



**COMMISSION  
THIRTEENTH REGULAR SESSION**  
Denarau Island, Fiji  
5 – 9 December, 2016

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**VIEWS ON PROPOSED INTERIM TARGET AND LIMIT REFERENCE**

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**WCPFC13-2016-OP13  
3 December 2016**

**Paper submitted by Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Foundation**

**Attention:** Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission - Secretariat (as an information document for the forthcoming Commission meeting)

Dear Sir/Madam

**Proposal for the adoption by WCPFC of interim target and limit reference points for all target tuna stocks and key by-catch species where these are not currently in place**

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the convening of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) in December and to wish success to this body in achieving the sustainable management of the fisheries within its jurisdiction.

We note that there have been efforts in the past to promote measures that will facilitate sustainable management of tuna and that there is considerable interest in the creation and implementation of harvest strategies for tuna species. We also note that the creation of such strategies is a complex undertaking, involving the definition of objectives, target and limit reference points (and the acceptable risks of breaching them), a monitoring strategy, harvest control rules and other elements. It is inevitable that such an undertaking will be time-consuming and this delay allows unsustainable fishing to continue – an undesirable situation which members of the WCPFC may consider frustrating.

We also note that the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement<sup>1</sup> requires regional fishery management organisations such as the WCPFC, in the absence of appropriate data, to implement precautionary measures to avoid the overfishing of target stocks, the unacceptable depletion of by-catch species or damage to the wider ecosystem. It is our

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<sup>1</sup> Agreement for the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks. Annex II Guidelines for the application of precautionary reference points in conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks.

understanding that member nations of the WCPFC are signatories to this agreement.

We therefore wish to recommend a strategy that will meet the desire to create effective harvest strategies for tuna in a timely manner while also meeting the requirements of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement. Specifically, we would like to suggest that the WCPFC adopts a set of interim target and limit reference points for all target tuna stocks and key by-catch species where these are not currently in place. These interim targets should be in place within the next 12 months.

The value in this approach is that it provides management to the relevant fisheries but does not interfere with existing work plans to create species-specific reference points. The development of all the required elements of the comprehensive harvest strategies would continue in parallel with the interim targets. As each species-specific reference point was completed it would replace the interim target and limit reference points.

We suggest that the selection of appropriate interim reference points be based on existing reference points for the same or similar species in either Regional Fishery Management Organisation (RFMO) or exclusive economic zone (EEZ) management regimes around the world. We note that such interim reference points may need to be made somewhat more precautionary than species-specific reference points.

This approach will offer considerable assistance to the ambitions of the WCPFC. It allows for a faster introduction of appropriate management to these important fisheries through the use of interim reference points while simultaneously supporting the development of permanent strategies and enhancing the credibility of the WCPFC as an institution that can deliver significant results over a meaningful timescale.

We respectfully ask that you consider this recommendation in the course of your deliberations in December.

Yours sincerely

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