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WPEA-SPF Project Update

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PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief update on activities under the Western Pacific East Asia Sustainable Pacific Fisheries Activity (WPEA-SPF project) over the past 6 months, since the new project began. Note that the WPEA-ITM project concluded on 30 June 2024 and the Activity Completion Report has been submitted.

BACKGROUND

2. The tuna fisheries in the Pacific Ocean waters of Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam continue represent around 30% of the annual catches of key tuna species in the WCPO, including a significant proportion (40%) of the total yellowfin tuna catch in the WCPO (see Figure 1). The lack of accurate data on catch, effort and the composition of catches in these waters has been highlighted as a key uncertainty in WCPO stock assessments at WCPFC for a number of years.

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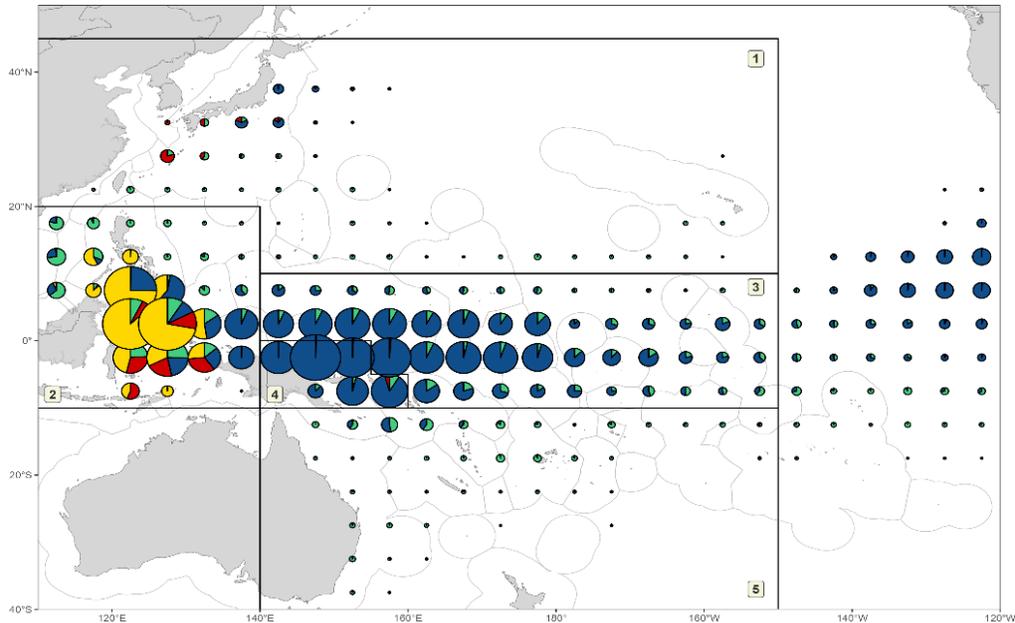


Figure 1. Distribution of yellowfin tuna catch by gear, 1990–2023 (longline - green; pole-and-line- red; purse seine - blue; other fisheries - yellow). The five-region spatial stratification used in stock assessment is shown.

3. In an effort to improve understanding of these fisheries and increase the accuracy of data available for stock assessments, a series of projects have been implemented since 2005 to support data collection in Indonesia and the Philippines, and later in Vietnam. These projects have included the Indonesia and Philippines Data Collection Project (IPDCP), the West Pacific East Asia Oceanic Fisheries Management Project (WPEA-OFM), and the Sustainable Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the West Pacific and East Asian Seas (WPEA-SM). The last WPEA-SM project, implemented by the WCPFC Secretariat and the three countries, terminated on 27 April 2019 and the WPEA-ITM project concluded on 30 June 2024. A new project is the West Pacific East Asia – Sustainable Pacific Fisheries (WPEA-SPF) that started on 1 July 2024. The WPEA-SPF project will run until 30 June 2027.
4. Since these projects were first instituted in 2005, significant progress has been made on data collection, data analysis and verification, and the provision of catch estimates. Consequentially, the uncertainty in WCPO tuna stock assessments associated with tuna data in these three countries has been reduced. More detail on the activities and achievements of these projects can be found in WPEA updates to previous Scientific Committee meetings.
5. Recognizing the importance to the WCPFC of continuing to improve tuna data from these three countries, the Government of New Zealand is providing NZD 4.5 million over the period 2024-2027 for the Western Pacific East Asia Sustainable Pacific Fisheries Project (WPEA-SPF). The goal of SPF is to increase prosperity, self-reliance and inclusivity across the Pacific region through a sustainably managed Pacific Ocean fisheries. We are thankful for the support from the Government of New Zealand.
6. The WPEA-SPF project is being managed by the WCPFC Secretariat, working closely with the

national fisheries authorities in the three countries, and with SPC FAME playing a critical implementation role. Project components include:

- a. Output 1: Partnerships and collaboration enhanced
- b. Output 2: Improved fisheries management and MCS&E capability
- c. Output 3: Improved observer and port data collection and management

SUMMARY OF WPEA-ITM ACTIVITIES IN 2024

7. The Implementing Arrangement between WCFPC and the government of the Philippines has been signed and funding support for 30 technical tuna enumerators.
8. The Implementing Arrangement between WCPFC and the government of Vietnam has been signed by WCPFC and is awaiting signature from Vietnam before in country activities can begin.
9. The Implementing Arrangement between WCPFC and the government of Indonesia has not been developed yet as we are waiting for governmental restructure in Indonesia to be completed so the WCFPC can contract with the proper Indonesian agency. Once this is done, in country project activities can begin.
10. The WPEA-SPF project supported 4 delegates from each country to attend a RFMO International Negotiations Workshop hosted by ANCORS at the University of Wollongong between 26-30 August. The workshop focused primarily on the WCPFC as it worked to strengthen cooperation, expertise and knowledge of the WPEA WCPFC Coastal States - Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam - so that they can more effectively cooperate and advocate for equitable and sustainable management of the Western and Central Pacific tuna fisheries.
11. Support for attendance at TCC20 was provided for Indonesia and the Philippines. Vietnam did not attend TCC20 in person.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12. WCPFC21 will note the successful completion of the WPEA-ITM project and beginning of the next phase of this work being the WPEA-SPF project.**