Regular Session

5.3 Advice and recommendations of NC3 to the Commission (P. 18)

Pacific bluefin tuna

120. Noting the uncertainty in the stock assessment, NC3 advised its members to voluntarily not increase the fishing mortality rate of Pacific bluefin tuna, and to collect and submit data to facilitate the stock assessment.

121. RMI, on behalf of FFA members, expressed support for the advice of NC3 with regards to Pacific bluefin tuna. The Commission **endorsed** the recommendation from NC3.

In 2008

4. Northern Committee 4th Regular Session (9-11 September 2008)

(P.3 Conservation and management measures for the northern stocks)

2.3.1 Northern Pacific bluefin tuna

13. NC4 discussed a draft conservation and management measure (CMM) for Northern Pacific bluefin tuna provided by Japan. The chair invited members to participate in an informal discussion of the draft CMM because there were several concerns on the draft in terms of wording among members. After the informal discussion, the NC reached an agreement on the amended draft CMM with reservation of one member (Attachment H). The member made a statement on this matter (**Attachment I**). While the reservation is expected to be lifted in time for the Commission meeting in December, the NC may call a brief meeting, if necessary, in the margins of the Commission meeting to resolve the reservation. With this understanding, NC4 **recommends** that the Commission consider and adopt the attached draft CMM.

(P.33 STATEMENT ON NORTHERN PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA BY THE KOREAN DELEGATION)

Korea appreciates efforts made by ISC scientists to make a recommendation on the northern Pacific bluefin tuna and Japanese proposal based on the recommendation made by the Scientific Committee. However, Korea regrets that at this time Korea must express a reservation on the adoption of a proposed WCPFC Conservation and Management Measure on the northern Pacific bluefin tuna. Korea had no time to consult with local fishermen on the Japanese proposal and needs sufficient time to consult with local fishermen before making any formal decision on the northern Pacific bluefin tuna. Korea recognizes the important views of local fishermen, and will have a consultation with stakeholders in Korea as soon as possible. Korea intends to provide the Northern Committee Chairman with comments on the proposed WCPFC Conservation and Management Measure following this consultation.

(P.37 Work Program)

Pacific bluefin tuna

2009: Review reports from CCMs on their domestic management measures, consider advice of IC and consider the need for management action

5. WCPFC Commission 5th Regular Session

89. The recommendations for Pacific bluefin tuna are:
- That the current level of fishing mortality not be increased;
 - If fishing mortality remains at the current level and environmental conditions remain favorable, then recruitment should be sufficient to maintain current yields well into the future; and
 - Increases in fishing mortality above the current level, and/or unfavorable changes in environmental conditions, may result in recruitment levels that are insufficient to sustain the current productivity of the stock.
93. The NC Chair explained that Korea had entered a reservation to the management

recommendation for Pacific bluefin tuna. The reasons for this reservation have been thoroughly explored with Korea, which has indicated it has no intention to increase its effort in 2009.

94. Korea stated that it is requesting a postponement, during which it will work to improve a statistical system on the northern Pacific bluefin tuna, study the distribution of Pacific bluefin in its coastal waters, and explore mechanisms for controlling effort given existing national laws and regulations.

95. Given Korea's reservation, the Chair of the NC suggested that Commission Members may wish to implement the recommendation on a voluntary basis and report their efforts in this regard to NC5. The recommendation can be reconsidered by NC5 and potentially developed into a draft CMM to be considered at WCPFC6. In 2009, the Chair of the NC will meet with representatives of Mexico to begin a dialogue on cooperative Pacific bluefin tuna management.

96. One CCM expressed concern that the management recommendation for Pacific bluefin: i) is not adequately precautionary; ii) is premised on an assumption that environmental conditions remain favorable; and iii) does not define current effort.

97. Gary Sakagawa, Chair of the ISC, informed the Commission that the ISC is currently holding a workshop designed to clarify points of uncertainty in the Pacific bluefin stock assessment. More informative scientific advice is expected to be available for WCPFC6.

98. Two CCMs expressed their concerns about the status of the Pacific bluefin stock, urging the ISC and the NC to work toward a revised management recommendation next year.

99. WCPFC5 **agreed** that CCMs are **requested** not to increase the level of fishing mortality on Pacific bluefin in 2009 on a voluntary basis and **tasked** the NC to work toward developing a draft CMM for Pacific bluefin for consideration at WCPFC6.