

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION
PERMANENT WORKING GROUP ON FLEET CAPACITY
24th MEETING
Victoria, B.C., Canada
3 August 2023

CHAIR'S REPORT

AGENDA

	Documents
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opening of the meeting 2. Adoption of the agenda 3. Review of changes in the utilization of fleet capacity in the EPO 4. Consultant's report on the proposal to address the management of fishing capacity in the EPO 5. Review of pending capacity claims, disputes, adjustments, and requests according to the list presented at the 89th meeting of the IATTC and referred to in document CAP-17 INF-A REV (14 May 2016) 6. Recommendations to the Commission 7. Other business 8. Adjournment 	CAP-24-01

The 24th meeting of the Permanent Working Group on Fleet Capacity was held in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, on 3 August 2023. The list of attendees is included as Appendix 1.

1. Opening of the meeting

The Chair of the Working Group, Mr. Julio César Guevara, of the Nicaraguan delegation, opened the meeting.

It was agreed that the delegations of Vanuatu (IATTC Member) and Bolivia (Cooperating non-Member), which did not have a delegate present in the room, could take the floor by requesting it through the Chair of the meeting, as could other delegations with representatives in the room by requesting the floor for their delegates participating virtually.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The Working Group adopted the provisional agenda without comments or suggestions.

3. Review of changes in the utilization of fleet capacity in the EPO

The Director of the IATTC, Dr. Arnulfo Franco, briefly presented the situation of the capacity of the purse-seine fleet operating in the EPO, as described in Document [CAP-24-01](#), "Review of changes in the utilization of fleet capacity in the EPO". After summarizing its evolution and the stages of its regulation by the resolutions adopted successively by the Commission since 1999, Dr. Franco pointed out that, as of 30 June 2023, the capacity of the active purse-seine fleet reached 272,315 m³, to which should be added the capacity of the purse-seine vessels on the list of inactive and sunk vessels (13,741 m³) and the remainder recorded in the Regional Vessel Register as available capacity (16,807 m³). This results in a total authorized

capacity of 302,863 m³, as shown in Figure 1 of Document CAP-24-01. He pointed out that the potential capacity was much higher since, in addition to this authorized capacity, it was necessary to take into account the capacity claimed by several CPCs, which would be considered under item 5 of the agenda; this potential capacity reached a total of 355,530 m³.

Several delegations requested that, in future presentations, as well as in the document on capacity utilization, a representation of the target capacity (158,000 m³) be shown in the graph in the figure, without prejudice to the need to eventually analyze and update this target capacity, since the existing one dates back to 2002.

Ecuador recalled that operative capacity—i.e., the capacity of vessels that effectively fish during a year—is well below active capacity and has also decreased over the last three years by more than 10,000 m³ since 2019. He asked whether, under these conditions, the number of closure days should also be reduced. The Secretariat commented that the entire authorized capacity can be activated at any time, and therefore it is not only the operative capacity that is used as a reference to determine the duration of the closure. One participant added that this reduction in operative capacity did not necessarily imply a reduction in fishing mortality.

4. Consultant's report on the proposal to address the management of fishing capacity in the EPO

Dr. Dale Squires began by recalling the broad outlines of the scheme that he had previously presented and was continuing to develop, highlighting in particular what he saw as the benefits and advantages that this scheme could bring to tropical tuna fisheries in the EPO, with better management of fleet capacity. As the next steps in the process, he recommended that one or more pilot trials be conducted and noted that a workshop would be held in Panama City in January 2024 with the participation of representatives of all interested parties, including the fishing sector.

Several participants considered this proposal for a pilot scheme to be opportune, as it would make it possible to determine whether the scheme worked, as noted by the European Union. Ecuador and Vanuatu indicated their willingness to implement this pilot scheme. The IATTC Coordinator of Scientific Research, Dr. Alexandre Aires-da-Silva, stated that the Commission's scientific staff would be ready to ensure the follow-up of the implementation of the pilot plan and to collect and analyze the data produced. Guatemala pointed out that this implementation would lead to the coexistence of two completely different fisheries management systems operating in parallel. In its view, this situation should be further analyzed by the Commission. Mexico also stressed that any pilot scheme should first be approved by the Commission as a whole before being implemented.

With regard to the further development of the scheme, including the holding of a workshop with representatives of interested parties, Guatemala recalled that it had already stressed on several occasions the importance of not only holding these joint consultations with all CPCs, but also holding individual consultations with CPCs with purse-seine capacity in the Regional Vessel Register, without neglecting those CPCs that are not yet in this situation but have the right to engage in this fishing activity.

The discussion also made it possible to highlight some of the substantive aspects of the scheme, about which several participants expressed concern or interest in giving them greater consideration. Likewise, Guatemala stressed that the proposed model would mainly benefit companies that own several vessels, but would not be equitable for companies with one vessel, nor would it be equitable for CPCs without a purse-seine fleet. Venezuela also referred to this imbalance, but in terms of fishing effort, pointing out that the scheme would result in favoring the operation of the most efficient vessels, which could lead to an increase in catches, i.e., the opposite effect of what is sought through capacity reduction.

During the discussion, it was also pointed out that this issue should not be approached solely from a purely economic point of view, but that the analysis should also take into account aspects related to the management and sustainable use of the resource, the social aspects of fishing and also the situation of the

right of coastal States in the region that do not have a fishing fleet to develop it, including to fully exercise their sovereign rights over the use of fishery resources in areas under their national jurisdiction.

Some participants also stressed the need to take into account the relationship between capacity and flag States, since for several CPCs, as highlighted by Mexico and Guatemala, capacity belongs to States and not to the owners or operators of the vessels, and it is the competent authorities of those States that manage the capacity and its allocation, unlike what would happen in the scheme proposed by the consultant through the management of transferable fishing days.

In conclusion, the discussion showed that there were still several elements in the consultant's proposal that needed further analysis and improvement. It was agreed that the immediate step to be taken would be to hold a workshop in Panama in January 2024 to review the scheme in a more detailed and systematic manner and, in particular, to review the pilot project and its implementation, with the understanding that, in preparation for this workshop, the Consultant would take into account the comments, suggestions and expressions of concern expressed at this and previous meetings.

5. Review of pending capacity claims, disputes, adjustments, and requests according to the list presented at the 89th meeting of the IATTC and referred to in Document CAP-17 INF-A REV (14 May 2016) and Document CAP-24-01

The Chair introduced this agenda item by stating that it would be considered in the order of the cases listed in Document CAP-24-01.

a. Requests based on the footnote to Resolution C-02-03

- i **Peru** (not present at the meeting): sent a note with the request that it be reproduced as an appendix to the minutes of the 101st meeting of the Commission, in which it reiterates its aspiration to be recognized as having the right to effectively use the remaining capacity noted in the footnote of Resolution C-02-03.
- ii **Costa Rica**: the Minister of Fisheries and Executive Chair of INCOPECSA made a remote presentation in which he reiterated Costa Rica's aspiration to be recognized as having the right to effectively use the remaining capacity noted in the footnote of Resolution C-02-03 (7,058 m³).
- iii **Colombia** reiterated its aspiration to be recognized as having the right to effectively use the remaining capacity noted in the footnote of the resolution (4,772 m³).

b. Claims arising from disputes

- i **Bolivia** reiterated its request to be allocated 5,830 m³ of capacity that it claims to have been transferred to other CPCs without the corresponding approval. It requested that 2,439 m³ be allocated immediately and the remainder when resource conditions permit.
- ii **Vanuatu** reiterated its request for recognition of 1358 m³ of capacity that it claims to have been transferred to other CPCs without the corresponding approval.
- iii **Venezuela** reiterated its request for recognition of the capacity it claims to have been transferred to other CPCs without the corresponding approval. It requested that it be allocated 3,805 m³ immediately and 1,268 m³ when resource conditions permit.

The Working Group agreed that, in the future, these requests would not be considered in the context of dispute settlement, as it has no competence in this area, but rather in the context of addressing the issue of the capacity of the purse-seine fleet in general.

c. New requests

Requesting recognition of their special requirements and needs as developing coastal States, **El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia and Mexico** reiterated their requests for 2,105 m³, 4,200 m³, 9,000 m³ and 2,000 m³, respectively. Bolivia reiterated its request for 5,000 m³, which, unlike the previous requests, was not included in the list presented at the 89th IATTC meeting.

d. Other cases

Ecuador, which has 5 individual cases on the list, only presented the case of the vessel *Victoria A* (ex. *Cabrillo*). It noted that the vessel had sunk in 1995 and had been in operation prior to the adoption of Resolution C-02-03 and that, due to an omission by the Ecuadorian authorities, it had not been included in the Regional Vessel Register when it was established in 2002. Ecuador recalled that it had subsequently requested its inclusion on several occasions, including before the Commission itself in plenary.

The European Union and the United States reiterated their opposition to granting these requests, whatever their nature or basis, in the absence of the capacity management plan for the purse-seine fleet, which has been in the works for several years, as it would be unacceptable to increase capacity under these circumstances.

In light of the foregoing, none of the claims or requests presented achieved the consensus necessary for the Group to recommend their approval to the Commission.

6. Recommendations to the Commission

The Working Group adopted the following recommendations:

- a) Request the IATTC scientific staff to analyze whether the reduction of more than 10,000 m³ of operative capacity in recent years could imply a reduction in the number of closure days, taking into account that this number was set on the basis of additional closure days for each 1,000 m³ of capacity added to the Regional Vessel Register.
- b) Request the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), with the support of the scientific staff, to update the analysis to determine the maximum capacity limit as the optimal target for the operation of the purse-seine fleet fishing for tropical tunas in the EPO.
- c) Request the consultant to update his proposal to include, among other things, an analysis based on the comments and concerns expressed by CPCs at this and previous meetings, consideration of the impact of implementing the scheme, the issue of participation by CPCs that do not currently have a purse-seine fleet, the issue of transitioning from the current management of fleet capacity in the IATTC to a transferable fishing days scheme, the definition and implementation of a pilot program, in particular the component of the fleet that would implement it and the duration of such implementation.
- d) That the Secretariat review and update, as appropriate, Document CAP-17 INF-A REV describing pending capacity claims and requests.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m. on 3 August 2023.

Appendix 1. List of attendees.

ASISTENTES - ATTENDEES

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