



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
SEVENTEENTH REGULAR SESSION**

Electronic Meeting
11-19 August 2021

Chair's Summary Report of the South Pacific Albacore Roadmap IWG Meeting

WCPFC-SC17-2021/MI-IP-09

SPA-RM-IWG Chair¹

¹ Neomai Ravitu (Fiji)



SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE ROADMAP INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP

Virtual Meeting
Friday, June 25, 2021, 9am-12pm Pohnpei Time

CHAIR'S SUMMARY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE ROADMAP INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP MEETING

WCPFC18-2021-SPALB-Roadmap-IWG

AGENDA ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1.1 Opening Remarks

1. The South Pacific Albacore Roadmap Intersessional Working Group Meeting was held on 25th June 2021. The meeting was opened by the Chair of SPA IWG, Ms Neomai Ravitu. The principal objective of this meeting was to progress the work on management of South Pacific albacore through the key activities identified in the work plan.
2. The list of participants to this virtual meeting is included in **Annex A**.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda

3. The IWG Chair Ms Neomai Ravitu welcomed participants and outlined the meeting procedures and the agenda.
4. China proposed one amendment to the Agenda. The amendment was under Agenda item 5.1, to delete the term “rebuilding” in Agenda 5.1 taking into account that the SPALB stock is in a healthy state which was also raised in the previous IWG meeting.
5. The provisional agenda was adopted as amended (**Annex B**).

1.3 Meeting Arrangement

6. Mr Tim Jones (Secretariat) outlined the virtual meeting protocols to all participants. He noted the new improvements in meeting webpage and reminded participants that the chat facility should only be used for technical support. He also noted that this was first meeting using the WCPFC meeting server, so there is folder for secured documents which is only available to meeting participants and a notification feature if any additional documents are posted on the meeting site, given that the registration to meeting was done before the meeting convened.

AGENDA ITEM 2. BRIEF RECAP

2.1 Introduction and progress since WCPFC 17

7. The Chair updated the forum on the progress made since the WCPFC17 to date relating to the South Pacific Albacore Roadmap.

8. No comments from members.

AGENDA ITEM 3. TARGET REFERENCE POINT (TRP)

3.1 Science Provider to update IWG members on alternative catch pathways to achieve the iTRP.

9. In essence of time, the agenda items 3.1 and 3.2 were merged together for presentations from SPC. Dr Sam McKechnie (SPC-OFP) presented on the alternative catch pathways to achieve the interim target reference point (iTRP) in reference to the working paper presented in SC16 paper (*titled: Additional trajectories to achieve the South Pacific albacore interim TRP*) (WCPFC-SC16-2020/MI-IP-01).

3.2 Science Provider to present on the potential starting points to the trajectories

10. Dr Sam McKechnie (SPC-OFP) continued with SPC Presentation for Agenda 3.2 on potential starting points to trajectories.

3.2 Discussion on any options or consensus presented

11. The Chair thanked SPC for their presentations' and opened the floor for discussions on the issues. The Chair also noted that the iTRP was based on the 2013 conditions.

12. Ocean Foundation thanked Chair and SPC for presentation and raised a question on using of MSE, if it would be useful in assessing the performance of this trajectories and if MSE would be built on the current work. Also noting that trajectories are short term and later it would be superseded by MSE work, is there any advantage of these trajectories work.

13. SPC responded to Ocean Foundation stating that trajectories and MSE are two different things. The MSE work is actually a long term goal in managing the stock, and currently the MSE work is in preliminary stages and the idea of these trajectories work is to start people getting some focus on the management and later these trajectories work will be incorporated in MSE work, If a harvest strategy becomes accepted means of managing the stock.

14. Samoa made a statement on behalf of FFA members: "FFA members strongly support the IWG focus on an agreement for the earliest implementation of the work to achieve the TRP given the 3 years of inaction. We are proposing that the IWG consider the reduction of SPA catches throughout the whole fishery, starting as soon as practicable and implementing the minimum % of year-on-year reductions required to achieve the TRP over the requisite time frame. We suggest looking at a period of 3 years to start off with annual reporting of the fisheries performance and catches. We acknowledge the stock assessment for South Pacific Albacore stock this year which will inform how we manage this fishery onward, however the work of the IWG needs to focus in principle on the cuts to be taken to achieve the TRP within the timeframe we have agreed to. We understand that once a harvest strategy for the SPA fishery is adopted it will replace the interim recovery plan based on the preferred trajectory, however until such time there is a real need for the reductions in catch/effort for the SPA fishery to occur".

15. China made a comment on potential starting points and stated that the iTRP should be achieved in 20 years based on 2013 catches levels although the IWG is working very hard, we are already delayed in the implementation. China suggested to seek the will of the Commission (how much time is left) because of this delay. China further suggested to delay more 2-years in achieving the iTRP because of the current situation (*face-to-face meeting was hindered by COVID-19 which made negotiations difficult and not all members can actively participate in the debate*).

16. No other members commented.

AGENDA ITEM 4: LIMITS AND ALLOCATIONS

4.1 Science Provider to present on possible catch limits under different trajectories

17. The Chair called on SPC to present on Agenda 4.1.

18. Science Provider gave additional response to China's comment made earlier on base year used. SPC stated that the base year 2013 was used for the establishment of the iTRP and not the reference period of the projections. The interim TRP was based on CPUE relative to that reference year of 2013. The TRP can be achieved in 20-years (2040) but most of the projections showed that the TRP can be achieved before 20-years, in particular for those scenarios where catches have been cut in early years. The biomass is stabilized around the TRP, so the trajectories hit the TRP a lot earlier than that, because to stabilize around TRP, the TRP had to be reached earlier and then the catches are increased to let the biomass hover around that 56%.

19. SPC proceeded on presentation on agenda item 4.1 on limits.

20. No comments from members.

4.2 Discussion on allocation options

21. The Chair stated that there was no presentation on allocation options and opened the floor for discussions.

22. Republic of Marshall Islands suggested on taking in consideration the whole longline fishery in the region when doing analysis and also stated taking in account the longline catches targeting different species in different seasons or just specific to certain fleets purely fishing for albacore.

23. SPC responded to RMI saying that the trajectory analysis was done to consider catches from the entire LL and/or TL fisheries in WCPO. The trajectory analysis done applied reductions for both longline and troll fishery and there is a specific trajectory that looked at keeping troll fishery constant and then making up the difference if slightly larger reduction in longline catches, but most of trajectories takes in account both longline and troll fisheries. For YFT / BET /OTH catches these are also taken into account or incorporated in the harvest strategy in the multi-species component of MSE work that will be presented at SC17.

24. Niue on behalf of FFA members delivered FFA statement: "FFA members continue to advocate our approach of 'zone-based management' to manage the South Pacific Albacore longline fishery. We are now developing our in-zone limits and management arrangements and will inform the working group in pursuing a TAC/TAE for the SPA and the split of TAC between the high seas and the EEZs".

25. American Samoa (AS) commented that the IWG should acknowledge that AS LL feet is a comparatively small scale fleet with vessels far smaller than other members, Article 30 para. 2a (*“the Commission shall take into account the special requirements of developing States Parties, in particular small island developing States, and of territories and possessions, in particular: (a) the vulnerability of developing States Parties, in particular small island developing States, which are dependent on the exploitation of marine living resources ...”*), they believe that the current and proposed CMM does not address the economic viability of their LL fleet that are currently experiencing difficulties as expressed in previous meetings.

26. Vanuatu delivered FFA statement: “With the zone-based management approach established in our zones, we will not accept any flag- based limits to be applied within our zones. We will continue to work with our fishing partners on ensuring access to fishing in our waters that continues to maximize benefits for our partnerships and returns from our resources”.

27. China commented that there is need for more information to be able to make decision on TAC in EEZ and high seas. Currently, they cannot make any proposal on allocations and suggested that IWG consider transparency and FFA to consider possibility of sharing that information. China further commented on charter notifications, stating that China catches cannot export its catch due to lack of charter notifications based on WCPFC rules, and they further advocate the need to develop a comprehensive CMM.

28. New Caledonia commented that they support statement from American Samoa as they are in the same situation.

AGENDA 5: Future amendments to CMM 2015-02 (New CMM)

5.1 Discussion of future amendments to CMM 2015-02 to incorporate an interim recovery plan for South Pacific albacore

29. The Chair invited members to provide their views on each agenda item.

5.1.1 Review of Convention Area

30. Cook Islands delivered a FFA statement on behalf of FFA members: “FFA members are of the view that key components for a revised measure should consider these key issues such as: 1. To expand the area of coverage to the South of the Equator and include the EEZs and High Seas. 2. To recognize the agreed interim Target Reference Point agreed in 2018 and clearly outline an interim rebuilding plan to achieve iTRP within 20 years. 3. To establish an overall TAC with separate limits for the HSs and EEZs. 4. That all CCMs share the responsibility to limit the efforts and catches of the SPA in accordance with agreed limits. 5. To include provisions requiring robust and effective monitoring and reporting systems to support management. FFA members to continue work on key elements for incorporation to a revised measure. The deficiencies of the current measure are certainly areas in which the IWG can focus on to get this underway. Perhaps a tasking for the Chair and Secretariat to pull together this information for the next IWG meeting”.

31. China believes that the next CMM should consider the SPALB stock distribution and not just 20S, more information be provided for the zone-based management for better understanding to exchange views with FFA; concur with new reporting and monitoring elements be considered. China also mentioned that in future we may consider not to make amendments to this CMM but replace it with a new comprehensive CMM, and suggested that in the next meeting these new elements be provided.

5.1.2 Formally identify TRP in CMM

32. USA commented that they support expanding the management area for the SPALB and will continue to work with other members; believes that incremental progress be made for the CMM and not really a large over-haul to continue to address concerns on the management of SPALB.

33. American Samoa commented that they support CK statement on the expansion of CA and robust monitoring.

5.1.3 Interim Rebuilding plan

34. No comments from the members.

5.1.4 Limit Catch and Effort

35. China agreed that the new measure should establish catch limit including the overlap area (IATTC); noted that there seems to be some double counting of their catches between WCPFC and IATTC overlap area that should be avoided in stock assessment (~4,000-5,000MT). China also mentioned that they have informed WCPFC, IATTC & SPC that the catch of Chinese vessels in the overlap area should be attributed to WCPFC.

5.1.4 Establish TAC (EEZ and High seas)

36. Chair noted that FFA members had suggested earlier on dividing the TAC between EEZs and high seas.

37. China commented that they currently have no position on establishing catch limits in EEZ and high seas with no much information available to make that decision. China mentioned that although they respect the sovereign rights of small island countries but there is also a consideration if all members establish their own TAC in their EEZs, the total TAC number might increase than the current amount in WCPFC area, hence making it difficult for them to consider since the high seas TAC would be reduced by higher percentage.

38. Chinese Taipei supported China's position on transparency of information on the establishment of TAC in EEZ (zone-based) and high seas.

39. American Samoa mentioned that they are in unique situation with no access to high seas as it is surrounded by EEZs of other states, noted *Article 10 para 3h* should be given same access on the high seas and support achievement of the TRP soonest.

5.1.5 Enhanced monitoring and reporting systems

40. China suggested to use the Commission's existing or developed systems (e.g. VMS, ER_eM, etc) to enhance the monitoring and reporting systems. China also agreed on species by species reporting, but need to assess the work load if it requires reporting vessel by vessel.

41. Chair noted about the catch documentation scheme (CDS).

42. China noted that CDS is very difficult to negotiate as with other RFMOs and China mentioned that adopting CDS for SPALB might delay adoption of the CMM.

43. New Zealand acknowledged that a lot of work needs to be done to get to the TRP, there are complexities on various aspects, in general support FFA statement.

AGENDA ITEM 6: WORKPLAN

6.1 Agreement of work plan through to WCPFC18

44. Chair invited comments on the work plan. Also mentioned to work with members electronically from now to the next meeting (before WCPFC18). The work plan will be circulated electronically.

45. No comments from members on the work plan.

46. Proposed work plan 2021 is attached under **Annex C**.

47. Proposed **next meeting date will be on 5th November 2021**.

AGENDA ITEM 7. Outcomes and Recommendations

48. The Chair noted that the Chair's Summary will be circulated electronically, and IWG members will be invited to provide comments. General Outcomes and Recommendations are in **Annex D**.

49. Fiji gave a closing prayer.

50. Meeting closed at 12.15 hours Fiji Time. The Chair thanked everyone for their participation.

**SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE ROADMAP
INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP**

ELECTRONIC MEETING

25 June 2021

9am to 12pm Pohnpei time.

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**SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE ROADMAP
INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP**

ELECTRONIC MEETING

25 June 2021

9am to 12pm Pohnpei time

AGENDA

AGENDA ITEM 1. Opening of the Meeting

1.1 Opening remarks

1.2 Adoption of the agenda

1.3 Meeting arrangements

AGENDA ITEM 2. Brief Recap

2.1 Introduction and progress since WCPFC17

AGENDA ITEM 3. Target Reference Point (TRP)

3.1 Science Provider to update IWG members on alternative catch pathways to achieve the iTRP.

3.2 Science Provider to update members on alternative catch pathways to achieve the iTRP.

a) Discussion on any options or consensus presented

AGENDA ITEM 4. Limits and Allocations

4.1 Science Provider to present on limits and allocation options

4.2 Discussion on any options or consensus presented

AGENDA ITEM 5. Future possible amendments to CMM 2015-02 (New CMM)

5.1 Discussion of future amendments to CMM 2015-02 to incorporate an interim rebuilding plan for South Pacific albacore.

AGENDA ITEM 6. Future Work Plan

6.1 Agreement of work plan through to WCPFC18

AGENDA ITEM 7. Outcomes and recommendations

**SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE ROADMAP
INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP
ELECTRONIC MEETING
25 June 2021
9am to 12pm Pohnpei time**

Proposed Work Plan

This work plan addresses the three main components of the south Pacific albacore Roadmap.

	Limit and Allocation	TRP	New Conservation and Management Measure
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IWG Meet ● Discussions for recommendation on a potential limit. Guided by paper: WCPFC16-2019-18, <p>SC17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Task SPC for specific analyses to inform the work of the IWG. <p>TCC17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● (Issues to be determined from SC17 meeting) <p>Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider advice on progress on agreeing to a Limit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IWG Meet ● Discussions for recommendation on pathway to achieve TRP – Guided by Papers: WCPFC16-2019-18, WCPFC16-2019-19, WCPFC16 – 2019-20 and WCPFC16- 2019-20. <p>SC117</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Task SPC for specific analyses to inform the work of the IWG. <p>TCC17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <p>Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider advice on progress on agreeing to the pathway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IWG meet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Noting key components of new CMM. <p>SC17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Task SPC for specific analyses to inform the work of the IWG. <p>TCC17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Task SPC for specific analyses to inform the work of the IWG. <p>Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider advice on drafting a New Conservation and Management Measure

**SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE ROADMAP
INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP**

ELECTRONIC MEETING

25 June 2021

9am to 12pm Pohnpei time

**GENERAL OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE
ROADMAP INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP MEETING**

Target Reference Point

1. No general consensus was reached on selecting of catch trajectories that were presented to achieve the interim target reference point in 20 years' time.
2. FFA members recommended to implement minimum % year on year reductions across whole of SPA fishery (with 3 years with yearly monitoring) to start of the management as soon as possible given 3 years of inaction.

Limits and Allocations

3. No consensus reached on use of any catch or effort limit options presented.
4. No consensus reached on how catch and effort limit would be allocated.
5. FFA members suggested zone based management approach to SPA fishery. They also mentioned that they are working in developing zone based limits in FFA EEZs which they will update to IWG.
6. Other members believed they needed more information on zone based management, to be able to provide their positions and requested FFA members to share some information.

Future Amendments to CMM 2015-02

7. The agenda identified six elements to be amended in the CMM. These six elements included;
 - a. Review of Convention Area**
 8. A general agreement by members on expanding the Convention area to cover whole of longline fishery and stock distribution instead of 20°S.
 - b. Formally identify TRP**
 9. No general agreement.
 - c. Interim Rebuilding Plan**
 10. No general agreement
 - d. Limit Catch and Effort**

11. A general agreement by members to establish a catch limit, including the overlap area (WCPFC& IATTC).

e. Establish overall TAC.

12. FFA members had noted establishing a TAC and dividing the TAC between EEZs and High Seas. However, other members still need more information on zone based approach to be able to provide their positions.

f. Enhanced monitoring and reporting systems

13. A general agreement by members to improve the monitoring and reporting systems of SPA longline fishery in the region. However, identification of some of these monitoring and reporting elements can be elaborated in the next meeting.

Recommendation

14. Overall, a gradual progress has been made in this meeting on all three key priority areas of the SPA roadmap, however more valuable discussions would follow after the new stock assessment of SPA in August this year (2021), which gives members more updated information on the stock and the reference periods to provide their positions accordingly. The next SPA IWG meeting will be focused to elaborate more on the three key priority areas of the work plan and lay out the activities of 2022.