

Progress made in respect of the Course of Actions for RFMOs from the Joint Meeting of Tuna RFMOs in Kobe

IATTC Secretariat

At the joint meeting of the five tuna RFMOs, held in Kobe, Japan, 22-26 January 2007, key areas and challenges to be addressed by the RFMOs to improve their performance were identified. Following is a summary of the actions taken by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) to date in these areas.

PART I - Key areas and challenges

1. Improvement, sharing and dissemination of data and stock assessments and all other relevant information in an accurate and timely manner including development of research methodologies.

Scientific information and public domain data, including the results of research and stock assessments involving target stocks or species taken incidentally in tuna fishing operations in the IATTC area, are available on the IATTC website.

The availability of operational level data is governed by confidentiality rules that limit public domain information to that which does not reveal the operations of any one vessel. Catch and effort data in the public domain must be aggregated to a level of three vessels or more. During the review period, IATTC scientists and data managers have collaborated directly with scientists and research programs of other Commissions and scientific organizations.

2. Development, where appropriate, and application of equitable and transparent criteria and procedures for allocation of fishing opportunities or level of fishing effort, including provisions to allow for new entrants.

The IATTC has not developed criteria or procedures for allocation of fishing opportunities or fishing effort, although there is a de-facto allocation of purse seine effort via a resolution on fishing capacity, and this is based on procedures elaborated in the resolution.

Also, the IATTC has allocated bigeye tuna catch among longline fleets, although this is not based on any agreed allocation formula.

To a considerable extent allocation issues are associated with the establishment of a Total Allowable Catch (TAC). Although the IATTC has agreed to TACs as a management approach in the past, in recent years it has been decided by IATTC Parties that time and area measures are a better approach.

3. Controls, including capacity reduction as appropriate, to ensure that actual total catch, fishing effort level and capacity are commensurate with available fishing opportunities in order to ensure resource sustainability of tuna stocks while allowing legitimate fishery development of developing coastal states, particularly small island developing states and territories.

This principle has been embodied in the conservation measures agreed for yellowfin, bigeye, and albacore tuna. Measures developed for yellowfin and bigeye are designed to limit the catch to levels which will allow maximum sustainable yields, although in the case of bigeye the agreed measures fall short of the catch limits recommended by the IATTC scientific staff. Measures developed for albacore are intended to limit effort so the fishery can continue at a sustainable level.

The IATTC has had a strong measure in place since 2003 to limit purse seine capacity, although the current capacity levels are too high and should be reduced. The Commission has in place a regional capacity plan, which provides the basis for addressing purse seine capacity reductions as well as reductions in longline effort, but no discussions along these lines have occurred.

4. Ensuring that management measures are based on the best scientific advice available and consistent with the precautionary approach, particularly, with respect to establishment of effective stock rebuilding measures and other measures to maintain stocks at sustainable levels.

The quality of the scientific advice which serves as the basis for IATTC conservation and management measures, is high. The scientific advice is largely based on the work of the scientific staff of the Commission, supplemented by the work of member country scientists and of other scientific organizations.

5. Ensuring compliance through establishment of integrated MCS (monitoring, control and surveillance) measures that could include VMS, observers, boarding and inspection schemes, port state controls, market state measures, stronger controls on transshipment, and monitoring of bluefin tuna farming, and the harmonization of those measures across the five tuna RFMOs where appropriate to avoid duplication and increase cost efficiency.

The Commission has developed and implemented a suite of MCS tools including:

- Record of fishing vessels and authorizations to fish
- VMS requirements
- Implementation of IUU Vessel Listing Procedures
- Establishment of an observer program requiring 100 % coverage on purse-seine vessels
- verification of transshipment of longline catches
- Catch/statistical documentation
- Compliance monitoring and reporting.

6. Application of penalties and sanctions of adequate severity to deter IUU fishing by both non-members and members.

The IUU Vessel List is the Commission's primary tool to deter IUU fishing. vessels from both members and non-members are eligible for placement on the list, and it is clear that the possibility of being listed is a deterrent to IUU fishing. However, the placement of a member's vessel on the IUU list is problematic, since consensus is required for a vessel to added to the list.

The matter of penalties and sanctions for members has not been addressed, although there have been efforts in the Commission's compliance working group to focus more attention on this question.

7. Development and implementation of stronger measures to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing, including mechanisms to identify and quantify IUU activities based on trade and other relevant information, a system to exchange information on IUU fishing among RFMOs and among flag states, port states, market states and coastal states, consolidation of the positive and negative lists, as described in Section 2 below, effective control over nationals in accordance with their duties under international law, identification of beneficial ownership and demonstration of "genuine link" and dissemination of relevant information to the public.

The Commission has been discussing the strengthening and improvement of the resolution establishing the IUU list, but agreement has not yet been reached on a new resolution.

8. Establishment and implementation of a system to monitor catches from catching vessels to markets.

The IATTC participated in the technical working group which was held in July 2007 to consider the harmonization and improvement of the trade tracking programs and, as appropriate, development of catch documentation, including tagging systems as required.

The Commission has implemented a system to monitor catches from catching vessels to markets pursuant to a system developed under the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP), for which the IATTC Secretariat serves as the Secretariat.

Also, longline catch transshipments are monitored through the Commission's transshipment observer program.

9. Reviewing the performance of tuna RFMOs in accordance with Annex I.

The IATTC has agreed in principle to undertake a performance review, and a draft resolution setting forth the terms and conditions of the review has been discussed by the members. However, to date, no agreement has been achieved on the text of a resolution.

10. Implementation of the precautionary approach and an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management including improved data collection on incidental by-catch and non-target species and establishment of measures to minimize the adverse effect of fishing for highly migratory fish species on ecologically related species, particularly sea turtles, seabirds and sharks, taking into account the characteristics of each ecosystem and technologies used to minimize adverse effect.

The IATTC incorporates the precautionary approach and an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management into its work. And with the imminent entry into force of the Antigua Convention, these concepts are likely to receive even more emphasis, as they are specifically enshrined in that agreement.

For purse-seine fisheries, due to 100% observer coverage on large vessels, data collection on incidental catches is excellent. However, for longliners, the data on incidental catches collected and reported are somewhat lacking.

The Commission has developed an array of measures related to these matters. There is a by-catch resolution which requires the release of non-target species alive, to the extent practicable. Compliance with this requirement with respect to sea turtles is excellent. The release of live sharks is more difficult, since most of the animals arrive to the deck already dead. The IATTC does not yet have a resolution on the mitigation of seabird by-catch, although considerable scientific work and extensive discussions have taken place.

11. Development of data collection, stock assessment and appropriate management of shark fisheries under the competence of tuna RFMOs.

The IATTC has not developed a system of data collection, or undertaken stock assessments or management of shark fisheries under the auspices of the the Commission.

The Antigua Convention provides a strong basis for more extensive scientific and management work to be done on sharks.

12. Research and development of techniques to reduce incidental take of juvenile tunas during tuna fisheries, in particular in FAD operations.

The IATTC has extensively discussed this matter, and the most recent resolution adopted by the Commission on the conservation of yellowfin and bigeye tuna calls upon the Director of the Commission to develop, in consultation with interested Parties a pilot program for research into, and gathering information on, the FADs used to aggregate tunas in the EPO. As an integral part of the program, the Director is to initiate, in the first quarter of 2010, in Manta (Ecuador), a research and information-gathering program for FADs. The program shall include, *inter alia*, provisions for the marking of FADs, maintaining a record of the numbers of FADs on board each vessel at the beginning and end of each fishing trip, and recording the date, time, and position of deployment of each FAD. The Director shall report on the status of this effort at the next annual meeting of the IATTC.

Regarding sorting grids to reduce the capture of juvenile tunas, the same resolution calls upon the Director to continue experiments with sorting grids for juvenile tunas and other species of non-target fish in the purse-seine nets of vessels that fish on FADs and on unassociated schools, by developing an experimental protocol, including parameters for the materials to be used for the sorting grids, and the methods for their construction, installation, and deployment.

13. Provision of adequate capacity building assistance, including human resource development, for developing coastal states, particularly small island developing states and territories, towards responsible fishery development, including participation in RFMO and scientific meetings, fisheries data collection and stock assessment and implementation of MCS measures.

The IATTC staff does become involved on occasion in assisting developing countries regarding technical matters, such as organizing fisheries data bases. Also, the Commission staff is heavily engaged in assistance efforts with coastal member states with regard to reducing sea turtle by-catch.

The Secretariat has also informed all members of the procedures for applying for assistance through the *Assistance Fund under Part VII of the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks*.

It should be noted that the Antigua Convention calls upon the Commission to adopt measures relating to technical assistance, technology transfer, training and other forms of cooperation, to assist developing country members.

14. Enhancement of cooperation among scientists, relevant experts and with other relevant fisheries organizations possibly through organization of symposia or working groups on appropriate topics of common interest. Coordination of timing of annual meetings and scientific meetings with a view to avoiding their overlap as well as allowing an adequate interval between scientific and annual meetings and between proposal submission and annual meetings.

IATTC scientists regularly engage with WCPFC scientists on stock assessment activities, particularly in respect of pan-Pacific stocks, biological research and tagging studies. Staff scientists also actively engage in an international network of science associated with tunas, including research on ocean ecosystems.

The IATTC Secretariat is actively involved in the RSN and the Secretariats of tuna organizations networks. The IATTC also maintains close cooperation with regional organizations involved in fisheries in the eastern Pacific Ocean.

All IATTC meetings are published on the Tuna-org web site, and are arranged not to coincide with other meetings as far as possible.

The IATTC is also a partner of FIRMS and CWP.

It should be noted that the Antigua Convention establishes a Scientific Advisory Committee, composed of representatives designated by each member of the Commission. This Committee will clearly be a vehicle for enhancing cooperation among scientists.

PART II. Technical work to cooperate across RFMOs will commence by addressing the following challenges

1. Harmonization and improvement of the trade tracking programs and, as appropriate, development of catch documentation including tagging systems as required.

The IATTC participated in the technical working group which was held in July 2007 on this issue. See Section 8 above.

2. Creation of a harmonized list of tuna fishing vessels that is as comprehensive as possible (positive list) including use of a permanent unique identifier for each vessel such as an IMO number. The positive list should include support vessels. Creation of a global list of iuu vessels.

The tuna RFMO Secretariats have collaborated with IMO, LR-F, and FAO to review details currently collected by tuna RFMOs for their respective records of fishing vessels, reconciled them against IMO/LR-F requirements to generate a permanent unique vessel identifier, and identified a process for the tuna RFMOs to achieve the outcome agreed at Kobe 1.

The joint tuna RFMO positive list is published on the Tuna-Org web site, maintained by the ICCAT Secretariat, as are the links to all IUU lists.

3. Harmonization of transshipment control measures

The IATTC has implemented a regional observer program to control transshipments. This program became operative beginning January 1, 2009, following the signing of a contract between the IATTC Secretariat and the implementing consortium. The contractor used by the IATTC is the same as the one employed by ICCAT.

A progress report, presented at the 80th meeting of the Commission, is available on the Commission's website.

4. Standardization of presentation form of stock assessment results

IATTC scientists generally use the "Kobe-plot" to present stock assessment results.