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Indicative Workplan for Developing a Southwest Pacific Swordfish Harvest Strategy

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Submitted by the Secretariat

Purpose

1. This document presents the *Indicative Workplan for Developing a Southwest Pacific Swordfish Harvest Strategy* ([Attachment A](#)) for the Commission's consideration, as recommended by the 21st Regular Session of the Scientific Committee (SC21). The workplan provides a high-level schedule of scientific and management activities commencing after the 2025 stock assessment, identifying key milestones for the Scientific Committee and the Commission in progressing toward a management procedure for this stock.
2. The workplan is intended as a living document, to be updated as necessary to reflect progress, latest scientific advice, and decisions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. It supports a structured, efficient, and inclusive approach to harvest strategy development for the Southwest Pacific swordfish, consistent with the Commission's broader commitment to harvest strategy-based management across its key fisheries.

Background

3. At its Twenty-First Regular Session (WCPFC21, 2024), the Commission agreed to commence work toward developing a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) framework for the Southwest Pacific swordfish stock, with a view to considering the eventual development of a harvest strategy. The Commission tasked Australia and the European Union, consistent with the SC20's [Billfish Research Plan](#), to prepare a project scope and workplan for consideration by SC21. This tasking was reflected in paragraphs 458–460 of the [WCPFC21 Summary Report](#).
4. In response, Australia and the European Union jointly developed a project proposal (Project P21X03 in [SC21-GN-WP-04](#)), outlining a three- to five-year process to develop and evaluate candidate management procedures for the Southwest Pacific swordfish through a transparent, inclusive, and scientifically robust framework. The proposal emphasized that swordfish in this region are taken both in targeted longline fisheries and as bycatch in tuna fisheries, and that management approaches should account for these differing fishery characteristics.
5. The project was reviewed by SC21, which endorsed the project scope and recommended that the Commission consider the broader *Indicative Workplan for Developing a Southwest Pacific Swordfish Harvest Strategy*, contained in [Attachment A](#) of the project proposal and annexed to this document.

Next Steps

6. The Commission is invited to:
 - a. note the endorsement by SC21 of “Project P21X03” and its associated Indicative Workplan in [Attachment A](#); and
 - b. consider and adopt the *Indicative Workplan for Developing a Southwest Pacific Swordfish Harvest Strategy* as a Commission workplan guiding further development of a management procedure for this stock.

Indicative Workplan for Developing a Southwest Pacific Swordfish Harvest Strategy¹

- This attachment provided a draft workplan developed in accordance with [CMM 2022-03](#). It sets out a schedule of technical work and Commission decision-making for the development from 2026 to 2030. The workplan is a living document and will be updated as needed to reflect actual progress as well as other needs and developments. It is acknowledged that delays in the execution of the workplan may occur, noting the complexity of developing harvest strategies for multiple species within the multilateral WCPFC environment.
- This workplan simply schedules decisions, noting that it is the Commission's decision as to whether they may be 'interim' in nature.
- The term "Management Procedure" is defined as a formal specification of data collection, the associated estimation model (e.g., the estimation of stock status through an analytical or empirical method), together with a Harvest Control Rule. Together, these clearly define what management actions are to be made in response to changes in the stock or fishery condition.
- Note: The table below refers to the elements contained in CMM 2022-03 (a. Objectives, b. Reference Points, c. Acceptable Levels of Risk, d. Monitoring, e. Harvest Control Rules/Management Procedure, and f. MSE). Items in brackets are related to harvest strategy development and so are part of the plan, but are not one of these six elements.

Broader Indicative Workplan for Developing a Southwest Pacific Swordfish Harvest Strategy.

Note some items (in blue) are outside of the MSE project scope, so will need to be progressed separately.

2025	[Scheduled SW Pacific swordfish stock assessment]
2026	SC consider the operating models for use in Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE). SC provide any advice on potential Management Procedures (MP) to evaluate. <i>The Commission consider the Objectives for the management of the stock.</i> <i>The Commission provide advice on candidate management procedures to evaluate.</i>
2027	<i>SC consider a set of Performance Indicators for evaluating candidate MPs.</i> SC consider the performance of candidate MPs and provide technical advice for subsequent work. <i>SC consider the candidate Limit Reference Point or set of reference points for Southwest Pacific swordfish.</i> <i>The Commission record the set of Objectives for the management of the stock and a set of Performance Indicators for evaluating candidate MPs.</i> <i>Commission consider candidate TRPs to be evaluated within candidate MPs.</i>
2028	SC formally agree on the operating models for MSE.

¹ As presented to SC21 in WCPFC-SC21-2025/GN-WP-04(Rev.03) which presented "Terms of Reference for Proposed Projects for 2026 – 2028". The paper is available only to registered participants of SC21 and accessible from the SC21 meeting webpage.

	<p>SC provide advice to the Commission on the performance of candidate MPs, including their associated candidate TRP.</p> <p>The Commission consider and refine the candidate set of MPs, including their associated candidate TRP.</p> <p>The Commission consider adopting a Limit Reference Point or set of reference points for Southwest Pacific swordfish together with acceptable levels of risk.</p>
2029	<p>SC provide advice to the Commission on the performance of candidate management procedures.</p> <p>SC consider appropriate monitoring strategy elements.</p> <p>The Commission consider adopting an MP together with the required implementing arrangements.</p> <p>[Scheduled SW Pacific swordfish stock assessment]</p>
2030	<p>SC provide advice to the Commission on the monitoring strategy.</p> <p>The Commission consider adopting an MP together with the required implementing arrangements.</p>