



**NORTHERN COMMITTEE  
SIXTEENTH REGULAR SESSION**

**ELECTRONIC MEETING  
8 October 2020**

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**SC16 Brief Summary for NC16**

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**WCPFC-NC16-2020/IP-02a**

**Secretariat**

**The Commission for the Conservation and Management of  
Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean  
NORTHERN COMMITTEE  
SIXTEENTH REGULAR SESSION**

ELECTRONIC MEETING  
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**SC16 SUMMARY REPORT TO NC16  
(Brief Summary)**

**OPENING OF THE MEETING**

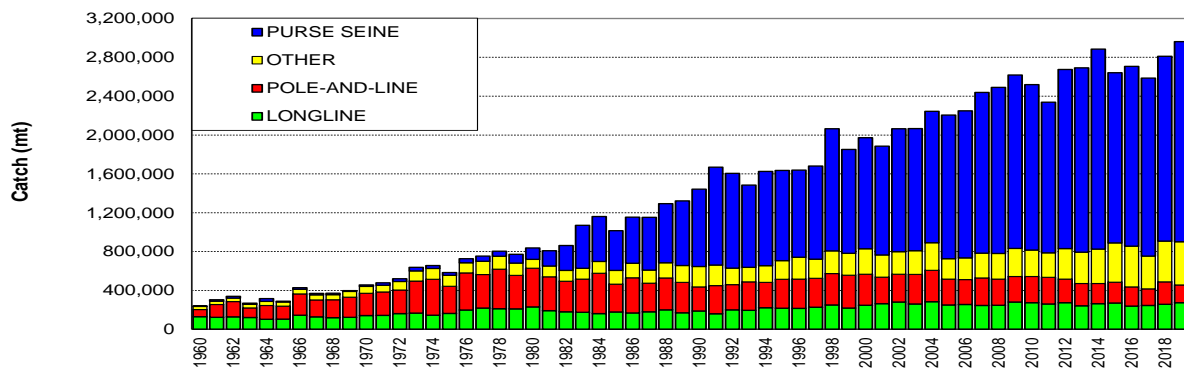
1. SC16 took place from 12–19 August 2020 as an electronic meeting in response to the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The meeting was chaired by Mr Ueta Jr. Faasili (Samoa).

**REVIEW OF WCPO FISHERIES**

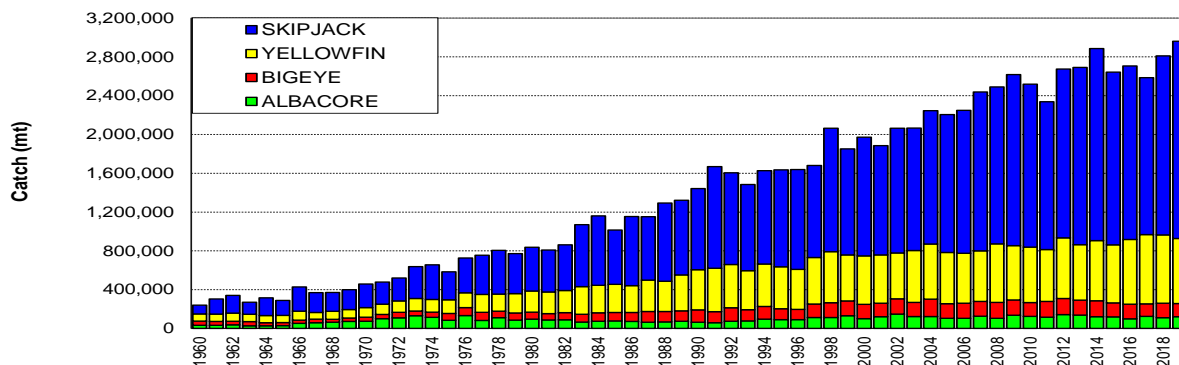
2. The provisional total WCP–CA tuna catch for 2019 was estimated at 2,961,059 mt (the highest on record), which is 81% of the total Pacific Ocean catch of 3,656,813 mt, and 55% of the global tuna catch (the provisional estimate for 2019 is 5,403,368 mt).

Species	Catch (mt)	%
Skipjack	2,034,230	68.7
Yellowfin	669,362	22.6
Bigeye	135,680	4.6
Albacore	121,787 (NP: 35,081; SP: 86,706)	4.1

Gear	Catch (mt)	%
Purse seine	2,060,412	69.6
Pole-and-line	183,193	6.2
Longline	273,550	9.2
SP Troll albacore	3,425	0.1
Others	440,479	14.9



**Figure 1.** Catch (mt) of albacore, bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin in the WCP–CA, by longline, pole-and-line, purse seine and other gear types



**Figure 2.** Catch (mt) of albacore, bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin in the WCP-CA

### STOCK STATUS AND MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The following matrix summarizes management advices from stock assessments and other assessments related to Northern Committee issues. For the details, participants will refer to the Outcomes Document (NC16-IP-02).

<b>WCPO Tunas</b>	
Bigeye tuna	<p>a) Stock assessment was conducted in 2020. The preliminary estimate of total WCPO bigeye catch of 135,680 mt in 2019 is a 9% decrease from 2018.</p> <p>b) The median <math>SB_{\text{recent}}/SB_{F=0} = 0.41</math> and the median <math>F_{\text{recent}}/F_{\text{MSY}} = 0.72</math>; and the stock is not overfished (100% probability <math>SB/SB_{F=0} &gt; LRP</math>) and likely not experiencing overfishing (87.5% probability <math>F &lt; F_{\text{MSY}}</math>).</p> <p>c) SC16 recommended that as a precautionary approach the fishing mortality should not be increased from the level that maintains spawning biomass at 2012-2015 levels until the Commission can agree on an appropriate TRP.</p>
Yellowfin tuna	<p>a) Stock assessment was conducted in 2020. The preliminary estimate of total WCPO yellowfin catch of 669,362 mt in 2019 is a 5% decrease from 2018.</p> <p>b) The median <math>SB_{\text{recent}}/SB_{F=0} = 0.58</math> and the median <math>F_{\text{recent}}/F_{\text{MSY}} = 0.36</math>; and the stock is not in an overfished condition (0% probability <math>SB/SB_{F=0} &lt; LRP</math>) and is not experiencing overfishing (100% probability <math>F &lt; F_{\text{MSY}}</math>).</p> <p>c) SC16 recommended that as a precautionary approach the fishing mortality should not be increased from the level that maintains spawning biomass at 2012-2015 levels until the Commission can agree on an appropriate TRP.</p>
<b>Northern Stocks</b>	
North Pacific albacore	<p>a) SC16 responses to the results of the ISC’s stock assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SC16 noted the ISC’s the conclusions on the stock status of North Pacific albacore and the ISC’s conservation information.</li> </ul>
Pacific bluefin tuna	<p>a) SC16 responses to stock status from the ISC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SC16 noted the ISC’s conclusions on the stock status of Pacific bluefin tuna.</li> <li>• SC16 noted that <math>F_{\text{recent}} &gt; F_{20\%SPR}</math>, indicating that overfishing is taking place. SC16 also noted that the projection results estimate that the stock may continue to rebuild.</li> <li>• The majority of SC16 CCMs recommend that an assessment approach based on the structural uncertainty grid is adopted in future, especially when using these models to drive management action. However, ISC currently does not</li> </ul>

	<p>see the need for structural uncertainty grid because of internal consistency of the assessment model of PBF.</p> <p>b) SC16 responses to conservation information from the ISC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SC16 noted the conservation information from ISC.</li> <li>• SC16 also noted that the improved recruitment in 2016 has now been followed by two much lower recruitments (2017, 2018). The majority of CCMs noted that future recruitments may remain low until there is sufficient recovery in spawning biomass.</li> <li>• While SC16 recognized the existence of an interim Harvest Strategy for this stock, the majority of CCMs urge the Commission to take a precautionary approach to the management of Pacific Bluefin tuna, especially in relation to the timing of increasing catch levels.</li> </ul>
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**Peer Review**

Yellowfin and bigeye tunas	<p>a) SC16 supports an external expert peer review of the yellowfin stock assessment. This review would examine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• model complexity;</li> <li>• weighting of data sources;</li> <li>• spatial approaches;</li> <li>• the extreme sensitivity to assumptions on growth; etc.</li> </ul> <p>b) Provisional time-line:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Year 1: SPC’s internal testing and analysis focus on YFT and finalize TOR at SC17</li> <li>• Year 2: SPC’s further internal testing and analysis focused on BET and YFT, external expert review in early 2022, and report to SC18</li> <li>• Year 3: updated YFT and BET stock assessment for SC19 in 2023</li> </ul>
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**Stock Assessment Schedule**

**Table 1.** WCPFC provisional assessment schedule for 2021-2025 as discussed in the SC16 Plenary session. In the schedule, tunas are scheduled for assessment every 3 years; swordfish every 4 years; and sharks and other billfish every 5 years.

Species	Stock	Last assessment	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Bigeye tuna	WCPO	2020			X		
	Pacific	2015	X?				
Skipjack tuna	WCPO	2019		X			X
Yellowfin tuna	WCPO	2020			X		
Albacore	S Pacific	2018	X			X	
	N Pacific	2020			X		
Pacific bluefin	N Pacific	2020		X		X	
Striped marlin	SW Pacific	2019				X	
	NW Pacific	2019				X	
Swordfish	SW Pacific	2017	X				
	N Pacific	2018		X			
Pacific blue marlin	Pacific		X				
Silky Shark	WCPO	2018			X		
Oceanic whitetip shark	WCPO	2019					
Blue shark	S Pacific	2016	X				
	N Pacific	2017		X			

Mako	N Pacific	2018			X		
	SW Pacific			X			
Bigeye thresher	Pacific	2017					
Porbeagle	S Pacific	2017					

## MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND HARVEST STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

### TRP for bigeye and yellowfin tuna

4. As requested by WCPFC16, SC16 provide advice on the formulation of TRPs for bigeye and yellowfin tuna for SPC to provide the results to WCPFC17. Detailed criteria is in Para 82 of the SC16 Outcomes Document.

### TRP for skipjack tuna

5. SC16 reviewed document SC16-MI-WP-02 (Updated skipjack TRP), where SPC noted that a TRP of 42%  $SB/SB_{F=0}$  would be achieved in the equilibrium under 2012 effort levels and was equivalent to 2012 stock status.

6. The document also includes advice on the formulation of TRPs for skipjack tuna and effort creep estimated in relation to the TRPs, as requested by the Commission.

7. An updated document incorporating requests from SC16 will be presented to WCPFC17.

### Progress of the harvest strategy framework

8. SC16 reviewed an overview of the HS development (SC16-MI-WP-03) and detailed information is in ten (10) Information Papers (SC16-MI-IP-01 to SC16-MI-IP-10).

9. SC16 provided several advice and recommendations to the Commission, including:

- Regarding the development of HS elements, the adoption of the Operating Models could be undertaken at SC17 with the review of a final suite of MPs to be undertaken by SC18.
- In relation to the multispecies approach, SC16 noted that it may not be possible to achieve all the TRPs at the same time, and SPC advised that options to support discussion on such issues in achieving TRPs in the mixed fishery framework will be developed.
- Noting that the virtual SC16 meeting did not have enough time, SC16 agreed to continue discussions on the ten Information Papers through the WCPFC Online Discussion Forum.
- In order to enhance the progress of many technical aspects, SC16 requests the Commission to consider the utility of holding a technical workshop in conjunction with the annual Pre-Assessment Workshop hosted by the SSP.
- SC16 reiterates its previous recommendations for a Science-Management Dialogue to be convened.

## SC WORK PROGRAMME AND BUDGET

10. The 2021 scientific services from SPC would comprise (i) the South Pacific albacore stock assessment; (ii) the Southwest Pacific swordfish stock assessment; and (iii) additional analyses related to yellowfin tuna in preparation for the stock assessment peer review.

11. There are nine new projects proposed at SC16 and total SC budget of USD 2,192,984 was recommended to the Commission (1.7% increase from the previous year)

#### **ADMINISTRATION ISSUES**

12. Next Meeting: SC16 recommended to the Commission that SC17 will be held in Palau during 11–19 August 2021, and Tonga offered to host SC18 in 2022.

13. The Resume SC16 Meeting: SC16 meeting adjourned on 19 August 2020 and resumed on 10 September to finalize future SC work programme and budget.