FORUM FISHERIES COMMITTEE

ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTEENTH MEETING

FFA

25 - 28 MAY 2021

Agenda Item:	***11***
Paper Number:	***FFC118-WP08-Rev01***
Title:	Management of South Pacific Albacore

Summary:

Good progress has been made in 2020/2021 for the management of SPA fisheries. Three workshops within the last 6 months have progressed discussions on the setting of zone-based limits by FFA members and the setting of a catch trajectory for achieving the SPA iTRP.

The paper provides an update on a number of key issues for the management of South Pacific albacore. The Secretariat welcomes further direction from the Committee.

Members to note that this Rev01 version of the paper contains additions to reflect discussions at the Zone Based Limits Workshop held on Friday 21 May. These additions are in italics for ease of reference.

Recommendations:

The Committee is invited to:

1. Discuss progress on the management of SP albacore and provide further direction to the Secretariat on next steps.
2. Discuss and consider the Catch Reduction Trajectory position intended for the WCPFC SPA IWG meeting in June 2021.

Introduction

This paper provides an update on work to improve the management of South Pacific albacore fisheries for the information of FFC.

The past workshops by the membership have progressed one of the top priorities for the SPA management on the setting of zone-based limits for the SPA. Despite the settings of virtual meetings, the Secretariat has good guidance from members on options for further discussion.

The key issues listed below provide an overview on progress to date and the Secretariat welcomes further directives from the Committee on this work.

The Zone-Based Management Workshop on Friday 21st May 2021 has provided further guidance to the Secretariat on options for further discussion with respect to zone based limits and the trajectory for meeting the TRP.

Key Issues:

There were two virtual workshops conducted in October 2020 and in April 2021 to progress the members' work in setting zone-based limits for South Pacific Albacore. The main outcomes from the workshops are:

Zone-based Management for Longline Fisheries:

- General agreement to use the 'weighted model' as the basis for further work on setting zone-based limits, while noting the need to perhaps revisit the weighting of different allocation factors.
- Secretariat to update the information on the 'weighted model' and include all members in the model. Secretariat will work directly with members who have queries on the weighted model, to be addressed before tabling the results for the next workshop (e.g. the inclusion of troll data).
- Secretariat to look into issues regarding the impacts of catch reductions (economic losses) on the membership if/when they do happen (noting strong arguments that reductions should be taken on the high seas, at least in first instance).
- *Following the most recent workshop, the Secretariat will look to update the information on the 'weighted model' to not only include all members in the model but also to take into account Troll fisheries and the potentially different impact troll fisheries have on the stock.*

Options for TAC Setting and Catch Trajectory

- Members noted that any initial trajectory will just be the start of work on reducing catches to get to the iTRP and that it is more important to implement <u>any</u> trajectory rather than delay longer to choose the 'perfect' trajectory. Members also indicated a preference that the trajectory be subject to periodic review based on the performance of the fishery and stock assessments and modified as necessary in order to continue meeting CCMs' objectives and circumstances.

- Support for a clear process through FFC to develop an FFA position on the trajectory and its starting point to take forward to the SPA IWG.

- *At the Workshop on 21 May, Members discussed the proposed initial trajectory (Annex 1) proposed by the Secretariat as a proposal to the WCPFC SPA IWG. There was general acceptance of the proposal with good guidance for the Secretariat to revise and bring it back to members before the IWG meeting.*

Proportional reductions convention wide or HS/EEZ split?

- Once the trajectory and associated annual TACs are adopted, the critical question for the Commission to consider is where and who the required cuts in catch will come from. This includes whether the required reductions in catch are to be applied proportionally across both the high seas and EEZs or whether the catches should be reduced at a higher rate in the high seas than EEZs, noting that longline fisheries in the high seas have benefited from a lack of effective management over the years and therefore there is justification for the highest conservation burden (reductions) be taken on the high seas.

- Proposals based on different percentage reductions in HS and EEZs are unlikely to be possible until such time as FFA members have agreed EEZ zone based limits in place. Without those agreed limits, it will be difficult for FFA members to agree amongst themselves about how to give effect to any required EEZ catch reductions.

- If FFA Members wish to pursue an asymmetrical reduction of catches between the high seas and EEZs then, in the first instance at least, FFA Members could argue that catch reductions should come from the high seas limit, as this is where catch has expanded considerably since 2005 when the first SPA measure was adopted by the WCPFC (need to check if this is the case).

- FFA could seek reductions by large DWFN fleets e.g. China and CT, which could take immediate steps to reduce their longline vessel numbers that are operating in the SPA fishery on the high seas, as an initial step towards reducing catches. China had hinted that it was ready to do this shortly after the TRP was agreed in 2018, by moving vessels to other oceans or retiring them.

Monitoring Tools and Systems

- The Secretariat will further evaluate the monitoring systems required to support a Catch Management Agreement (CMA), taking into account existing systems and programs to coordinate and manage the implementation of an agreement - *including cost benefit analysis of a catch based system assessing the benefits versus the costs of such a system. Secretariat to continue to work with SPC on the available tools and systems that can be pulled together for this arrangement.*

Key Components required for Management Arrangement

- Members agreed that a lot of work has gone into the development of the CMA text, however quite some time has gone by. Need to revisit the underlying issues and address them based on the current situation. CMA text remains a useful reference document going forward.

- Support and reaffirmation of commitment by members for a collective approach to managing this fishery is critical for moving forward, particularly in advance of any decision in relation to an FFA bloc allocation.

FFA positions in advance of the SPA IWG meeting in mid-June

- Secretariat will draft a proposal on the initial recovery trajectory for members' consideration and to take to the SPA IWG. An FFA position paper for the SPA IWG will also put some pegs in the ground in relation to the move to zone based management for SPA.

Recommended stock Recovery Trajectory position for consideration by FFA members

1. Introduction to Trajectory Proposal

At the 2nd FFA SPA Workshop last month, Members tasked the Secretariat to draft a proposal on the initial recovery trajectory and starting point for members' consideration for taking into the SPA IWG meeting in June.

The WCPFC South Pacific Albacore (SPA) Roadmap IWG has set an important agenda on progressing the work to achieve the SPA iTRP - an outcome with tangible economic benefits to Members. FFA Members are most affected by the current low CPUE of this fishery and need to lead this work.

The WCPFC work on the trajectory for achievement of the SPA iTRP needs to progress concurrently with the agreement of FFA zone-based limits and we can take steps to lay the groundwork for our position on both these issues at the next upcoming SPA IWG meeting. In preparation for this, a draft proposal in relation to the trajectory for achieving the TRP is provided here for consideration.

2. Agreement on a trajectory

Members have been considering a range of catch trajectory options (attachment 2), each of which will achieve the iTRP within the required timeframe but each with potentially different economic, social and administrative implications at both the regional and national levels.

This paper presents a recommended interim recovery trajectory and proposes key elements of a new CMM which would supersede CMM 2015-02 and operationalise the preferred trajectory as a recovery plan for South Pacific albacore.

Proposal: Trajectory requiring 2% year-on-year catch reductions across the fishery for 3 years with annual review

The 2% reduction is one of the options provided by SPC under the 'Achieve the TRP sooner' scenario which could achieve Members' objective of recovering the stock to the iTRP by 2040, requiring a 2%

annual reduction in catch over the next 17 yrs, assuming implementation of the new CMM in 2022. This option represents the lowest cut possible which should achieve the iTRP within the original 20 year time-frame (ie. by 2040) taking into account 3 years of inaction since the 20 year timeframe was agreed at WCPFC15 in 2018.

Note that the minimum cuts required to achieve the iTRP over a 20 year period is estimated at 1.6% year-on-year (SPC base case scenario), but this in effect results in exceeding the 2040 timeframe and further delaying the benefits of higher CPUE to FFA Members.

It is important to note that any trajectory that is implemented is not 'locked-in' for *the 17 years or the duration of the measure. We are proposing that this initial trajectory will be set for 3 years with an annual review, and depending on the performance of the fishery and stock assessments the trajectory can be modified accordingly. We will have appropriate* provisions for periodic review and evaluation of the performance of the trajectory against the objectives of the measure to recover the stock to the iTRP. *(additions in italics added after Workshop on Friday 21 May)*

It should also be noted that this arrangement will be replaced by the Harvest Strategy once completed and adopted. However, it is critical that reductions be implemented at the soonest time and the proposing of the 2% reduction takes into account the inaction of the last 3 years and achieving the TRP within the timeframe as agreed in 2018.

The reductions will be taken by both the Longline and Troll fisheries and the SSP will be tasked to provide supporting analyses, based on SPA catch contributions, for the respective reductions required by these fisheries.

3. Key elements for a CMM implementing an interim recovery plan for the South Pacific Albacore

The following elements would be incorporated into a new south Pacific albacore CMM

- The iTRP to be recognised in the CMM and the SSP required to provide annual stock status reports and management advice with reference to the TRP.
- If agreed by FFA Members, the catch trajectory requires year on year reductions of 2% to 2040 with negotiated reductions from High Seas and EEZs (noting an FFA starting position could be that 0% reductions be required in EEZ).
- Recognition of an FFA bloc which will be responsible for managing any FFA member EEZ reductions and reporting to the WCPFC on in-zone reductions as a single unit.
- An initial duration of 3 yrs for the CMM and interim recovery plan, with annual performance evaluations and a review of the trajectory after 3 yrs which defaults to the status quo 2% reductions if no amendments agreed.
- Requirements, based on advice from the SSP/SC, for the monitoring and reporting of catches/effort, including any administrative provisions as appropriate, eg role of WCPFC Secretariat in notifying CCMs of catches nearing annual limits.

Attachment 1:

The decision from the WCPFC15 on the SPA Target Reference Point for refresher.

207. WCPFC15 agreed on an interim target reference point (TRP) for south Pacific albacore at 56 percent of spawning stock biomass in the absence of fishing (0.56 $SB_{F=0}$) with the objective of achieving an 8 percent increase in catch per unit of effort (CPUE) for the southern longline fishery as compared to 2013 levels. If a future stock assessment indicates that this interim TRP will not result in the desired longline CPUE, then the interim TRP will be revised in order to meet this objective. The TRP shall be reviewed every 3 years, consistent with the SP albacore assessment schedule.

208. The Commission shall amend or develop appropriate conservation and management measures to implement a harvest control rule, developed in accordance with CMM 2014-06, with the objective of maintaining the south Pacific albacore spawning stock biomass at the target level on average and according to the timeframes specified in paragraph 209.

209. In order to manage the required reduction in catches, the timeline for achieving the interim target reference point shall be no later than 20 years. The Scientific Services Provider is tasked with identifying a range of alternative catch pathways and timeframes that achieve this, for consideration in 2019.

210. In undertaking the assessment identified in paragraph 209 information from all fisheries will be included while noting that any management measures must take account of the impact of different gear types.

211. The Scientific Committee shall refer to the target reference point in its assessment of the status of the WCPO South Pacific albacore tuna stock and in reporting to the Commission on management advice and implications for this stock.

212. Considering that the distribution of the South Pacific albacore stock goes beyond the WCPFC Convention area and the management of this stock is responsibility of both WCPFC and IATTC, WCPFC15 requested the Scientific Services Provider to coordinate with the IATTC scientific staff with the view to consider including the entire South pacific in future assessments.

Attachment 2

Table 1. Total South Pacific albacore catch (longline plus troll) trajectories over time under the different scenarios examined.

	Achieve TRP							
Scenario	In 20 yrs	With 2 % redn	With 3 % redn	Minimise overshoots	With LL only	Decrease 10 yrs maintain	Decrease 5 yrs increase 15 yrs	Decrease 15 yrs increase 5 yrs
2020	61,500	61,500	61,500	61,500	61,500	61,500	61,500	61,500
2021	60,500	60,300	59,600	59,200	60,500	60,000	57,200	60,300
2022	59,500	59,000	57,800	56,900	59,500	58,500	52,900	59,000
2023	58,500	57,800	56,000	54,600	58,500	57,100	48,600	57,800
2024	57,600	56,600	54,100	52,300	57,500	55,600	44,300	56,600
2025	56,600	55,300	52,300	50,000	56,500	54,100	40,000	55,300
2026	55,600	54,100	50,400	47,700	55,500	52,600	40,600	54,100
2027	54,600	52,900	48,600	45,400	54,500	51,200	41,200	52,900
2028	53,600	51,700	46,700	43,000	53,500	49,700	41,800	51,700
2029	52,600	50,400	44,900	40,700	52,400	48,200	42,400	50,400
2030	51,700	49,200	43,000	38,400	51,400	46,700	43,000	49,200
2031	50,700	48,000	41,200	40,100	50,400	46,700	43,700	48,000
2032	49,700	46,700	39,400	41,800	49,400	46,700	44,300	46,700
2033	48,700	45,500		43,500	48,400	46,700	44,900	45,500
2034	47,700	44,300		45,200	47,400	46,700	45,500	44,300
2035	46,700	43,000		46,900	46,400	46,700	46,100	43,000
2036	45,800	41,800		48,600	45,400	46,700	46,700	44,000
2037	44,800	40,600		50,300	44,400	46,700	47,400	44,900
2038	43,800			52,000	43,400	46,700	48,000	45,800
2039	42,800			53,700	42,400	46,700	48,600	46,700
2040	41,800			55,300	41,400	46,700	49,200	47,700
Cumulative total	1,084,800			1,027,100	1,080,300	1,062,200	977,900	1,065,400

Note: catch in 2020 is average 2014-16 from SC16-MI-IP-11

Note: catches are rounded to the nearest median estimated 100mt