



**COMMISSION
EIGHTH REGULAR SESSION**
Tumon, Guam, USA
26-30 March 2012

EXPLANATORY NOTE

**EU PROPOSAL FOR A CMM FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF
TROPICAL TUNAS (BIGEYE, YELLOWFIN AND SKIPJACK)**

**WCPFC8- 2011-DP/25
31 January 2012**

Paper prepared by the European Union



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Explanatory Note

EU Proposal on a CMM for the Conservation and Management of Tropical Tunas (Bigeye, Yellowfin and Skipjack)

BACKGROUND

State of the stocks

In the light of the analysis of the WCPFC Scientific Committee (SC) in its 5th, 6th and 7th Meeting, bigeye tuna is at the very least approaching overfished state and may in fact already be overfished. SC7 recommended with regard to bigeye tuna that the Commission adopts "additional measures to secure additional reductions in fishing mortality above those expected from the current CCM, to ensure that fishing mortality is reduced to at least FMSY level, and remove the risk of the stock being overfished". Although fishing mortality levels of yellowfin and skipjack tunas seem sustainable for the time being, SC warned that ongoing intensive fishing in the equatorial region increases juvenile yellowfin mortality and could also lead to contractions of the skipjack stock.

Current measure on conservation and management of bigeye and yellowfin tuna

The current measure CMM 2008-01 on conservation and management of bigeye and yellowfin tuna has not been effective in achieving reductions in purse seine effort. In fact there has been an increase of 6.6% in 2011 as compared to 2010 (18% as compared to the baseline year 2004). The effectiveness of the measure has been undermined by the large number of exemptions foreseen, the exclusion of archipelagic waters from its coverage and the variations in measures across different parts of the Convention area. An additional crucial factor has been the difficulty to control the compliance of CCMs with the provisions.

Compliance with the 3-months FAD closure foreseen in CMM 2008-01 is difficult to assess because the ROP observer reports for one-third of the trips have not yet been made available by the observers and a large portion of those provided are yet to be processed (WCPFC8-2011-42, p 3). Reported observer coverage was only 45.5 % and 32.5% respectively for 2009 and 2010 FAD closures. Moreover, as SPC noted, 2011 data indicates a return to relatively high FAD usage in the months leading up to the 2011 FAD closure (WCPFC8-2011-43 p.4). There has been more than double increase in vessels drifting at night with fish aggregation lights. It is therefore premature to conclude that setting on FADs is being reduced as a result of CMM 2008-01.

Furthermore, the HSP closure has resulted in relocation of effort and therefore has been inconsequential in terms of reduction of fishing mortality. A 2011 Working Paper of the Scientific Committee (Prospects for effective conservation of bigeye tuna stocks in the Western Central Pacific Ocean) concludes that closing areas to purse seine fishing without consideration of the fate of displaced fishing effort will not be effective for bigeye conservation. Indeed, in the simulation, simply closing areas to purse-seine fishing produces only very small increases in bigeye biomass. The paper adds that area closures could even be counter-productive in some cases if fishing effort is simply displaced and the closure is used as a justification to increase fishing effort outside of the closed areas.

EU PROPOSAL

The EU proposes the current measure to be replaced by a conservation and management measure for tropical tunas that is in keeping with the best available scientific advice and is easy to monitor and control.

3 months full closure for purse seine fishing

The EU, in line with the scientific advice and the precautionary principle, proposes to replace the current unproductive and difficult to control 3 months FADs closure with a 3 months full closure of purse seine fishing. In IATTC, the full closure of fisheries has already achieved positive results in terms of stock recovery.

Each CCM flag state would choose between one of the two closing periods: from 1 July to 30 September or from 18 November to 17 February. This would enable for a continuous supply of the processing plants of the region. The closure periods coincide with those implemented by the neighbouring RFMO – IATTC - for the tuna species. CCMs member of IATTC would have to select the same start date for the closure period in the WCPFC and in the IATTC area. This way they would not be able to move their effort from one RFMO to the other during the closure periods.

This approach would strengthen the conservation and management of tropical tunas and bring two advantages: (1) better control of fishing effort is the area to mitigate the increase in capacity , and (2) it is easier to monitor and control than a FAD closure.

FAD management requirements

The EU proposes to strengthen FADs management requirements to prevent catches of juveniles during the rest of the year. The measure would ensure adherence to the adoption of a FADs management plan by each CCM flag State as a precondition for fishing in the WCPFC area.

Purse seine capacity freeze

In addition, the EU would propose to freeze the active purse seine capacity at 2010 levels. CCMs small island developing States who pursue the objective of responsible development of their fleets (as demonstrated by a fleet development plan) would be excluded from this capacity freeze.

Measures for the longline fleet

The provisions of 2008-01 with regard to longline fishing of bigeye have been successful and the objective of reduction of catches by 30% would most likely be achieved. As recommended by the Scientific Committee, the EU proposes to maintain the current provisions on longline fishing for bigeye and yellowfin tuna, i.e. to limit catches at levels of 2004 or 2001-2004 average. An exemption would continue to be granted for longline vessels of CCMs small island developing States.

High sea pockets (HSP)

Subject to a special management regime, the EU proposes to re-open to fishing the HS pockets indicated in Attachment D of CMM 2008-01 (Attachment 2 of the present proposal) as of 1 July 2012. The HS pocket closure has not led to a reduction of the fishing effort but rather to a displacement of the effort to the EEZ of the coastal states. Although the HSP closure had been decided for a limited period (2010-2011), it is proposed to create a compensatory funds fuelled by fees paid by vessels intending to fish in the HSP.