



TECHNICAL AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

Second Regular Session

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Brisbane, Australia

SUMMARY REPORT OF SC2 TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION AND SC2 OUTCOMES FOR TCC'S CONSIDERATION

WCPFC-TCC2-2006/21
19 September 2006

Paper prepared by the Secretariat

Introduction

1. This paper presents a summary report of the Second Regular Session of the Scientific Committee (SC2), including a summary of SC2 outcomes for consideration by the Technical and Compliance Committee (**Attachment 1**).

Opening of SC2 meeting

2. SC2 took place at Manila, Philippines, from 07-18 August 2006. The Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Domingo F. Panganiban provided a keynote address. Dae-Yeon Moon, Korea, was elected by consensus as the Chair of the Scientific Committee until the conclusion of the fifth regular session of the Commission in December 2008.

3. All WCPFC Members, Cooperating Non-Members and Participating Territories (CCMs) attended the meeting and FFA, SPC, ACAP, ISC, Birdlife International, the Sea Turtle Restoration Project, WWF, and Greenpeace attended as Observers.

4. The matters considered by SC2 and its specialist working groups (SWGs) included:

- a. A review of the fisheries in the Pacific Ocean;
- b. A review of the key stock status and management implications;
- c. By-catch mitigation issues;
- d. Regional observer programme;
- e. Data confidentiality and dissemination;
- f. Cooperation with other relevant organizations;
- g. The special requirements;
- h. The future work program for the Scientific Committee; and

- i. Administrative matters on the functioning of the Scientific Committee.

Overview of WCPO and EPO fisheries

5. The provisional total Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) tuna catch for 2005 was estimated at 2,145,367mt, the highest annual catch recorded (skipjack - 1,443,127mt (67%), yellowfin - 423,468mt (20%), bigeye - 163,419mt (8%), and albacore - 115,353mt (5%)).
6. The total combined Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) catch, excluding discards, of yellowfin, skipjack, bigeye and Pacific bluefin tunas was 655,000mt in 2005, which was still significantly down on 2003 (over 804,000mt). The purse seine catch of yellowfin tuna in 2005 was 268,000mt, skipjack 260,000mt, and bigeye 70,000mt.

Stock status and management implications

Bigeye

7. The 2006 assessment results were consistent with the 2005 assessment, although the point estimate for $F_{\text{current}}/F_{\text{MSY}}$ was slightly more pessimistic in this assessment. There is a high probability that overfishing of bigeye has been occurring in the WCPO ($F_{\text{current}}/F_{\text{MSY}} \geq 1$, with >99 per cent probability) since 1997, but the stock is not yet in an overfished state ($B_{\text{current}}/B_{\text{MSY}} > 1$, with >99 per cent probability; Figure 3).
8. In order to maintain the bigeye stock at a level capable of producing the maximum sustainable yield the Scientific Committee recommends a 25 per cent reduction in fishing mortality from the average levels for 2001-2004. If the Commission wishes to maintain equilibrium average biomass at levels above B_{MSY} , further reductions would be required.

Yellowfin

9. The 2006 assessment results were consistent with the 2005 assessment, although the point estimate for $F_{\text{current}}/F_{\text{MSY}}$ was slightly more optimistic in this assessment. Over-fishing is occurring in the WCPO ($F_{\text{current}}/F_{\text{MSY}} \geq 1$, with 73 per cent probability), but the stock is not yet in an overfished state ($B_{\text{current}}/B_{\text{MSY}} > 1$, with 95 per cent probability).
10. In order to maintain the yellowfin stock at a level capable of producing the maximum sustainable yield the Scientific Committee recommends a 10 per cent reduction in fishing mortality from the average levels for 2001-2004. If the Commission wishes to maintain equilibrium average biomass at levels above B_{MSY} , further reductions would be required.

Skipjack

11. No new assessment was conducted for skipjack in 2006.

South Pacific albacore

12. The 2005 assessment was updated using new data for 2004 and 2005. The key conclusions were similar to those of the 2003 and 2005 assessments, i.e. that overfishing is not occurring ($F_{\text{current}} / F_{\text{MSY}} < 1$) and the stock is not in an over-fished state ($B_{\text{current}} / B_{\text{MSY}} > 1$).
13. Current catch levels from the South Pacific albacore stock appear to be sustainable and yield analyses suggest that increases in fishing mortality and yields are possible.

Swordfish in the southwest pacific

14. The swordfish stock assessment covers the Southwestern Pacific Ocean (0-50S, 140E-175W) for the period 1952-2004. The total stock biomass in 2004 was between 56 per cent and 74 per cent of the biomass in 1995. The model predicts that total biomass in 2004 was between

31 per cent and 69 per cent of the unfished level, and that spawning stock biomass in 2004 was between 15 per cent and 65 per cent of the unfished level.

15. This assessment has indicated consistent declines in stock abundance in recent years, and most model projections predict further declines at current levels of fishing mortality.

By-catch mitigation

16. Several specific measures were recommended on seabird by-catch mitigation and improved data collection and research programme. SC2 also provided advice to the Commission on the use of circle hooks and other sea turtle mitigation measures, and recommended that the Commission adopt the proposed sea turtle data collection and research program.

Data and information

Observer programmes

17. SC2 endorsed recommendations on objectives of the regional observer program on longline and purse seine fisheries, an initial minimum coverage of 5 per cent of fishing effort, and others to be prepared for next meeting.

Data confidentiality, security and dissemination

18. SC2 discussed the work of the Ad Hoc Task Group [Data] and endorsed the recommendations of the AHTG [Data] for the completion of this issue.

Indonesia and Philippines Data Collection Project

19. Two sessions of the third Steering Committee meeting was held during SC2. The Steering Committee was satisfied with the two years of fishery monitoring that has been conducted in Philippines and that information has been used to improve catch estimates from that country.

20. With regard to IPDCP activities in Indonesia, SC2 decided to hold a workshop in Indonesia to consider recommendations on improvements to the statistical systems in Indonesia, from 27 to 28 November 2006. An additional fund of USD100,000 is required to start and continue two-year IPDCP activities in Indonesia and SC2 recommended that the Commission provide funding support to the IPDCP through the core budget.

Tagging initiatives

21. In order to understand stock structure, habitat preference, and vertical migration, SC2 recommended the Phase II extension of the tagging project as a Commission-sponsored research project, after the Phase I of tagging project in the Papua New Guinea area.

Cooperation with other organizations

Technical and Compliance Committee

22. It was suggested that the SC Chair would attend the TCC meetings and the TCC Chair would attend the SC meetings in the future for the purpose of developing collaborative approaches.

MOUs with other organizations

23. The MOUs between the WCPFC and the IATTC, ISC, SPC, and the CCSBT will be reviewed at the next Commission meeting. It was recommended that MOUs be developed with IOTC, SPREP and ACAP.

Special requirements issues

24. SC2 recommended that Stock Assessment workshops for Small Island Developing States and Territories, similar to the workshop conducted by SPC-OFP in July 2006, should be continued in the future, beginning in 2007.

Future work program and budget

25. SC2 reviewed the Strategic Research Plan for the Commission and recommended it be submitted to the Commission for approval. Research activities or projects for 2007 and 2008 with priority and required funding were endorsed to submit to the Commission.

26. Total funding requested from the core budget was USD638,000 for 2007 and USD692,000 for 2008.

Administrative matters

Rules of procedure

27. SC2 recommended that the proposed Rules of Procedure be forwarded to the Commission for adoption at WCPFC-3.

Independent review of the Commission's science structure and functions

28. SC2 recommended the process, terms of reference and schedule for the proposed independent review of interim scientific structure and functions be forwarded to the Commission for consideration and endorsement.

Commission's draft Publication Policy

29. SC2 welcomed the work that had been undertaken and encouraged the Secretariat to finalize the draft Publication Policy.

Next meeting

30. The date and venue for the third regular session of the WCPFC Scientific Committee are 13–24 August 2007 at Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia.

Adoption of the report

31. The Summary Report and Executive Summary of SC2 were adopted by consensus.

SC2 Outcomes for Consideration by TCC

Management advice on key target species

1. Reduction of fishing mortality on bigeye and yellowfin tuna was recommended but no specific management options were proposed.
2. On the subject of purse seine closures, SC2 recommended that the Executive Director should liaise with the Scientific Service Providers to formulate some technical guidance to the Commission. TCC may also consider technical aspects of this measure.

Mitigation measures on by-catch

1. Regarding recommendations on seabird and sea turtle by-catch mitigations, a large area of technical and compliance consultations should be established between the SC and the TCC. However, SC2 has already identified specific mitigation measures of by-catch for adoption at the Commission meeting (SC2 Agenda Item 5). As a consequence, the TCC may review those and provide technical advice for implementation so that the Commission may adopt comprehensive and feasible mitigation measures at its third session.
2. In relation to the catches of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna associated with FADs, no specific management options were proposed at the SC2 but further analysis were recommended on the spatio-temporal aspects of those catches associated with FADs to identify appropriate mitigation measures. The TCC may consider in advance technical and compliance aspects of potential management options related with FAD fishery.

Regional Observer Programme

1. SC2 considered five recommendations on the scientific aspects of the Regional Observer Programme:
 - a. objectives in the longline and purse seine fisheries;
 - b. objectives in other fisheries;
 - c. initial minimum coverage;
 - d. coverage required to address specific issues of concern; and
 - e. data collection requirements on longline and purse seine fisheries (SC2 Agenda Item 6).
2. The TCC may wish to consider technical and compliance aspects of these recommendations.