



POSITION
STATEMENT

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Smart Fishing Initiative

WWF POSITION STATEMENT FOR THE 87TH MEETING OF THE INTERAMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION (IATTC)

Lima, Peru, July 14 – 18, 2014

Tunas are one of the most dominant and valuable fisheries in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, supporting a billion dollar industry that sustains the livelihoods of tens of thousands of people and contributes to economic growth and social development in the region. It is therefore vital that the member states of the IATTC maintain and expand their commitment to the responsible management necessary for sustainable fisheries. By addressing overfishing and overcapacity threats, WWF believes that it is possible to ensure the long-term viability of tuna stocks throughout the Eastern Pacific region while maintaining a healthy ecosystem and safeguarding the rich biodiversity of the region. In this sense, the key issues to resolve and WWF's recommendations to the IATTC 87th Annual Meeting are:

- Harvest Control Rules Developed Using Appropriate Reference Points
- Tuna Conservation
- Management of Fleet Capacity
- Management of FADS
- Species Conservation
- IATTC Performance evaluation
- Conservation of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction

Harvest Control Rules Developed Using Appropriate Reference Points

Currently, fisheries in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) are subject to management measures imposed in a relatively opportunistic manner under a consensus-based system that must harmonize many competing interests and values. This broad range of competing interests can often lead to decisions that maximize short-term economic interests at the expense of long-term productivity and sustainability, which can result in wide variations in catch levels and, potentially, overfishing and inconsistent market supply. Implementation of fishing policies guided by reference points and harvest control rules allows managers to act swiftly and efficiently, according to a pre-agreed standard, to ensure that catches do not exceed acceptable limits. This can thereby ensure the sustainability of the resource and the consistent supply of fish to our markets. The adoption of harvest control rules is a key aspect of modern fisheries management and also a requirement of several eco-label certification programs.

WWF urges the IATTC, on the basis of the guidelines contained within the Antigua Convention, to adopt interim species-specific target and limit reference points and harvest control rules for tunas, as proposed by the staff at the May 2014 Scientific Advisory Committee Meeting in document SAC-05-14. In 2015, these reference points and control rules should be evaluated by the staff for further management advice.

WWF views the development of effective Harvest Control Rules for Eastern Pacific Ocean tuna fisheries as of the highest priority. WWF fully supports the IATTC in these efforts, including the facilitation of regional capacity building activities to improve dialogue among scientists, managers and other stakeholders.

Tuna Conservation

Yellow Fin and Bigeye Tuna: According to the scientists of the IATTC, the size of these tuna stocks is slightly above the MSY, and therefore they recommend maintaining Resolution C-13-01 for the year 2015, i.e., keeping the size of the current fishing closure. However, uncertainty persists about these stocks due to current levels of fishing mortality, average recruitment levels and possible increases in fishing effort. Scientists agree that the evaluation results are more pessimistic if a stock-recruitment relationship is assumed. WWF agrees to maintain Resolution C-13-01 but the IATTC will have to closely monitor the status of these stocks and be more proactive in terms of management measures to conserve stocks at MSY levels. WWF also urges the Commission to develop quota management plans that more precisely control mortality of big eye and yellowfin tunas such as SAC-04-INF D that focuses on allocation of bigeye and yellowfin tunas and a management scheme that includes individual vessel quotas.

Pacific Blue Fin Tuna: Technical reports of both the ISC and the IATTC indicate that the stock of North Pacific Bluefin is in extremely poor condition. The ISC confirmed that overfishing is occurring, the stock is heavily overfished, and its spawning stock biomass has declined by as much as 96%. This is a clear indicator that the management measures taken both in the Western and Central Pacific and in the Eastern Pacific are proving to be insufficient to preserve this stock. Each RFMO must assume their share of responsibility.

WWF maintains strong concerns on restoring and rebuilding this ecologically, sociologically, and economically important fishery resource because, if there is only one reproductive cohort that is reaching the end of its life, the stock is in a critical situation that may jeopardize recruitment.

The IATTC must adopt more restrictive measures to protect the biomass and other, even more stringent measures to protect juveniles, so that the fishery has the opportunity to be sustainable.

Considering the risk of recruitment collapse and in order to allow spawning stock to rebuild,

- 1) WWF calls the IATTC to follow the Commission's staff scientific advice, as affirmed by the Scientific Advisory Committee, of establishing catch limits no greater than 3154 metric tons by agreeing to a catch limit of 2750 metric tons to be consistent with the ISC recommendation of a 50% reduction.
- 2) WWF urges the IATTC to adopt the long-term Pacific Bluefin recovery plan, candidate limit and target reference points, and harvest control rules that are well-defined, pre-agreed and contain mandatory actions for a determined course of management action in response to changes in indicators of stock status with respect to reference points.
- 3) WWF calls the IATTC to develop a catch documentation scheme for Pacific Bluefin to ensure monitoring and control in the Pacific Bluefin catch through traceability.

If sufficient management measures are not adopted at this meeting, fishing should not be allowed to continue on such a depleted stock, and WWF urges the IATTC for a moratorium on fishing for this species to prepare rigorous Pacific Bluefin recovery plan.

Management of Fleet Capacity

The problem of overcapacity in tuna fisheries seems to be common to all tuna RFMOs and this drives excessive fishing effort. It stems from fisheries management policies that are based on open access systems or common pool management systems that do not get the incentives right. As a result, fishermen are encouraged to expand fishing capacity beyond sustainable limits, even in cases where the RFMO has placed caps on the number of registered fishing vessels or established other weak rights arrangements.

In 2002, the IATTC adopted Resolution C-02-03 on the Capacity of the Tuna Fleet operating in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, which set a target level of 158,000 cubic meters of total well volume for the purse seine fishery that must be reviewed on a regular basis. In 2005, the Commission adopted a Plan for Regional Management of Fishing Capacity, which requires assessment and monitoring, setting limits and taking measures to reduce overcapacity. During the last meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee, IATTC staff reported that the active purse seine capacity was 212,087 cubic meters, with 203 vessels fishing in the Eastern Pacific Ocean in 2013. This well volume recorded in the Commission's Regional Vessel Register greatly exceeds the target level.

Overcapacity undermines the economic performance of the fleet and often associated with overfishing. It is in the best interest of the EPO tuna industry to address this problem to secure the future of EPO tuna fisheries and avoid measures such as extended closed seasons and closed areas. With this in mind:

WWF urges the IATTC to develop reduction plan(s) to meet the capacity limits objective of its 2005 Plan for Management of Regional Capacity. Good first steps are the development of recommendations from the IATTC's Technical Experts Workshop on Capacity of the Tuna Fishing Fleet in the Eastern Pacific, held in April 2014 and a process to provide expert advice to the Commission starting in 2015. A proposed GEF ABNJ project would provide funding to the IATTC to hold meetings of this experts working group.

WWF recommends that Rights Based Management (RBM) approaches be implemented. Where applicable, such approaches could be combined with vessel buybacks and other financial transition programs. Strong RBM programs, with well-defined features, offer a solution to the overcapacity problem and can help the IATTC achieve the objectives of its capacity resolution and regional plan. Development of ideas contained in SAC-04-INF D that focuses on allocation of bigeye and yellowfin tunas and a management scheme that includes individual vessel quotas.

WWF recommends that the IATTC not permit any increases in capacity unless they are offset by capacity reductions.

WWF urges the IATTC member states to strengthen the Commission's ability to monitor and control existing capacity in the EPO using the Regional Vessel Register as a management tool. Therefore, WWF strongly recommends that an amendment be made to Resolution C-11-06 to require IMO numbers for all purse seiners and longliners greater than 20m in length operating in the Convention area. This action will allow the Commission to confirm that vessels are complying with the relevant resolutions of the IATTC.

Management of FADS

Considering the importance of access to complete information on FADS for scientists to perform a comprehensive analysis, WWF calls on the Cooperating Parties to provide additional data on movements of FADS to the Commission from January 1, 2015, as established in Resolution C-13-04. WWF recommends avoiding the use of any entangling material deployed under FADS in order to reduce by catch of sea turtles and sharks. WWF supports the IATTC scientific staff recommendation for marking and identifying FADS with satellite buoys deployed after January 1, 2015.

Species Conservation

Sharks: WWF urges the IATTC to support the staff recommendations to put in place a conservation measure to limit the fishing mortality of silky sharks, with the aim of rebuilding the stock of these sharks in the EPO.

Additionally, WWF urges the IATTC to totally prohibit the removal of fins at sea and to require that sharks be landed with their fins naturally attached.

WWF supports the recommendations made by the IATTC staff on best practices for handling mantarays (genus *Mobula* and *Manta*) aboard purse seiners.

Sea Birds: It has been scientifically proven that a combination of weighted branchlines, bird scaring lines, and night setting are best-practice mitigation measures for pelagic longline fisheries. Taking this into account, and in accordance with the recommendations of the IATTC staff, WWF recommends that the IATTC adjust Resolution C-11-02 to only allow vessels to choose two of the three mitigation measures stated above. Similar measures have been passed by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and the WCPFC and these are measures that WWF strongly supports.

Sea Turtles: WWF supports the recommendations made by the IATTC staff on adequate handling of sea turtles in longline fisheries, and urges the parties to adopt such recommendations.

IATTC Performance evaluation

The performance evaluation agreed to in the Kobe Process of the tuna RFMOs has been on the agenda at all meetings of the IATTC since June 2007, but the Commission has failed to agree on how to proceed with a review of its performance. To date, all other tuna RFMOs have conducted such performance evaluations.

WWF urges IATTC member states to adopt a resolution on the performance evaluation of the commission so that it is completed before the next annual meeting in 2015.

Conservation of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction

At the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 10), governments agreed to a process for describing areas that meet the criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), and then notifying the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) of these areas and their need for stewardship. This was a great first step, especially for ocean areas beyond national jurisdiction, and the culmination of seven years of work by the CBD.

Since 2010, a number of scientific expert workshops describing areas that meet the EBSA criteria have already taken place in various regions, encouraged and supported by the CBD. Reports of these workshops, once considered by the CBD COP, are to be submitted to the UNGA, governments as well as relevant international and regional organizations and bodies (such as Regional Fishery Management Organizations, RFMOs), as was the case with the workshop reports for the Western South Pacific and the Wider Caribbean and Western Mid-Atlantic regions. This year, the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), and subsequently COP 12, will consider workshop reports for the following regions (<http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbstta-18/official/sbstta-18-04-en.pdf>):

- (a) Southern Indian Ocean
- (b) Eastern Tropical and Temperate Pacific
- (c) North Pacific
- (d) South-Eastern Atlantic
- (e) Arctic
- (f) North-West Atlantic
- (g) Mediterranean

WWF strongly supports the CBD EBSA process as the information contained in the workshop reports can be used as the scientific basis for establishing a globally comprehensive, adequate and representative system of EBSAs under effective protection and sustainable management in accordance with international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Therefore, WWF urges the Commission to be informed and support the EBSA process and, to anticipate the analyses and responses in order to effectively conserve the EBSAs – under its competence - identified in the Eastern Tropical and Temperate Pacific (<http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbstta-18/information/sbstta-18-inf-eb-sa-ett-p-01-04-en.pdf>) and the North Pacific (<http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbstta-18/information/sbstta-18-inf-eb-sa-np-01-04-en.pdf>), both into the area of competence of IATTC. In addition, we call the Commission to start a process of consultation with the South Pacific RFMO, or other regional seas organizations, on how to better coordinate efforts to conserve the EBSAs in their common region.

Our Smart Fishing Vision and Goals:

Vision: The world's oceans are healthy, well-managed and full of life, providing valuable resources for the welfare of humanity.

2020 Goals: The responsible management and trade of four key fishery populations results in recovering and resilient marine eco-systems, improved livelihoods for coastal communities and strengthened food security for the Planet.



Why we are here
 To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and
 to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.
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For more information

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