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2023 WCPFC POSITION STATEMENT

WCPFC20-2023-OP08
21 November 2023

Global Tuna Alliance



2023 WCPFC Position Statement

GLOBAL TUNA ALLIANCE

TOP LEVEL ASKS

Harvest Strategies

Accelerate development and implementation of comprehensive, precautionary Harvest Strategies, including precautionary Reference Points and Harvest Control Rules.

Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA)

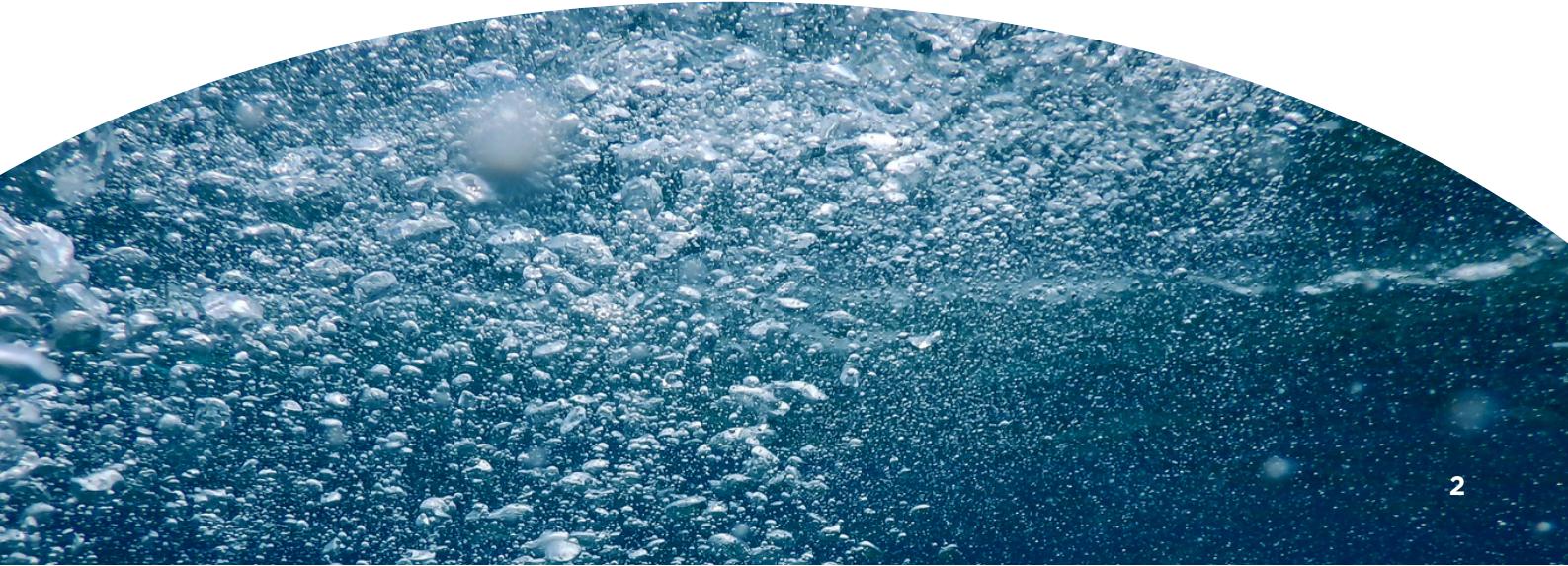
WCPFC adopts port state measures (PSMs) that are aligned with PSMA requirements.

Electronic Monitoring

Adopt a CMM for an Electronic Monitoring Program as well as associated Minimum Standards.

Labour Standards For Crew On Fishing Vessels

Support proposed CMM on Labour Standards for crew on fishing vessels.



HARVEST STRATEGIES

What is the issue?

- The major Western and Central Pacific Ocean tuna stocks are “in the green” – with no overfished stocks or overfishing occurring.
- To ensure this continues, we are calling on the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) to accelerate action to develop comprehensive management procedures (harvest strategies) across these stocks.
- In addition, many tuna fisheries in the region are either Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified or in full assessment. These certifications may be at-risk if stocks fall “out of the green” and become subject to overfishing.
- Last year, the WCPFC adopted its first-ever harvest strategy for skipjack. While a significant step in the right direction, the management procedure is not binding, significantly limiting its effectiveness.

What are we calling for?

- Adopt a new CMM for tuna conservation that limits fishing mortality for bigeye and yellowfin to the interim Target Reference Points and includes the outputs of the skipjack Management Procedure adopted in 2022, and which also removes all ambiguities and exemptions.
- Adopt Target Reference Points and continue to develop management procedures for bigeye and yellowfin.
- Accelerate the development and adoption of an updated binding skipjack management procedure that automatically implements the outcome of the harvest control rule included in the adopted management procedure.
- Accelerate the development of a harvest strategy for South Pacific albacore that will consider the entire South Pacific in the operating models.
- Adopt a management procedure for North Pacific Albacore.



PORT STATE MEASURES AGREEMENT

What is the issue?

- The PSMA, adopted in 2009 by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), requires parties to place tighter controls on foreign-flagged vessels seeking to enter and use their ports to land or tranship fish.
- Tuna RFMOs also regulate member nations' port State controls as part of their management measures. This ensures that these governments have minimum standards in place, regardless of whether they are a party to the PSMA.
- In December 2017 the WCPFC agreed to a CMM (2017-02) on Port State Minimum Standards with the stated purpose being "to establish processes and procedures for CCMs to request that port inspections be undertaken on fishing vessels suspected of engaging in IUU fishing or fishing related activities in support of IUU fishing."
- However, the WCPFC measure is largely for members to request port inspections to be undertaken and foreign-flagged vessels can enter any non-designated WCPFC member port without requesting access, providing information in advance, or being inspected.

What are we calling for?

- Expand the CMM to cover all foreign flagged vessels seeking entry into a CCM's port (Article 3);
- Adopt integration and coordination and electronic exchange of relevant information between RFMO, States, FAO and other international organizations (PSMA Article 5, 6 & 16).
- Require advance notice of port entry with a specific time frame and information to be provided (Article 8);
- Include denial of port entry and use provisions (Article 9, 11, 18)
- Final consideration is to require inspections of suspicious vessels in foreign ports at the request of a CCM with reasonable grounds to believe that a vessel has engaged in IUU fishing or fishing related activities, and is seeking entry in to, or is in the designated port of another CCM (Article 12). (Article 12)
- Members to opt into the PSM measure by designating ports.
- Accelerate action on developing the funding mechanism to assist Small Island Developing States to implement CMM 2017-02 on port State minimum standards.



ELECTRONIC MONITORING

What is the issue?

- Comprehensive observer coverage is critical to effective fisheries management, compliance monitoring, and independent verification of catch, effort and species interactions.
- Low levels of observer coverage limit the availability of independent catch and operational data, reducing the accuracy of stock assessments and effectiveness of conservation management measures.
- Some WCPFC members still do not meet the minimum 5% observer coverage requirement for longline vessels adopted in 2007.
- Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic affected observer coverage in the purse seine and longline fisheries in the WCPFC.
- Had minimum standards for electronic monitoring been in place, the impact would have been considerably less.

What are we calling for?

- Adopt a CMM for an Electronic Monitoring Program as well as associated Minimum Standards.



LABOUR STANDARDS FOR CREW ON FISHING VESSELS

What is the issue?

- The seafood supply chain, and their customers, are concerned about ongoing instances of poor labour conditions and reports of human rights abuses on board fishing vessels.
- The GTA is fully supportive of the work of the Crew Welfare Intersessional working group to advance the issue under the leadership of New Zealand and Indonesia in support of transitioning WCPFC Resolution 2018-01 on Labour Standards for Crew on Fishing Vessels into a formal, binding CMM.

What are we calling for?

- Support proposed CMM on Labour Standards for crew on fishing vessels.





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