



**NORTHERN COMMITTEE
NINTH REGULAR SESSION**

2-5 September 2013
Fukuoka, Japan

Statement of the American Fishermen's Research Foundation

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AMERICAN FISHERMENS RESEARCH FOUNDATION
SEPTEMBER 5, 2013
FUKUOKA, JAPAN**

The American Fishermens Research Foundation (AFRF) is supported by the United States west coast albacore harvesters and their buyers and processors through a voluntary assessment. Its primary interest is to support research and management efforts directed at maintaining a sustainable troll and bait boat fishery in the North Pacific for albacore. We are honored that we are able to participate in these meetings as a recognized Observer on behalf of harvesters of ocean resources. We note that AFRF may be unique in that regard. (Except perhaps for the gentlemen sitting toward the back of the room.)

Our interest has been evidenced by attending all of the IATTC meetings, all of the WCPFC meetings and all of the WCPFC-NC meetings since 2005, as well as MHLC and PrepCon meetings. At several of these meetings we have made statements encouraging cooperation between the WCPFC and the IATTC and have applauded the attendance of representatives from each RFMO at meetings of the other. For this reason we are extremely gratified that the delegation from Mexico actively participated in this meeting of the Northern Committee. They are likely the most important member of the IATTC from North America. It was particularly worthwhile that they were able to make contributions directed at assuring that WCPFC-NC suggested measures and those measures of the IATTC remain compatible. While their primary reason for being here may have been the consideration of Pacific Bluefin tuna resources, we look forward to their continued active participation in matters involving other trans-North Pacific stocks, such as albacore where cooperation and consistency between the two RFMOs is critical. We are also happy to see so many of our friends from the South Pacific island states here so they can see first hand how the Northern Committee functions, learn first hand the scientific information presented on fisheries north of 20 degrees north, and witness how those fisheries are managed throughout their range.

Secondly, AFRF would like to thank the International Scientific Committee for its extremely valuable work in providing scientific advice to the WCPFC-NC. AFRF recognizes that decisions to ensure sustainable resources must be founded on the best available science. We are frequently disappointed in the amount of resources devoted by member countries to this important aspect of fisheries management. In fact we fail to understand how countries such as the US, Japan, Korea, Chinese

Taipei, and China can devote so few of their scientific research funds to the work being done on North Pacific stocks. Therefore, we urge the member countries of the Northern Committee to increase their efforts to fund ISC research so the information which goes into their assessment models may be less than 40 years old.

Thirdly, we are heartened by the progress made at this meeting on the road to setting scientifically based limit and target biological reference points for albacore tuna. We look forward to continuing to work with the ISC scientists and the member countries fisheries managers to come together to formulate a conservation system which will achieve the goals we have all agreed to for the North Pacific stocks. We also look forward to the continuing efforts to formulate scientifically based harvest control rules which take into consideration economic and social factors of the harvesters, as well as scientific advice and management theories.

Finally, some of you may not be aware that in July of 2012 a stateless vessel with an apparently Chinese crew was stopped while using illegal drift nets on the high seas. The vessel was turned over to the Chinese government, which to its credit volunteered to determine the true identity of the crew, since they had no identification papers. We believe the vessel was eventually destroyed. The relevance of this story is that the vessel contained 40 tons of illegally caught North Pacific albacore. RFMOs around the world are increasingly placing additional burdens on law abiding harvesters in the form of Port State Measures and Catch Document Systems. These measures are often easily thwarted by vessels fishing illegally. The only way in which IUU fishing can be stopped, which the EU recently estimated at \$14 billion, is enforcement. We call on the members of the Northern Committee who are concerned about the sustainability of living resources in the North Pacific, and who wish to have accurate and meaningful assessments of the North Pacific species to seriously consider a management measure which would put an end to IUU fishing in the North Pacific north of 20 degrees north. Participants in the North Pacific salmon fisheries have found ways to agree to enforcement that have proven to be very effective. It is well past time that a similar enforcement mechanism be put in place for bluefin and albacore tunas.

Thank you very much for your time and attention.