



**TUPA**  
Tuna Protection Alliance

### **The Global Tuna Alliance and Tuna Protection Alliance Jointly Call for Action at WCPFC**

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) is responsible for the effective long-term conservation management of highly migratory fish stocks, including tunas and sharks, in the western and central Pacific Ocean. At their annual meeting in Papua New Guinea in December, WCPFC members must take substantive actions to improve the long-term sustainability of tuna stocks.

The Global Tuna Alliance and Tuna Protection Alliance, together representing 25 supply chain companies in North West Europe, has again joined forces to call on members and cooperating non-members at the 16th Meeting of WCPFC to take the following actions:

#### **Establishing a requirement for 100% observer coverage**

WCPFC has implemented a 100% observer coverage requirement for large-scale purse seiners for 20 degrees North and South of the equator; yet it requires only a minimum of 5% for longline tuna fisheries. Further, compliance data shows some longline fleets continue to fail to meet this minimal coverage that was adopted nearly 12 years ago.

There is a paucity of data from longline fisheries – including on transshipment vessels – that hinders effective conservation and management of tuna stocks, as well as compliance with regulations.

Electronic monitoring (EM) is feasible now and has been successfully implemented on tuna fishing vessels. While not a replacement for human observers, EM technology can be used as a complement. This is particularly true where human observers are not feasible, such as certain fleets and vessel sizes including longliners and carrier vessels

100% observer coverage requirements level the playing field by ensuring all parties are playing by the same rules and without 100% observer coverage on industrial tuna fishing vessels, there are too many unknown risks lurking across tuna supply chains.

We therefore call for the adoption of electronic monitoring and reporting standards for longline vessels, including review rates by dry observers, and a work plan for the creation of a Commission-wide electronic monitoring program. This will necessitate the adoption of a clear work plan for achieving 100% observer coverage on longline and transshipment vessels within five years.

#### **Adoption of reforms regulating at-sea transshipment to ensure the practice is well-managed, transparent, and in line with best practices**

Under the WCPFC Convention, at-sea transshipment is supposed to be the exception, not the rule; yet more than 6,000 transshipment events have been reported since 2010. The number of reported high seas transshipment events has increased by 155 percent between 2014 and 2018. This includes an increase of 29 percent between 2017 and 2018. The number of transshipping vessels has also

increased – in 2018, 55 percent of fishing vessels on the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels (RFV) were authorized to tranship, up from 40 percent three years ago.

Despite the requirement to have 100% observer coverage of all transhipments, the Secretariat reported receiving only one observer report for the 956 high seas transshipping events that were reported to have occurred in the Convention Area in 2016. There is very little transparency or reporting on the regional level of the operation of approximately 80 percent of the entire carrier fleet.

We call on the WCPFC to accelerate the work of the Transshipment Working Group so that reforms to WCPFC Conservation & Management Measure 2009-06 regulating at-sea transhipment are adopted in 2020 to ensure this practice is well-managed and transparent in line with [best practices](#) including:

- Increasing the advance notification requirement to at least 48 hours
- Requiring the submission of transhipment declarations by the fishing vessel to the WCPFC Secretariat and flag State in near real-time
- Requiring that carrier vessels be flagged to an WCPFC CPC in order to be authorized to tranship tuna and tuna-like species
- Developing electronic reporting standards for carrier and longline fishing vessels

#### **Accelerate the development of harvest strategies to support sustainable fisheries**

The timeframes in the original agreed skipjack Harvest Strategy Work Plan have lapsed and the 2019 assessment of skipjack indicates that biomass has been below the target level (TRP) for a decade and this needs to be addressed by management through a Harvest Control Rule that will ensure that the stock fluctuates around the Target Reference Point.

Adhering to best practices of modern fisheries management, consistent with the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement and the Food and Agricultural Organization Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, harvest strategies are an essential component of the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative's (GSSI) benchmarking tool. Responsible members of the supply chain, including signatories to the World Economic Forum's Tuna 2020 Traceability Declaration, are continually increasing their sourcing from tuna fisheries certified by schemes that are internationally recognized by the GSSI. Accordingly, sourcing may be impacted should harvest strategies not be implemented.

For example, all MSC-certified WCPFC fisheries must meet the Commission's harvest strategy development timeframes in the amended Harvest Strategy Work Plan in 2017 or risk losing their certification. The MSC has established hard deadlines for these conditions for certified tuna fisheries and if a harvest strategy is not in place by **2021** for western Pacific skipjack, current MSC certifications for this stock will be suspended.

Therefore, we call for urgent action in the WCPFC on the development of harvest strategies, including the adoption of harvest control rules, for skipjack.

We also call for the WCPFC to adopt interim target reference points (TRPs) for bigeye and yellowfin tunas at their current levels of biomass which would achieve the objectives of CMM 2018-01 to prevent biomass decline.

#### **Strengthening FAD management measures**

Studies estimate that over 30,000 FADs are deployed each year in the western and central Pacific Ocean, of which about half drift out of main fishing areas. Given the high risk of FAD ecosystem

impacts, including beaching, marine debris, and shark and turtle mortality, it is essential to collect and report FAD data, including the number of FADs being deployed and FAD position data and trajectories, to develop science-based management measures.

WCPFC needs to develop a comprehensive FAD management program that achieves the following:

- Add a new “FAD Information” section and FAD identification field in the ROP Minimum Standard Data Fields for inventories of FAD buoys on board at the start and end of each trip and adopt requirements for improved reporting on FADs by vessel operators such as those developed by the PNA.
- Set a timeframe to transition to FADs without nets and with biodegradable materials.
- Require fleets to remove previously deployed highly entangling FADs from the water.
- Design FAD-recovery mechanisms and incentives, such as increasing purse seiners’ FAD retrieval and storing capacity, and removing a percentage of FADs from the water relative to the number deployed.
- Adopt science-based limits on FAD deployments and/or FAD sets.
- Require complete FAD position data and acoustic records from echosounder buoys.
- Adopt supply-and-tender vessel measures, including identifying purse seine vessels supported, data collection on FADs being deployed and serviced, identifying on the Record of Fishing Vessels which activities they are engaged in, and applying observer requirements.
- Develop a FAD marking scheme based on the FAO Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear for all new FAD deployments, regardless of vessel type.

The IOTC Resolution 19/02 *Procedures on a fish aggregating devices (FADs) management plan* which was approved in June 2019 demonstrate an example of improved practice that WCPFC could emulate.

#### **Fins Naturally Attached (FNA) policy for sharks**

The WCPFC has not adopted rigorous management arrangements for shark fisheries (or mobulid rays) and the CMMs for minimizing shark bycatch do not reflect scientific advice or best practices.

There is a need to improve the collection of species-specific data on catch, discards and trade as a basis for improving the conservation and management of shark stocks and identifying sharks by species is rarely possible when fins have been removed from the carcass.

A Fins Naturally Attached policy is widely accepted as an effective way to reduce illegal shark finning.

#### **Notes**

The [Global Tuna Alliance](#) is an independent group of retailers and tuna supply chain companies, who are committed to implementing the objectives laid out in [World Economic Forum’s Tuna 2020 Traceability Declaration](#).

The [Tuna Protection Alliance](#) (TUPA) is an initiative, coordinated by [Earthworm Foundation](#), driven by canned tuna market players who recognise that retailers, producers and fleets must work together to quickly adopt better fishing practices and management to restore balance and safeguard resources for future generations.