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ISSF Position Statement

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Submitted by the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF)



Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)

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This Position Statement outlines issues that we urge the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) to act on at its upcoming meeting.



COMPLIANCE PROCESSES

2025 Asks

- Review the Commission's data rules and procedures used in the Compliance Monitoring Scheme (CMS) in 2026 and take this review into account in developing guidelines for the participation of accredited observers in the CMS.

Background

A strong and transparent compliance process improves fisheries management by holding regional fisheries management organization (RFMO) members accountable. Transparency is an essential part of a modern and well-designed compliance process, yet the WCPFC is the only tuna RFMO that closes its compliance assessment process to observers. In 2024, developing a process for the participation of observers was included in the [TCC Work Plan](#) for 2027. It was also agreed that developing such guidelines will be preceded by a review of the non-public domain status of those data used in the CMS. Best practice recommendations to improve RFMO compliance processes are available in reports from ISSF and Pew Charitable Trusts: [2020 report](#), [2021 report](#), [2022 report](#).

Priorities to Progress

Develop and adopt corrective actions to encourage and incentivize CCM compliance with the Commission's obligations, where non-compliance is identified.

[RFMO Compliance Information & Resources](#)



TUNA STOCK CONSERVATION

2025 Asks

- Continue to manage skipjack tuna based on the Management Procedure in place.

Background

A new assessment of skipjack tuna was conducted in 2025. SC21 concluded that the stock has had stable spawning potential, depletion and fishing mortality since around 2010. The Stock and fishing mortality are well above the LRPs for depletion and fishing mortality, respectively. SC21 agreed that management should be based on the management procedure in place (CMM

2022-01) under the skipjack monitoring strategy. SC21 also recommended that the Commission support a one-time extension of the current skipjack MP application period from 3 to 4 years.

[Tuna Conservation Information & Resources](#)



2025 Asks

In line with ISSF's established approach to strengthening FAD management:

- Establish a timeline for transitioning to 100% biodegradable FADs consistent with the timeline agreed by the IATTC, ICCAT or IOTC.
- Establish a timeline to develop a WCPFC FAD register.
- Develop and adopt a requirement for provision to WCPFC of near real-time FAD position and acoustic biomass records data for scientific use with a maximum time lag of 90 days to protect confidentiality.
- Develop and adopt a FAD marking scheme, including requiring the marking of the buoy and the FAD structure.
- Develop and adopt clear rules for FAD ownership and for FAD buoy activation and deactivation.

Background

Fishing with FADs has a risk of loss and abandonment of these devices, which can negatively impact the ecosystem. There was considerable discussion on this topic at SC21. WCPFC has taken some steps to mitigate these impacts by requiring non-entangling FADs with no netting or meshed materials as of 1 January 2024. Additionally, recovery programs are being initiated in several areas in the Pacific Ocean. However, crucial steps are still needed to manage FADs effectively. This includes transitioning to FAD designs that use as much biodegradable materials as possible, requiring data from echo-sounder buoys used to track FADs, assessing the impact of buoy deactivation practices on dFAD deployment limits and dFAD loss and fates, and implementing better marking of FADs to understand their numbers, dynamics and fate. These steps would enable the establishment of more effective management measures, such as science-based FAD limits.

Priorities to Progress

- Consider buoy deactivation practices in assessing the effectiveness of the current dFAD deployment limit, as well as dFAD retrieval programs, as suggested by the SC21.
- Develop and implement science-based limits on FAD deployments and FAD sets.
- Develop FAD recovery program/strategies, considering incentive-based policies where practical, as suggested by SC21.
- Develop a submission deadline for historical data gaps on FAD buoy data transmission.

[FAD Management Information & Resources](#)



ELECTRONIC MONITORING (EM) AND REPORTING & OBSERVER COVERAGE

2025 Asks

- Increase observer coverage (human and/or electronic in accordance with the adopted [minimum EM standards](#)) on large-scale longline vessels to an interim level of 20%.

Background

Comprehensive observer coverage is critical to effective fisheries management, compliance monitoring, and independent verification of catch, effort, species composition and bycatch. 100% observer coverage (human and/or electronic) is feasible and necessary. SC21 noted the lack of sufficient data available to provide reliable estimates of bycatch in longline fisheries as a consequence of limited ROP observer coverage in these fisheries. SC21 urged the Commission to consider this issue. SC21 also recommended providing the “[Report of the Electronic Monitoring Minimum Standards Harmonization Workshop](#)” to the ER and EM IWG.

Priorities to Progress

- Adopt a timeline to progressively reach 100% observer coverage in industrial tuna fisheries, including all vessels engaged in at-sea transshipment.
- Develop potential changes to the interim EM standards to improve [harmonization](#) across RFMOs.

[Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Information & Resources](#)



TRANSSHIPMENT REGULATION AND PORT STATE MEASURES

2025 Asks

Adopt revisions to CMM 2009-06 to strengthen the regulation of at-sea transshipment and to CMM 2017-02 to enhance port State measures implementation:

- For CMM 2009-06, improvements, in line with [best practice standards](#), include:
 - Requiring advance notification at least 48 hours prior to any transshipment event to all relevant authorities and the WCPFC Secretariat, including time, location, and quantities on board before transshipment.
 - Requiring the use of AIS, prohibiting transshipments during VMS failures and increasing VMS reporting frequency to support monitoring, control and surveillance activities.
 - Prohibiting vessels from acting as both donor and receiving vessels.
- For CMM 2017-02, improvements, in line with [best practice standards](#), include:
 - Requiring advance notice of port entry.
 - Provisions for denial of port entry and use.
 - Establishing minimum inspection levels.

Background

If not well-managed, transshipment at-sea can be a conduit for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fish to enter the supply chain. The current CMM 2009-06 is not aligned with the FAO's transshipment Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment and lags substantially behind other tuna RFMOs in implementing best practices. Gaps include the absence of risk-based approaches, authorization criteria, timely pre-event verification, comprehensive declaration requirements, and prohibition of transshipments during VMS failures.

The WCPFC Secretariat [reports](#) that current data sources and analytical capacity can only partially verify member implementation of CMM 2009-06. WCPFC data shows that 83% of high seas transshipments were conducted by longline vessels. [WCPFC's minimum 5% observer coverage requirement for longline vessels is insufficient and not being fully met.](#)

The [FAO Agreement on Port State Measures](#) (PSMA) was a significant achievement for global efforts to combat IUU fishing activities. CMM 2017-02 does not align with the PSMA. Gaps include requirements for advance notice of port entry, denial of port entry or use, minimum inspections levels, and reporting aspects. In 2024, the WCPFC established a Working Group to review the CMM and make recommendations. The WCPFC must adopt significant revisions to bring its CMM in line with the PSMA to strengthen global and regional efforts to combat IUU fishing.

Priorities to Progress

Develop electronic reporting standards for transshipment observers or providers through the ER and EM IWG.



EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES (HARVEST STRATEGIES)

2025 Asks

- Adopt an interim management procedure for South Pacific albacore tuna.
- Adopt Target Reference Points and continue to develop management procedures for bigeye and yellowfin.
- Request that the Northern Committee recommend Target and Limit Reference Points for Pacific bluefin tuna.

Background

WCPFC has made notable progress in the last three years. In 2022, the Commission adopted a Management Procedure for skipjack. In 2023, the WCPFC translated the outputs of the skipjack management procedure into fishing catch-and-effort controls contained in its new tropical tuna measure ([CMM 2023-01](#)) and adopted a Management Procedure for North Pacific Albacore. In 2024, the WCPFC agreed on a process to advance an interim management procedure for South Pacific Albacore during 2025. This work is on track. The Commission needs to adopt an interim management procedure for South Pacific Albacore this year and continue to develop robust management procedures for all tunas.

Priorities to Progress

Continue to refine the harvest and monitoring strategies using the latest information and advice from the Scientific Committee.

2025 Asks

In line with ISSF's established approach to strengthening bycatch mitigation, shark conservation and non-target species management in tuna fisheries:

- Adopt a seabird conservation management measure that reflects up-to-date scientific advice on bycatch mitigation best practices.
- Amend CMM 2024-05 to require that all retained sharks be landed with fins naturally attached without exceptions.

Background

WCPFC needs to adopt improved and science-based measures to limit fishing mortality on seabirds, sharks, rays, and marine mammals and strengthen data collection and reporting requirements. According to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), declines in seabird populations in the WCPFC Convention Area are accelerating. The Antipodean albatross has declined 62% since 2004, with modeling projecting extinction by 2070 if current trends persist. Gibson's albatross has declined 58% since 2004 and faces the highest relative bycatch risk among Southern Hemisphere seabirds. Fine-scale tracking shows 77-80% of these albatrosses overlap with high seas pelagic longline vessels. There was [no consensus at SC21](#) on the review of CMM 2018-03 regarding the combined use of multiple bycatch mitigation practices. ACAP recommends simultaneous use of tori lines, weighted branch-lines, and night setting, or the use of hook shielding devices as a stand-alone measure.

Shark species are vulnerable to overfishing, and many face considerable uncertainty in their biological status due to data limitations. Oceanic whitetip shark, which was assessed by SC21, is of highest concern because it remains severely depleted at approximately 6% of its unfished biomass, despite recent signs of slow recovery. SC21 noted the need for improved observer data collection to inform monitoring of shark abundance trends and shark post-release survival.

Priorities to Progress

Adopt a plan to substantially improve observer data collection in longline fisheries to inform monitoring of shark abundance trends and shark post-release survival.

[Bycatch Reduction Information & Resources](#)



Background

Experts agree that there is overcapacity, too many vessels, in the global tuna fleets. Fishing fleet overcapacity increases pressure to weaken management measures, and eventually it leads to stock overexploitation.

Priorities to Progress

Establish limited entry through closed vessel registries and develop a common currency to measure fishing capacity.