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Provisional 2026 Workplan for the IATTC–WCPFC Joint Working Group on South Pacific Albacore

This Workplan has been developed on a provisional basis in anticipation of its consideration and adoption by the Joint IATTC–WCPFC Working Group on the Management of South Pacific Albacore (SPAJWG), which is expected to be established by the IATTC and the WCPFC at their upcoming annual meetings in 2025. Its purpose is to serve as a multi-year roadmap guiding collaboration between the two Commissions. The Workplan outlines a phased approach to harmonizing scientific analysis, coordinating management strategies, improving monitoring and data exchange, and advancing regionally compatible measures for the effective conservation and management of South Pacific albacore tuna fisheries.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

To support the effective implementation of this Workplan, the following cross-cutting issues will be duly taken into consideration throughout all phases:

- Small Island Developing States (SIDS), developing Members, and participating territories engagement: Within the WCPFC, there is a need for financial and logistical support for delegates from SIDS, developing States, and participating territories. Similarly, within IATTC, there is the same need for its developing Members.
- Transparency: The need for all meeting documents, recommendations, and data-sharing protocols to be made available in English and Spanish.
- Stakeholder Involvement: The need to ensure, as appropriate, the participation of scientific experts, NGOs, and industry representatives to be invited as observers or advisors, consistently with the respective rules of procedure of each Commission.
- Capacity Building: The need to support the development of technical and institutional capacity in SIDS, developing Members, participating territories, and Cooperating Non-Members, especially in scientific and monitoring capabilities.
- Communication and Outreach: The need to enhance understanding and visibility of SPAJWG's objectives and progress among stakeholders and the public.

REVIEW OF THE WORKPLAN

Once adopted by the Working Group, and to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness, the SPAJWG Workplan shall be subject to an annual review by SPAJWG participants at the end of each calendar year. This review will:

- Assess the progress made toward each planned activity;
- Identify and record completed or terminated actions;

- Flag any activities requiring adjustment, rollover, or intensified follow-up in the following year.

The results of the annual review shall inform the planning of subsequent SPAJWG meetings and be reported to both Commissions. Any resulting comments or recommendations made by either Commission are reported back to the SPAJWG.

RESOURCE PLANNING AND BUDGETING

Consistent with the relevant provisions of the Terms of Reference, and in recognition of the resource requirements to implement certain activities under this Workplan, the two Commissions will consider and endeavour to accommodate budgetary needs as appropriate.

YEAR 1: 2026 — INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

A. First SPAJWG Meeting in the first half of 2026

1. Implementation of the SPAJWG Workplan

- The SPAJWG will review and consider the time frame, specific needs, and expected outcomes of the Workplan as needed

2. Overview of the SPA Management

- Summary of recent stock status based on stock assessment for WCPO only, Pan-Pacific scale, and EPO only.
- Overview of current SPA management approaches adopted by both Commissions, including arrangements for the overlap area.
- Introduction to the development of Harvest Strategies for SPA by each Commission.

3. Review of Management Procedure Evaluations (subject to the progress of the SPA MP at WCPFC22)

- Review the adopted WCPFC SPA MP (draft schedule provided in **Table 1**), the outcomes of the first running of the MP, and the adopted SPA MP implementation CMM.
- Review the application of the WCPFC's 2025 MP outputs to SPA management for 2026.
- Review of the scope of the SPA MP in the context of the geographic area (including the overlap area) and the mixed fishery structure
- Review of the IATTC components (fishing level) in the SPA HS framework
- Develop a detailed plan of harvest strategy-related SPAJWG activities for 2026 and beyond.

Table 1. The WCPFC's South Pacific Albacore Management Arrangements in a repeating 3-year schedule (Proposed by the South Pacific Group¹ and Australia in December 2024; [WCPFC21-2024-DP11 Rev01 Updated](#))

Year	Scientific Services Provider	Scientific Committee	Commission
2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Run the MP (using data to 2023). - Support SC and Commission consideration of the MP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide advice to the Commission on the MP outputs for 2026- 2028. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop/Review the SPA Management Arrangements CMM for 2026-2028, taking into account the output of the

¹ Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu

			MP.
2026		- Monitor the performance of the MP.	- Apply the <i>SPA Management Arrangements CMM</i> .
2027	- Perform full stock assessment (y _{last} = 2025).	- Monitor and review the performance of the MP, including potential exceptional circumstances, and advise the Commission.	- Apply the <i>SPA Management Arrangements CMM</i> . - Review the performance and use of the MP.
2028	- Run the MP (using data to 2026). - Support SC and Commission consideration of the MP.	- Monitor the performance of the MP. - Provide advice to the Commission on the MP outputs for the next management period (2029-2031).	- Review and revise the <i>SPA Management Arrangements CMM for 2029-2031</i> , taking into account the output of the MP.
2029		- Monitor the performance of the MP.	- Apply the <i>SPA Management Arrangements CMM</i> .
2030	- Perform full stock assessment (y _{last} = 2028).	- Monitor and review the performance of the MP, including potential exceptional circumstances, and advise the Commission.	- Apply the <i>SPA Management Arrangements CMM</i> . - Review the performance and use of the MP.
2031	- Run the MP (using data to 2029). - Support SC and Commission consideration of the MP.	- Monitor the performance of the MP. - Provide advice to the Commission on the MP outputs for the next management period (2032-2034).	- Review and revise the <i>SPA Management Arrangements CMM for 2032-2034</i> , taking into account the output of the MP.
etc.	-	-	-

4. Compatible management measures

The SPAJWG will consider the effectiveness of the MP across both Convention Areas to develop and recommend to both commissions compatible management measures, including quantitative limits, monitoring, reporting, data sharing arrangements, and coordination of the overlap area.

5. Preparing WCPFC's 2027 SPA stock assessment

- Establish a clear framework for coordination between SPC and IATTC scientists, including the development of intersessional meetings and communication channels to address key elements of the assessment, such as:
 - Input data requirements and exchange
 - Modelling approaches
 - Regional structure assumptions
 - Determining the scope of the assessment, including whether it will be Pacific-wide or RFMO-specific, with separate components for WCPFC and IATTC.

The SPAJWG will facilitate this discussion and establish a timeline for data sharing between the two organizations.

- Promote methodological alignment between SPC-OFP and IATTC in stock assessment practices to ensure comparability and consistency of outputs.
- Explore the development of SPA-wide projection models that incorporate both catch numbers and catch weight, to enhance the robustness of future management advice.

6. Support and Review Project 100c (CKMR)² Outputs

- Review results from CKMR³ sampling (2023–2025) and explore data integration into management advice. (SPC, SC, SPAJWG, etc.)
- Begin planning CKMR-informed stock assessments or MSE tests for the 2029–2031 MP cycle.

B. Intersessional Activities toward 2027

The following issues, among others, may be discussed, subject to the availability of supporting documents and time constraints.

1. SPAJWG reference document

- Develop one reference document for SPAJWG, covering a summary of stock structure, stock status, catch and effort levels, current management system, harvest strategy framework, climate change impacts, etc.
- Develop a list of areas where monitoring, reporting, and data sharing could be improved

2. Data issues

- Recommend to both Commissions to consider the adoption of shared data standards and timelines for stock status evaluations – comparing assessments from the WCPO-only, Pan-Pacific, and EPO-only approaches – and review existing data exchange and monitoring mechanisms, including plans for CKMR sampling and integration with ongoing tagging programs under SPC coordination.

3. SPAJWG Research plan and budget

- With the support of both Secretariats, develop a scientific research plan for the SPAJWG's work, including any necessary budget implications, and recommend it to each Commission.
- Prior to the SPAJWG meeting, the respective research plans should be shared and consolidated, and the research responsibilities clearly assigned to each Commission to facilitate budget allocation between them.

² *Preparing WCP tuna fisheries for application of CKMR methods to resolve key stock assessment uncertainties, 2023-2025*

³ Accurately estimating absolute spawning biomass is a key challenge in WCPFC stock assessments. Close-Kin Mark-Recapture (CKMR) offers a practical solution, providing not only biomass estimates but also insights into population structure, connectivity, and natural mortality to improve management decisions.

Annex. The provisional and indicative schedule for SPAJWG Meetings, aligned with the regular meeting calendars of both Commissions, with a provisional proposed agenda for each meeting.

2025		2026	
		Jan-Mar.	Secretariats: Preparation for the 1st SPAJWG Meeting (Hybrid) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting time • Venue • Agenda
20 May	1st Informal SPAJWG Meeting (online) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of DRAFT TOR • Consider elements to be included in the workplan (see Annex 1) • Confirm the 2nd Informal SPAJWG meeting date (29 July – 1 August) 	March	1st Formal SPAJWG Meeting (a 3-day hybrid meeting) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of recent stock status from stock assessments • Review of the scope of the SPA MP in the context of the geographic area and the mixed fishery structure • Review of the WCPFC-adopted SPA MP, outcomes of the first MP run, and the SPA MP Implementation CMM • Review of the IATTC components (fishing level) in the SPA HS framework • Develop a scientific research plan with budget implications as needed for the SPAJWG work, assisted by both Secretariats, and recommend it to each Commission
June – July	Secretariats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a DRAFT workplan and timeline • Communicate with CCMs (WCPFC) and CPCs (IATTC) to refine the workplan • Both Secretariats draft the SPAJWG meeting cycles and decision-making structure 		
2-6 June	IATTC-SAC16	Early June	IATTC-SAC17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the SPAJWG budget and recommend it to the Commission if needed
29Jul (Tue)-01Aug (Fri)	2nd Informal SPAJWG Meeting (online) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize TOR • Review and finalize the Workplan and timeline prepared by both Secretariats • Recommend the meeting date, duration, (hybrid?), and meeting venue for the 1st in-person (?) SPAJWG meeting, SPAJWG-01 (this is important) 	Late July-early August	2nd Formal SPAJWG Meeting (if needed) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
13-21 August	WCPFC-SC21	Mid-August	WCPFC-SC22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the SPAJWG budget and

			recommend it to the Commission if needed
1-5 September	IATTC-103 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt TOR • Finalize and recommend the workplan to be adopted at the 1st SPAJWG in 2026 • Recommend the meeting date and venue for the 1st in-person (?) SPAJWG meeting, SPAJWG-01 	Early September	IATTC-104 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and endorse the SPAJWG budget
1-5 December	WCPFC22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt TOR – subject to the decisions by both RFMOs, the SPAJWG will be established. • Review the IATTC-recommended workplan and endorse/recommend it to SPAJWG-01 for adoption • Recommend the meeting date and venue for the 1st in-person (?) SPAJWG meeting, SPAJWG-01 	Early December	WCPFC23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and endorse the SPAJWG budget