

COMMISSION SEVENTEENTH REGULAR SESSION Electronic Meeting

9 - 15 December 2020

REFERENCE DOCUMENT FOR THE REVIEW OF CMM 2015-02 AND DEVELOPMENT OF HARVEST STRATEGIES UNDER CMM 2014-06 (SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE)

WCPFC17-2020-17 20 November 2020

Paper prepared by the Secretariat

A. INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide a quick reference guide to the recommendations of the latest Scientific Committee (SC) of relevance to the discussions in support of the review of the CMM 2015-02 (*CMM for South Pacific Albacore*), the progress in the development of harvest strategies under CMM 2014-06 and Roadmap for South Pacific Albacore. This paper includes latest information on stock status, management advice and the development of a harvest strategy framework from WCPFC16, SC14, SC15 and SC16 for the South Pacific albacore stock.

B. COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

2. WCPFC16 provided the following recommendations related to South Pacific albacore, with paragraph numbers in the WCPFC16 Summary Report:

Management Objectives

170. The Commission reviewed the Management Objectives for tropical tunas contained in CMM 2018-01 and for South Pacific albacore and considered that there was no need to review the Management Objectives on an annual basis, but they should be amended as required.

Roadmap for effective conservation and management of South Pacific Albacore

390. The Commission agreed to reinvigorate the South Pacific Albacore Roadmap Working Group in 2020 under the leadership of Fiji and for it to continue to work intersessionally to develop the Roadmap for Effective Conservation and Management of South Pacific Albacore.

391. The Commission further agreed that the South Pacific Albacore Roadmap Working Group would meet in the margins of SC16 and TCC16 and that during the intersessional period it would work to develop its workplan and terms of reference.

Performance indicators

392. The Commission noted the progress on the development of performance indicators for South Pacific Albacore.

Harvest control rules and management strategy evaluation

403. The Commission noted the progress on the development of harvest control rules and management strategy evaluation for South Pacific albacore.

Review of CMM 2015-02: South Pacific albacore

408. The Commission noted that possible future amendments to CMM 2015-02 would be among the matters to be considered through the South Pacific Albacore Roadmap Working Group.

Future Meetings

667a. In 2020, the Commission also agreed to the two South Pacific Albacore Roadmap Intersessional Working Group face-to-face meetings, the first will be held immediately prior to SC16 in Apia, Samoa on Monday 10 August 2020 and the second would be held immediately following TCC16 in Pohnpei, FSM on Wednesday 30 September 2020.

C. SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The SC16 virtual meeting did not have discussions on the South Pacific Albacore stock status and management advice. However, a compendium of fisheries indicators for South Pacific albacore is available at SC16-SA-WP-01¹ and discussed through the WCPFC Online Discussion Forum, Category 16^{th} Regular Session of the Scientific Committee Topic 8². The updated trends in the South Pacific albacore longline and troll fisheries are described in SC16-SA-IP-11³. The last stock assessment for the South Pacific albacore was conducted in 2018 and the results were presented to SC14 (Attachment A). Updated information on stock status and trends, and management advice and implications including research recommendations are available in Paragraphs 233 – 240 of the SC15 Summary Report, which is briefly summarized below. SC16 acknowledged the work of the Scientific Services Provider on the South Pacific albacore MSE framework.

C1. Stock Status and Management Advice (Paragraphs 233 – 240, SC15 Summary Report)

a. Stock status and trends

4. The total provisional Pacific Ocean catch south of the Equator in 2018was 80,820 mt, a 13% decrease from 2017 and a 2% decrease from the average 2013-2017. Longline catch in 2018 (77,776 mt) was a 14% decrease from 2017 and an 8% decrease from the 2013-2017 average.

5. The average stock status in 2016 (the last year of the assessment) across the 72 model runs was $SB_{latest}/SB_{F=0} = 0.52$, below the interim target reference point ($SB_{latest}/SB_{F=0} = 0.56$) established by the WCPFC in 2018. The probability of being below the TRP in 2016 is 63%. The stock is not overfished nor is overfishing occurring.

6. SC15 noted projections from the 2018 assessment which apply to the WCPFC Convention Area (SC15-SA-WP- 01^4).

• The historical status and projections have a greater uncertainty in spawning stock depletion than observed for bigeye and yellowfin tuna because South Pacific albacore has a different grid which incorporates natural mortality and growth, and this gives a wider spread of uncertainty.

¹ https://www.wcpfc.int/node/46472

² https://forum.wcpfc.int/t/topic-8-review-of-indicators-paper/58

³ https://www.wcpfc.int/node/46625 (data updated version: WCPFC-TCC16-2020-IP07: https://www.wcpfc.int/node/47681)

⁴ https://www.wcpfc.int/node/42927

- SC15 noted that under recent fishery conditions of assuming that the 2018 catch remains constant, the albacore stock is initially projected to increase as recent estimated relatively high recruitments support adult stock biomass, then decline as future recruitment is sampled from the long-term historical estimates.
 - ✓ The projections indicate that median $F_{2020}/F_{MSY} = 0.24$; median $SB_{2020}/SB_{F=0} = 0.43$; and median $SB_{2020}/SB_{MSY} = 3.2$. The risk that $SB_{2020}/SB_{F=0} < LRP = 0\%$, $SB_{2020} < SB_{MSY} = 0\%$ and $F_{2020} > F_{MSY} = 0\%$.

7. According to the projections in SC15-SA-WP-08⁵, based upon the 2018 stock assessment and assuming 2018 catch levels through 2018-2035, the stock biomass is projected to decline from the 2016 level of 0.52 (SB_{latest}/SB_{F=0} = 0.52) to 0.39 by 2035 (SB₂₀₃₅/SB_{F=0} = 0.39). The risk of the stock biomass breaching the LRP in 2035 (SB₂₀₃₅/SB_{F=0} < LRP) is expected to be 23%.

• Overall, the longline-vulnerable biomass (the longline CPUE proxy) is expected to decrease by 36% relative to 2013 levels (a year where some CCMs considered the longline fishery to have an adequate catch rate to meet economic fishery objectives).

b. Management advice and implications

8. Given the stock assessment in 2018 and SC15 projections, SC15 advises that WCPFC develop comprehensive binding South Pacific albacore management measures which will result in the stock reaching the TRP within the 20-year time horizon. SC15 advises WCPFC16 may consider establishing a CMM to further reduce total catch or effort in order to reverse the projected decline in the vulnerable biomass.

9. SC15 notes that the 2018 South Pacific albacore stock assessment pertained to the WCPFC Convention Area. The South Pacific albacore catch in the eastern Pacific Ocean has recently increased and the scheduled 2021 South Pacific albacore assessment may pertain to the entire south Pacific stock in order to incorporate all population dynamics. WCPFC and IATTC compatible measures would be more easily implemented should an entire south Pacific assessment be conducted.

c. Research recommendation

10. SC15 noted that the assumed future recruitment can have a large impact on the projection result. It was recommended that research be undertaken to quantify autocorrelation behavior of recruitment to be included in the future projection.

C2. Development of the WCPFC Harvest Strategy Framework

11. SC16 acknowledged the work of the Scientific Services Provider (SPC-OFP) to progress the implementation of the harvest strategy elements for South Pacific albacore, noting the following papers prepared for SC16 will continue discussions through the WCPFC Online Discussion Forum (https://forum.wcpfc.int/c/HS-Framework/12):

- SC16-MI-IP-01⁶ Additional trajectories to achieve the South Pacific albacore interim TRP;
- SC16-MI-IP-04⁷ *Retrospective CPUE forecasting of south Pacific albacore;*
- SC16-MI-IP-05⁸ HCR design considerations for south Pacific albacore;

⁵ https://www.wcpfc.int/node/42934

⁶ https://www.wcpfc.int/node/46475

⁷ https://www.wcpfc.int/node/46693

⁸ https://www.wcpfc.int/node/46695

• SC16-MI-IP-11⁹ Report on the second external MSE review: Developments in the South *Pacific albacore MSE framework*

12. The status of developing the harvest strategy framework for the South Pacific albacore fishery is briefly described below.

a) Management objectives

From the harvest strategy perspective, several management objectives were identified in relation to biological, economic, social and ecosystem aspect. Details of the candidate management objectives are described in Attachment K of the WCPFC14 Summary Report (**Attachment B**). At WCPFC16, the Commission reviewed the Management Objectives for South Pacific albacore and considered that there was no need to review the Management Objectives on an annual basis, but they should be amended as required (Paragraph 170, WCPFC16 Summary Report).

b) Target Reference Points

WCPFC15 agreed on an interim TRP for South Pacific albacore at 56% of spawning stock biomass in the absence of fishing¹⁰ with the objective of achieving an 8% increase in catch per unit of effort (CPUE) for the southern longline fishery as compared to 2013 levels¹¹. If a future stock assessment indicates that this interim TRP will not result in the desired longline CPUE, then the interim TRP will be revised in order to meet this objective. The TRP shall be reviewed every 3 years, consistent with the South Pacific albacore assessment schedule. In order to manage the required reduction in catches, the timeline for achieving the interim TRP shall be no later than 20 years. (Paragraphs 207 – 212, WCPFC15 Summary Report)

SC15 noted that the interim TRP can be achieved within 20 years through many different approaches with the assumed long-term recruitments (SC15-MI-WP- 02^{12}). However, catch (and effort) reductions from the 2014-16 average (of 60,000 mt) are required under all scenarios, and delays in the introduction of the reduction of catch may also increase the risk of breaching the LRP in the short term. SC15 requested that the Science Service Provider undertake a similar set of analyses based on fishing effort-based projections, and recommends that WCPFC16 take note of both sets of results. (Paragraphs 370 - 372, SC15 Summary Report)

c) Performance indicators

At WCPFC16, the Chair noted that CCMs had raised various issues regarding Performance Indicators (PIs) and that SC15 had reviewed various PIs for South Pacific albacore (SC15-MI-WP-03¹³). In addition, the Commission considered that it was important to consider economic indicators as PIs and encouraged CCMs to assist the SPC-OFP by providing economic and other data to assist in development of PIs, including in relation to the disproportionate burden on SIDS, particularly with respect to multi-species fisheries. (Paragraph 443 of the SC15 Summary Report, and Paragraph 181 of the WCPFC16 Summary Report)

d) Management Procedure and Management Strategy Evaluation

Noting that the initial work on the development of harvest strategies for South Pacific albacore has focused on developing an empirical management procedure that uses standardised CPUE

⁹ https://www.wcpfc.int/node/46710

¹⁰ The method to be used in estimating the recent average spawning biomass in the absence of fishing shall be the same as that adopted by the Commission for the limit reference point, as described in paragraph 3 of CMM 2015-06. ¹¹ The proxy for CPUE will be the southern longline vulnerable biomass as estimated within the stock assessment.

¹² https://www.wcpfc.int/node/42947

¹³ https://www.wcpfc.int/node/42948

as the primary indicator of stock status, SC15 reviewed information on alternative sources of CPUE data (Pacific-wide longline operational dataset vs. Raised aggregate catch/effort dataset) and standardisation approaches (the 'traditional' CPUE analysis vs. the geostatistical CPUE standardization method) to inform this process (SC15-MI-WP-07¹⁴). SC15 endorsed the use of both the traditional GLM and the geostatistical modelling approaches for standardizing CPUE, and also endorsed the use of the aggregated catch/effort data set. (Paragraph 442, SC15 Summary Report)

Reviewing the current status of the MSE framework for South Pacific albacore (SC15-MI-WP-08), SC15 made a number of suggestions, such as being able to see retrospective analysis of the CPUE generated from the operating model, incorporating the DWFN index in the HCR, and including a density dependence/hyperstability option and recruitment autocorrelation in the Reference Set of the uncertainty grid. SC15 recommends that WCPFC16 note the current status of the MSE framework for South Pacific albacore and provide feedback to the Scientific Services Provider as needed. (Paragraph 444, SC15 Summary Report)

Due to the virtual nature of the meetings format, SC16 noted:

- the difficulties in structuring the discussions for this large amount of work due to the virtual nature of the meetings format;
- the adoption of the Operating Models for South Pacific albacore could be undertaken at SC17 with the review of a final suite of management procedures to be undertaken by SC18 as outlined in the current Harvest Strategy Workplan; and
- the inclusion of a length-based indicator in the suite of empirical HCRs to explore different ways of constructing an HCR using empirical data approaches that are not based on CPUE.

(Paragraphs 254 – 255, SC16 Summary Report)

D. SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE ROADMAP INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP

13. In December 2017, WCPFC14 agreed to formulate an intersessional working group (IWG) to develop a roadmap for effective management of the South Pacific albacore stock, and provided procedural matters including terms of references of this working group (Paragraphs 264 - 266, WCPFC14 Summary Report). The progress of the IWG was reported to the Commission and WCPFC15 tasked the SPA-VIWG, Chaired by New Zealand, to continue work intersessionally to develop the Roadmap for Effective Conservation and Management of South Pacific Albacore (Paragraphs 174 – 182, WCPFC15 Summary Report).

14. WCPFC16 agreed that in 2020, there will be two South Pacific Albacore Roadmap Intersessional Working Group face-to-face meetings, led by Fiji, the first will be held immediately prior to SC16 in Apia, Samoa on Monday 10 August 2020 and the second would be held immediately following TCC16 in Pohnpei, FSM on Wednesday 30 September 2020 (Paragraphs 667a, WCPFC16 Summary Report). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was delayed, and the Chair (Fiji) decided to hold a one-day, 3-hour virtual meeting on Friday, 13 November 2020 from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM, Pohnpei time. The IWG reviewed the alternative catch pathways and annual catch/effort limits to achieve the interim TRP, reference periods used to inform rebuilding pathways, possible amendments to CMM 2015-02 and future work plan. Chair's summary will be reported to the WCPFC17.

¹⁴ https://www.wcpfc.int/node/42953

Attachment A

The Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean Scientific Committee Fourteenth Regular Session Busan, Republic of Korea 8 – 16 August 2018

SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE TUNA STOCK ASSESSMENT (Refer to Paragraphs 216 – 246 of the SC14 Summary Report for the detailed discussions)

Provision of scientific information

1. SC14 accepted as SC14-SA-WP-05 as providing the best available scientific information for the purpose of stock assessment determination.

Stock status and trends

2. The median, 10 percentile and 90 percentile values of recent (2013-2016) spawning biomass ratio $(SB_{recent}/SB_{F=0})$ and recent fishing mortality in relation to F_{MSY} (F_{recent}/F_{MSY}) over the structural uncertainty grid were used to characterize uncertainty and describe the stock status.

3. A description of the structural sensitivity grid used to characterize uncertainty in the assessment is set out in Table SPA-1. The regional structure used within the assessment is presented in Figure SPA-1, and the time series of total annual catch by fishing gear for the diagnostic case model over the full assessment period is shown in Figure SPA-2 for the total assessment region, and Figure SPA-3 by model region. Estimated annual average recruitment, spawning potential, juvenile and adult fishing mortality and fishing depletion for the diagnostic case model are shown in Figures SPA-4 – SPA-7. Figure SPA-8 displays Majuro plots summarising the results for each of the models in the structural uncertainty grid, while Figure SPA-9 shows equivalent Kobe plots for SB_{recent} and SB_{latest} across the structural uncertainty grid. Figure SPA-10 provides estimates of reduction in spawning potential due to fishing by region, and over all regions attributed to various fishery groups (gear-types) for the diagnostic case model. Table SPA-2 provides a summary of reference points over the 72 models in the structural uncertainty grid. Figure SPA-11 presents the history of the annual estimates of MSY for the diagnostic case model, compared with annual catch by the main gear types. Finally, Figure SPA-12 presents the estimated time-series (or 'dynamic') Kobe plots for four example models from the assessment (one from each of the combinations of growth types, and natural mortality M set to 0.3 or 0.4)

4. SC14 noted that the median level of spawning biomass depletion from the uncertainty grid was $SB_{recent}/SB_{F=0} = 0.52$ with a probable range of 0.37 to 0.63 (80% probability interval). There were no individual models where $(SB_{recent}/SB_{F=0}) < 0.2$ which indicated that the probability that recent spawning biomass was below the LRP was zero. SC14 noted that the grid median F_{recent}/F_{MSY} was 0.20, with a range of 0.08 to 0.41 (80% probability interval) and that no values of F_{recent}/F_{MSY} in the grid exceeded 1.

5. SC14 also noted that there was a 0% probability (0 out of 72 models) that the recent fishing mortality had exceeded F_{MSY} .

6. SC14 noted that the structural uncertainty grid for the south Pacific albacore had changed since the 2015 assessment, with the 2018 assessment examining additional axes of uncertainty including assumptions

on growth and CPUE standardization approach. As a consequence, the uncertainty identified is higher than in previous assessments.

7. SC14 also noted that the assessment results show that while the stock depletion $(SB/SB_{F=0})$ has exhibited a long-term decline (Figure SPA-7) the stock is not in an overfished state and overfishing is not taking place.

Management Advice and implications

8. SC14 noted that the preliminary estimate of total catch of south Pacific albacore (within the WCPFC Convention Area south of the equator) for 2017 was 75,707mt, which was a 33% increase from 2016 and a 13% increase over 2012-2016. (see SC14-SA-WP-02).

9. Preliminary catch for longliners in 2017 (72,785mt) was 34% higher compared with 2016 and a 14% increase over 2012-2016. Preliminary other gear (primarily troll) catch in 2017 (2,896t) was 17% higher compared with 2016 but a 1% decrease over 2012-2016. (see SC14-SA-WP-02).

10. Based on the uncertainty grid adopted by SC14, the South Pacific albacore tuna spawning biomass is very likely to be above the biomass LRP and recent F is very likely below F_{MSY} , and therefore the stock is not experiencing overfishing (100% probability $F < F_{MSY}$) and is not in an overfished condition (100% probability $SB_{recent} > LRP$).

11. SC14 recalled its previous advice from SC11, SC12, and SC13 that longline fishing mortality and longline catch be reduced to avoid decline in the vulnerable biomass so that economically viable catch rates can be maintained, especially for longline catch of adult albacore. SC14 recommends that this advice be taken into consideration when the TRP for South Pacific albacore is discussed at WCPFC15.

Table SPA-1. Description of the structural sensitivity grid used to characterize uncertainty in the 2018 south Pacific albacore assessment. Levels used within the diagnostic case are starred.

Axis	Levels	Option
Steepness	3	0.65, 0.80*, 0.95
Natural mortality	2	0.3*, 0.4
Growth	2	Estimated* (K, L_{∞}) or fixed (Chen-Wells)
Size frequency weighting	3	Sample sizes divided by 20, 50* or 80
CPUE	2	Geostatistical*, Traditional

0	Mean	Median	Min	10%	90%	Max
Clatest	61719	61635	60669	60833	62704	63180
MSY	100074	98080	65040	70856	130220	162000
YFrecentt	71579	71780	56680	62480	80432	89000
fmult	6.2	4.96	1.89	2.44	12.05	17.18
F _{MSY}	0.07	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.09	0.1
Frecent/FMSY	0.23	0.2	0.06	0.08	0.41	0.53
${f SB}_{MSY}$ ${f SB}_0$	71407	68650	26760	39872	100773	134000
	443794	439800	308800	353870	510530	696200
SB_{MSY}/SB_0	0.16	0.17	0.07	0.1	0.21	0.23
$\mathbf{SB}_{\mathrm{F=0}}$	469004	462633	380092	407792	534040	620000
$SB_{MSY}\!/SB_{F\!=\!0}$	0.15	0.15	0.06	0.09	0.2	0.22
SB_{latest}/SB_0	0.55	0.56	0.33	0.42	0.69	0.74
$SB_{latest}/SB_{F=0}$	0.53	0.52	0.3	0.37	0.69	0.77
SB_{latest}/SB_{MSY}	4	3.42	1.45	1.96	7.07	10.74
$SB_{\text{recent}}/SB_{F=0}$	0.51	0.52	0.32	0.37	0.63	0.72
SB_{recent}/SB_{MSY}	3.88	3.3	1.58	1.96	6.56	9.67

Table SPA-2. Summary of reference points over all the 72 individual models in the structural uncertainty grid.



Figure SPA- 1. The geographical area covered by the stock assessment and the boundaries for the 5 regions under the "updated 2018 regional structure".



Figure SPA- 2. Time series of total annual catch (1000's mt) by fishing gear for the diagnostic case model over the full assessment period. The different colours refer to longline (green), troll (yellow) and driftnet (turquoise). Note that the catch by longline gear has been converted into catch-in-weight from catch-in-numbers.



Figure SPA-3. Time series of total annual catch (1000's mt) by fishing gear and assessment region from the diagnostic case model over the full assessment period. The different colours denote longline (green), driftnet (turquoise) and troll (yellow).



Figure SPA-4. Estimated annual average recruitment, spawning potential and total biomass by model region for the diagnostic case model, showing the relative sizes among regions.



Figure SPA-5. Estimated annual average juvenile and adult fishing mortality for the diagnostic case model.



Figure SPA-6. Distribution of time series depletion estimates across the structural uncertainty grid. Black line represents the grid median trajectory, dark grey region represents the 50% ile range, light grey the 90% ile range.



Figure SPA-7. Plots showing the trajectories of fishing depletion (of spawning potential) for the model runs included in the structural uncertainty grid. The five panels show the models separated on the basis of the five axes used in the grid, with the colour denoting the level within the axes for each model.



Figure SPA-8. Majuro plots summarising the results for each of the models in the structural uncertainty grid under the $SB_{latest}/SB_{F=0}$ and the $SB_{recent}/SB_{F=0}$ reference points (top left) and each axis of uncertainty.



SB/SBmsy

Figure SPA-9. Kobe plots summarising the results for each of the models in the structural uncertainty grid under the $SB_{latest}/SB_{F=0}$ and the $SB_{recent}/SB_{F=0}$ reference points.



Figure SPA-10. Estimates of reduction in spawning potential due to fishing (fishery impact = -*SB* _{*latest*}/SB _{*F*=0}) by region, and over all regions (lower right panel), attributed to various fishery groups for the diagnostic case model.



Figure SPA-11. History of the annual estimates of MSY (red line) for the diagnostic case model compared with annual catch by the main gear types.



B/Bmsy

Figure SPA-12. Estimated time-series (or 'dynamic') Kobe plots for four example models from the assessment (one from each of the combinations of growth types, and natural mortality M set to 0.3 or 0.4).

Attachment B

Summary of proposed performance indicators for the southern longline fishery (Attachment K, WCPFC14 Summary Report / Table 1, SC15-MI-WP-03). The *Calculated* column notes whether or not the indicator can be calculated using the current operating models. (* Description modified to better reflect the original intent of the PI.)

	Objective type	Objective Description	Performance Indicator (WP14)	Calculated
1	Biological	Maintain ALB (and SWO, YFT and BET) biomass at or above levels that provide fishery sustainability throughout their range	Probability of $SB/SB_{F=0} > 0.2$ as determined from MSE	Y
2	Economic	Maximise economic yield from the fishery	Predicted effort relative to E_{MEY} (to take account of multi-species considerations, BET and other spp. may be calculated at the individual fishery level). B_{MEY} and F_{MEY} may also be considered at a single species level	N
3	Economic	Maximise economic yield from the fisheryAverage expected catch (may also be calculated at the assessment region level)		Y
4	Economic	Maintain acceptable CPUE	Average deviation of predicted ALB CPUE from reference period levels	Y
5	Economic	Taking Article 30 of the WCPFC convention into account: Maximise SIDS revenues from resource rents*	Proxy: average value of SIDS / non-SIDS catch	N
6	Economic	Catch stability	Average annual variation in catch	Y
7	Economic	Stability and continuity of market supply	Effort variation relative to reference period level (may also be calculated at the assessment region level)	Y
8	Economic	Stability and continuity of market supply	Deviation from $SB/SB_{F=0} > 0.56$ (ALB) in the short-, medium- and long-term as determined from MSE (may also be calculated at the assessment region level)	Y
9	Social	Food security in developing states (importAs a proxy: average proportion of CCMs catch to total catch for fisheries operating in specific regions		N
10	Social	Avoid adverse impacts on small scale fishers	 MSY of ALB, BET, YFT Possible information on other competing fisheries targeting ALB (may also be calculated at the assessment region level) Any additional information on other fisheries/species as possible 	
11	Ecosystem	Minimise bycatch	Expected catch of other species	N