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POSITION STATEMENT
JULY 2015

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Smart Fishing Initiative

WWF POSITION STATEMENT FOR THE 89TH MEETING OF THE INTERAMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION (IATTC)

Guayaquil, Ecuador, June 29 – July 3, 2015

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 89th Annual Meeting are:

- Harvest Control Rules Developed Using Appropriate Reference Points
- Tuna Conservation
- Management of Fleet Capacity
- Management of FADS
- Species Conservation

- Observer coverage of long-line vessels
- IATTC transparency
- Improvements of the IATTC's monitoring, control and surveillance tools

Harvest Control Rules Developed Using Appropriate Reference Points

Currently, fisheries in the 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 that are guided by reference points and harvest control rules allows managers to act swiftly and efficiently under a pre-agreed standard to ensure that catches do not exceed any acceptable limits, and thereby ensures 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 is also a requirement of several ecolabel certification programs.

WWF applauds the steps taken by the IATTC in 2014 to adopt interim target and limit reference points and an interim harvest control rules for tropical tunas. Now we urge the Commission to adopt the Staff's recommended harvest control rules with specific timelines for reductions to target F_{MSY} and rebuilding timeframes, should they become necessary. In addition, and due to the existence of uncertainties, we urge the Commission to direct that the harvest control rules and reference points be tested for robustness to the main uncertainties in the assessment, such as the stock-recruitment relationship.

WWF grants the development of effective harvest control rules for EPO tuna fisheries the highest priority, and fully supports the IATTC in these efforts, including the facilitation of regional capacity building activities such as the Coastal States Tuna Management Workshop held in Panama in 24 – 25 February 2015 with the support of FAO and GEF, that served to improve the dialogue about these matters among scientists, managers and other stakeholders.

Tuna Conservation

Yellow Fin and Bigeye Tuna: The most updated assessments of the IATTC staff, presented at the 2015 Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting, shows that the spawning biomass for the yellowfin and bigeye stocks is close to the MSY level, although neither stock is being overfished, and therefore recommends maintaining the Resolution C-13-01, 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 increase in fishing effort. Scientists agree that the evaluation results are more pessimistic if a stock-recruitment relationship is assumed. Considering uncertainties in the assessments, and likely increases in fishing capacity and floating object-directed effort, WWF urges the IATTC to monitor the situation closely and be prepared to implement stronger measures in the future, should they become necessary to conserve stocks at MSY levels.

Pacific Blue Fin Tuna: The last assessment confirms that the stock is highly depleted, that fishing mortality exceeds all reasonable proxies for F_{MSY}. The recovery of the stock may be further delayed if the current scenario of low recruitment continues which is heavily reliant on a major adult cohort in the population. Complementary conservation measures adopted by WCPFC calling for reductions in catch for Pacific bluefin tuna of <30 kg in size are noted, but conservation of spawning stocks should also be implemented. WWF strongly support the staff's recommended catch limits for Pacific bluefin in the EPO as outlined in C-14-06 but encourages close monitoring of fisheries and catch and completion of a revised stock assessment for Pacific bluefin in early 2016. WWF urge both IATTC and WCPFC to adopt a long-term Pacific bluefin tuna recovery plan targeting SSBo 20%, 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.

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.

In 2002, the IATTC adopted Resolution C-02-03 on the Capacity of the Tuna Fleet operating in the EPO 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 aimed to achieve a sustainable fishery. During the last meeting of the SAC, IATTC staff reported that the active purse-seine capacity on the Regional Register on 30 April 2015 was 272,076 cubic meters. This well volume recorded in the Commission's Regional Vessel Register exceeds the target level greatly. Overcapacity undercuts the economic performance of the fleet and it is in the best interest of the EPO tuna industry to address this problem to secure the future of EPO tuna fisheries.

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

WWF urges the IATTC member states to freeze current capacity, adopt options to settle claims that do not increase the overall capacity and work toward ultimately reducing the number of vessels authorized to fish for tuna in the EPO. WWF recommends that Rights Based Management (RBM) approaches be combined with vessel buybacks and other financial transition programs to help solve the overcapacity problem. 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. Implementation of the recommendations of the Technical Experts Workshop on the Capacity of the Tuna fishing Fleet in the EPO that was held in Cartagena in 2014, is a good starting point to find solutions and strengthen the 2005 Plan for the Regional Management of Fishing Capacity.

Management of FADS

In view of the importance for scientists having all the information on the FADS in order to perform a comprehensive analysis to progress the adoption of science-based FAD management measures, WWF calls the Cooperating Parties, to provide these additional data on movements of FADS to the Commission from January 1, 2015, as established in the Resolution C-13-04. WWF also recommends to implement the use of non-entangling FAD designs to reduce the shark and sea turtle mortality and reduction of other ecosystem impacts in the eastern Pacific Ocean. WWF also encourage industry to authorize companies that operate the satellite buoy systems used to track the FADs to provide buoy position data to the IATTC Secretariat for scientific analyses, with a time lag of four months to protect the owner's proprietary information. Finally, we fully support the 2015 SAC recommendation that the IATTC convene a meeting on FADs and FAD impacts with scientists and stakeholders, and urge the Commission to establish such a working group as ICCAT, WCPFC and the IOTC have done.

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 aimed to rebuild the stock of these sharks in the region and its recommendation that Cooperating Parties submit data to allow ecological risk analysis for the main species of pelagic elasmobranchs impacted by EPO fisheries.

Additionally, WWF urge the IATTC to adopt the proposal tabled by Costa Rica requiring that sharks be landed with fins naturally attached.

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

WWF urges the members to report on how they are implementing the recent CITES listings of sharks and Manta rays and for the Commission to consider how to manage those shared stocks between its members.

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 of 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 to adequate handling of sea turtles in longline fisheries and urges the parties to adopt such recommendations.

Observer coverage of long-line vessels

According to the IATTC staff, the information provided by some observer programs of Member nations have revealed that 5% is too low a level of coverage to allow accurate estimates of the catch of species caught infrequently in those fisheries, therefore WWF supports the recommendations made by the IATCC staff of 20% observer coverage of large longline vessels until sufficient information is available to justify a revision.

IATTC transparency

The IATTC must improve its transparency regarding the review of compliance by members with their obligations to the Commission. WWF urges the IATTC to increase the transparency of its compliance assessment process by making public the responses from members to areas of identified non-compliance and include in the Review Committee report details regarding each Member and cooperating non-members areas of non-compliance, and its recommendations to address such non-compliance. We also request that the IATTC set clear milestones for improving compliance by requiring cooperating parties to submit a compliance action plan for identified infractions, and begin discussing how the Commission will respond to repeated and significant instances of non-compliance.

Improvements of the IATTC's monitoring, control and surveillance tools

WWF urges the IATTC to continue to reform its satellite-based VMS by amending C-14-02 to ensure that VMS data can be available to the Secretariat and be used for scientific or compliance purposes and reform C-05-07 so the IUU Vessel listing process is in line with best practices, such as including provisions for intersessional decision-making, making clearer delisting procedures, expanding the type of admissible information and harmonizing the criteria constituting IUU fishing across tuna RFMOs.

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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