

OUTCOMES OF THE THIRTEENTH SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 18 AUGUST, 2011

PURPOSE

To inform the Working Party on Temperate Tunas (WPTmT) of the recommendations arising from the Thirteenth Session of the Scientific Committee, held from 6–10 December 2010, specifically relating to the work of the WPTmT.

BACKGROUND

At the Thirteenth Session of the Scientific Committee (SC), the recommendations contained in Attachment A, that relate mainly to the data and research activities of national scientists were endorsed by the SC. The SC considered the recommendations contained in Appendix A as priority items compared to the complete list of data and research activities recommended by the WPTmT at its meeting in October 2008. The SC made several other recommendations relevant to the WPTmT, outlined below.

DISCUSSION

In addition to the recommendations outlined in Attachment A, the SC made several other comments and recommendations relevant to the WPTmT, which participants are asked to consider:

On Albacore tuna:

The SC noted the changed estimates of albacore catches, following new information being made available to the Secretariat. These new estimates of catch (since 2003–09) were dramatically higher than those used in the latest assessments for this stock. In light of these changes the SC agreed on the need for a new stock assessment for this species in 2011 (para. 140 of the SC13 report).

This recommendation was made after an observation and recommendation of the WPDCS regarding newly estimated albacore catches in Indonesia:

'The WPDCS noted the changes in the estimates of catches of albacore following a review by the Secretariat using data provided by the ISSF and Export Statistics from Indonesia. The WPDCS noted that the new catches estimated for 2003-09 represent more than twice catch values in the past. It was also noted that the new catches derived for the fisheries in Madagascar may be too high. The WPDCS requested the Secretariat to follow-up on these issues to ensure that the catches in the IOTC database are as accurate as possible.'

The SC also noted that most Japanese, Korean and Taiwan,China longliners have left the Somali area and that some have moved to other oceans. As a consequence, the Japanese longline effort decreased dramatically in the western Indian Ocean, while it increased slightly in the eastern Indian Ocean. It was also noted that; while longline activity was conducted traditionally in July and December-January around the Chagos archipelago, in 2009 vessels were present in the area all year round. This change could be due to the eastward displacement of vessels avoiding the risk of pirate attack. It was also noted that some vessels may have moved southward, increasing the fishing effort on albacore (para. 155 of the SC13 report).

The Executive Summary for albacore was adopted by the SC, noting that new information for the estimation of catches has been provided, and change drastically the catches of albacore since 2003. The advice and recommendations were amended to reflect concerns of the SC and the need for a new assessment to be conducted in 2011.

Data reporting requirements:

The SC endorsed the minimum data requirements for gillnet and pole-and-line fisheries. In order to complete this work, the SC recommended that this minimum requirement are translated into proposals of Resolutions for the recording of catch by gillnet and pole-and line fisheries in the IOTC area for presentation at the next meeting of the Commission (para. 141 of the SC13 report).

Stock assessments by working parties:

The SC noted that the complete and detailed stock assessment documents are not always made available at the WPs and requested that for all future WPs, complete stock assessment documents, describing the analysis, its assumption and its results, as well as

associated model diagnostics and input/output files are provided and archived so as to facilitate transparency in the process of stock assessment for IOTC stocks (para. 143 of the SC13 report).

The SC also requested that choice of particular assumption, e.g. steepness of the stock recruitment relationship, are fully justified and described in the report of the relevant WP (para. 144 of the SC13 report).

The SC revised the stock assessment guidelines previously agreed to at his 10th Session in 2007, which are applicable to all IOTC WP. The SC reminded scientists conducting stock assessment that these guidelines provide a minimum set of outputs required for WP participants to be able to properly analyse the results presented. As such, scientists and WP participants should ensure that these guidelines are followed to the extent possible, and WP chairs should make every possible effort to make sure this is done so (para. 145 of the SC13 report).

WPTmT priorities for 2011:

The SC agreed to the following schedule of working party meetings for 2011 and recommended that it be put before the Commission for endorsement at its 15th Session (para. 253 of the SC13 report).

- a. Stock assessment for albacore

The Scientific Committee also adopted revised Executive Summaries for albacore tuna which will be discussed under Agenda item 10. The current status, outlook and recommendation for albacore agreed to by the SC is provided at Attachment B.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Working Party on Temperate Tunas **NOTE** the recommendations of the Thirteenth Session of the Scientific Committee on data and research, and consider how to progress these issues at the present meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Summary of the Scientific Committee recommendations on data and research in 2010, relevant to the Working Party on Temperate Tunas.

Attachment B: Current status, outlook and recommendation for albacore.

ATTACHMENT A

Extract of the Report of the Thirteenth Session of the Scientific Committee

(IOTC-2010-SC13-R; SECT. 16.1, PAGES 41-44)

16. SUMMARY OF THE SC RECOMMENDATION IN 2010**16.1. RECOMMENDATIONS – ON DATA AND RESEARCH**

278. The following recommendations relate mainly to data and research activities of WPs and national scientists. They should be considered as priority items compared to the complete list of data and research activities recommended by the WPs (Appendix IV).

5. The SC noted that Mauritius had not reported data for its coastal fisheries in 2009, asking if this information could be sent as soon as possible. (paragraph 27)

14. The SC recommended that, in addition to the implementation of the Regional Observer Scheme, the collection of scientific data by all other means available including auto-sampling (collection of data by trained crew) and electronic monitoring (sensors and video cameras) be encouraged and developed as a mechanism to improve data collection on bycatch. (paragraph 50)

32. The SC noted that the complete and detailed stock assessment documents are not always made available at the WPs and requested that for all future WPs, complete stock assessment documents, describing the analysis, its assumption and its results, as well as associated model diagnostics and input/output files are provided and archived so as to facilitate transparency in the process of stock assessment for IOTC stocks (paragraph 143).

33. The SC also requested that choice of particular assumption, e.g. steepness of the stock recruitment relationship, are fully justified and described in the report of the relevant WP. (paragraph 144).

34. It also noted that the size-frequency sampling effort remains inadequate for some distant water longline fleets, and recommended this to be addressed as a matter of priority. The SC recognized that ecosystem modelling has yet to be fully implemented in IOTC area, largely because of its requirements for data and expertise, and encouraged such development in the near future as well as collaboration with programs integrating ecosystem and socio-economic approaches (such as CLIOTOP) to support the conservation of multi-species resources. (paragraph 148).

36. The SC supported the development of a MSE under the IOTC framework, and recommended that a meeting is organized in 2011 that will gather the scientist, managers and representative of the Industry (paragraph 251).

38. The SC supported the principle of peer-reviews of stock assessments made by the WP. It was suggested that the chair of the SC with the chair of the WP set up a proposal for such a procedure, that will be discussed with the Secretariat in terms of budget and funding (paragraph 273).

39. The SC recommended that for its future meetings all documents, essential to develop potential recommendations by the SC, should be submitted to the Secretariat no later than 15 days prior to the start of the SC meeting and be posted to the IOTC website. (paragraph 276)

ATTACHMENT B

Extract of the Report of the Thirteenth Session of the Scientific Committee

(IOTC-2010-SC13-R; SECT. 9.1, PAGES 27-28)

9.1.1 ALBACORE TUNA (*Thunnus alalunga*)

Current status

164. Based on the preliminary analyses undertaken in 2008 there are no indications that the albacore stock is over-fished ($B_{2007}/B_{MSY} > 1$) and overfishing is currently likely not occurring for the scenarios envisaged. Point estimates of MSY ranged from 28,260 t to 34,415 t. This indicated that continuous annual catches at a level approaching 38,000 t (equivalent to the historically high level of catch experienced over the period 1998 to 2001) may not be sustainable in the long term.

165. The estimates of catches of albacore in recent years have changed substantially, especially since 2003. This is due to a review of the catches of Indonesian longliners. Albacore catches have been around 39,100 t annually over the past five years (2005-2009) and this level is only much higher than the historical average annual catch taken for the past 50 years (24,300 t). Other fisheries-based indicators show considerable stability over long periods. The mean weight of albacore in the catches has remained relatively stable over a period of more than 50 years. Furthermore, the average weight of albacore in the Indian Ocean is higher than that reported in the other oceans and is likely to result in a higher yield per recruit. The catch rates of albacore have also been stable over the past 20 years.

166. Because of the low value and, as a likely result, low profitability of the albacore longline fishery compared to the fisheries for other tuna species, there is likely to be very little incentive for an increase in fishing effort on this species in the immediate future. However, displacement of effort that might have resulted from the increasing piracy in the western Indian Ocean could have some impact on the fishery and the revised catches of Indonesian longliners have drastically increased the total catch since 2003.

Recommendation

167. The SC acknowledged the preliminary nature of the albacore tuna assessment in 2008, but noting the available stock status information considers that the status of the stock of albacore is not likely to change markedly over the next 2-3 years and if the price of albacore remains low compared to other tuna species, no immediate action should be required on the part of the Commission. However, new information and estimation for the Indonesian longline fishery has increase the total catch at levels above the estimated MSY.

168. The SC recommended that a new albacore tuna assessment be presented to the Scientific Committee at the latest in 2011.