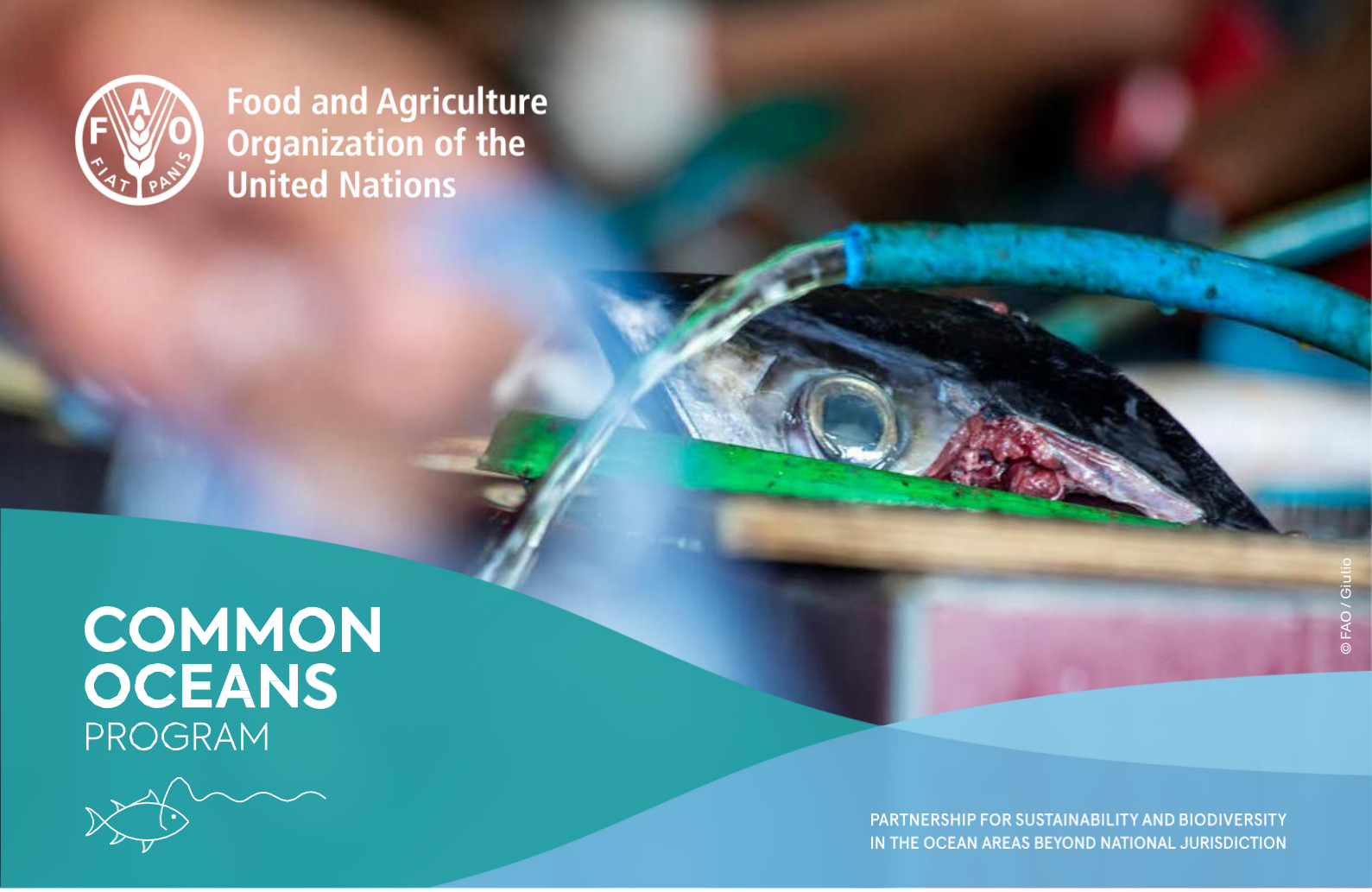


Tuna Project II - UPDATE

IATTC 103

1 - 5 September 2025

Panama City, Panama

The Project "Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction" is a continuation of an earlier project (2014-2019) of the same name. The Project seeks to achieve responsible, efficient, and sustainable tuna production and biodiversity conservation in the face of a changing environment.

This is a GEF- funded project, implemented by FAO, with activities carried out by the partners of the project - including intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the private sector.

gef global environment facility
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

WHAT WE DO

Improve tuna fisheries management

Ensure all major tuna stocks are fished at sustainable levels using harvest strategies.

Operationalize ecosystem approach to fisheries management in regional fisheries management organizations.

Improve compliance and tackle IUU fishing

Training in monitoring, control and surveillance for more efficient enforcement of regulations.

Improve compliance with fishing regulations by promoting innovative tools like electronic monitoring and traceability systems.

Improve environmental performance

Decrease bycatch with better monitoring and promoting best practices in bycatch mitigation and alternative gear.

Reduce impacts by advocating for ocean-friendly fishing devices

COMMON OCEANS PROGRAM

Tuna project

IMPROVE TUNA FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Develop capacity to implement harvest strategies

Project partner, The Ocean Foundation (TOF), supports capacity building in Harvest Strategies/Management Strategy Evaluation in tuna RFMOs through technical support. An e-learning course is being finalized, quarterly webinars are hosted with simultaneous interpretation, and educational materials are available.

- ✓ More information and all materials can be found here Harvest Strategies | 21st century fisheries management.
- ✓ An e-learning course on Management Procedures and Harvest Strategy Evaluation is finalized and will be launched during the third quarter of 2025 and hosted on the FAO e-learning Academy platform.

Operationalize EAFM, including climate change, in tuna RFMOs

Project partner, the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), in collaboration with FAO, supports the operationalization of an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) in tuna RFMOs. The emphasis is on how to formalize the implementation of EAFM, building on the outputs from workshops held in 2016 and 2019.

Three workshops are planned to bring together stakeholders from the tuna RFMOs, including managers and scientists, to discuss approaches to address the integration of ecosystem science and climate change impacts into decision-making processes. The outputs from these workshops will be disseminated broadly.

- ✓ The first EAFM workshop of the second phase of the Project was organized from 21–23 January 2025 at FAO headquarters in Rome. A workshop report will be available soon. Read web story here: Developing a blueprint for ecosystem-based management in tuna fisheries.
- ✓ The second Technical Workshop on Ecosystem Indicators for EAFM Implementation will be held in March 2026 in Nouméa, New Caledonia.

Project partners, Conservation International, The Pacific Community (SPC), and Mercator Oceans International will extend the SEAPODYM model to simulate spatiotemporal dynamics of tuna populations under the influence of both fishing and environmental pressures in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The goal of this work is to project climate change impacts on tuna distribution and provide this information to decision-makers for appropriate action.

This work builds on work carried out by SPC in the Pacific Ocean to model the effects of climate change on tuna fisheries which showed dramatic shifts eastward in the distribution of tuna stocks in the Pacific, hence predicting changes in the availability of the resources for some Pacific Island countries.

Convene joint tuna RFMO workshops

Project partner, Secretariat of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), together with FAO, will organize three joint tuna RFMO workshops on topics of global relevance for managers and scientists. A steering group was formed comprising officials from the tuna RFMOs, as well as other relevant stakeholders. The proposed themes include bycatch, management strategy evaluation (MSE), and stock assessment.

- ✓ The first workshop focused on bycatch and was held from 27-29 January 2025 at FAO headquarters in Rome. A workshop report will be available soon. Read web story here: Reducing bycatch in tuna fisheries.
- ✓ The upcoming workshop will focus on MSE and will be held from 19-23 January 2026 at FAO headquarters in Rome.

COMMON OCEANS PROGRAM

Tuna project

IMPROVE COMPLIANCE AND TACKLE IUU FISHING

Support establishing electronic monitoring (EM) and traceability systems

As of December 2024, four tuna RFMOs (IATTC, IOTC, ICCAT, and WCFPC) have adopted minimum standards for Electronic Monitoring and are poised to remedy the longstanding problem of subpar observer coverage in some fleets.

Project partner, International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), will convene two workshops involving relevant stakeholders from all tuna RFMOs to identify opportunities for EM standard technical harmonization (1st workshop) and implementation aspects (2nd workshop), to support the further development of regional standards for electronic monitoring systems to improve fisheries sustainability:

- ✓ The first workshop on EM minimum standards harmonization was held from 10–12 December 2024 in San Sebastian, Spain, with a second workshop planned for 2026. A workshop report will be available soon.

Project partner, the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), with support from New Zealand which has mandated EM systems on southern bluefin vessels since 2004, is providing capacity development to member countries on the use of EM systems with a special emphasis on monitoring the use of seabird bycatch mitigation measures:

- ✓ National innovation workshops were held in South Africa (September 2024), Indonesia (February 2025) and South Korea (March 2025).
- ✓ South Africa and Indonesia have developed roadmaps for implementing EM systems nationally. Follow-up activities to support implementation are underway.

To support these efforts, CCSBT conducted capacity-building training for port inspectors, observers, and compliance officers. Sessions were held in the second half of 2024 in Japan, Taiwan, and South Africa, and in early 2025 in Indonesia, focusing on improved inspection protocols and accurate bycatch data recording.

Project partner, World Wildlife Fund (WWF-US), published a Technical Source Document on the Governance of Electronic Monitoring (EM) Systems for Industrial Tuna Fisheries. The findings were presented to stakeholders as an EM toolkit with two resources:

- ✓ Implementing Electronic Monitoring Governance for RFMO managed fisheries
- ✓ The Governance of Electronic Monitoring Systems for Industrial Tuna Fisheries

Develop human capacity for fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS)

Project partner, the International Monitoring Control and Surveillance Network (IMCS Network), continues to convene the Tuna Compliance Network (TCN), which brings together compliance officers from the five tuna RFMOs, to review monitoring processes for compliance in tuna RFMOs and to identify drivers of compliance rates and measures to improve compliance.

- ✓ A comparative review of compliance assessment in the Tuna RFMOs was developed to support contracting parties to better meet their obligations and improve the performance of RFMOs.
- ✓ The sixth Tuna Compliance Network meeting was held from 9-13 June 2025 in Tokyo, Japan.

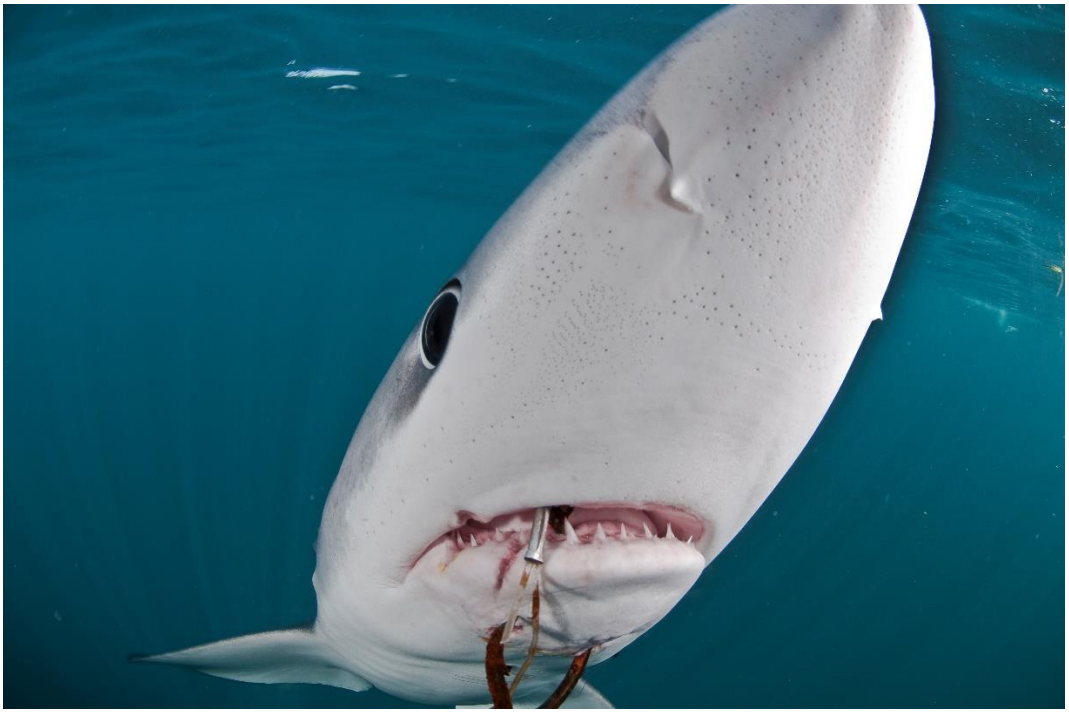
IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

IATTC regional shark fishery sampling program

The IATTC secretariat has started the development and implementation of tools and processes for a regional shark fishery sampling program in three countries (Ecuador, Mexico and Peru) bordering the Eastern Pacific Ocean, thus providing data for several types of stock assessments. This builds on successful work from Common Oceans Tuna Project I, which was carried out in Central America to address important data gaps in shark fisheries. The long-term objective is to build the required catch and effort data time series for conventional stock assessment in the region, while at the same time, prepare for data-limited methods to be used as well as alternatives such as Close Kin Mark Recapture (CKMR) involving genetic analysis.

The tasks to be carried out are:

- Identify available data sources (Metadata) and incorporate these into IATTC databases – the identification of metadata has been completed.
- Determine landing sites for shark catches, map these, and collect data on site characteristics, fishing activity, and catch composition – A detailed characterization of priority shark landing site locations was conducted.
- Develop feasibility studies and proposed sampling designs for shark fishery data.



Credit: Terry Gross Photography

Quantify, mitigate and reduce bycatch

Project partner, the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), continues efforts in bycatch mitigation, including a) develop and promote biodegradable/non-entangling FADs; b) holding skippers' workshops to adopt best practices in bycatch mitigation; c) develop acoustic technology to support selective fishing and bycatch avoidance, and d) produced and disseminated policy paper, ISSF 2024-04: Inputs for Comprehensive Bycatch Management Strategy Evaluation in Tuna Fisheries.

The secretariat of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) is providing enhanced education, outreach, and capacity building for the monitoring and implementation of seabird bycatch mitigation measures, as well as an update of the 2016 global seabird risk assessment.

In collaboration with BirdLife International and ISSF, CCSBT continues to drive education and outreach initiatives to reduce seabird bycatch and enhance industry engagement. The objective is to provide best practices for seabird bycatch mitigation for longline skippers. This is to inform and thereby enhance the use of bycatch mitigation minimum required standard and best practices. An infographic providing at-a-glance visual representations of technical, safety and practical aspects of seabird bycatch mitigation regulations and recommendations was produced for fishers.

- ✓ In 2024, CCSBT delivered skippers and train-the-trainer workshops in in Japan at Kesennuma and Shizuoka ports (February 2024), Cape Town (9–10 July) and Kaohsiung (16 October).
- ✓ A national workshop focused on seabird bycatch mitigation for skippers was held in Indonesia on 15 February 2025. The full article detailing these efforts is available here.

The Spatially Explicit Fisheries Risk Assessment (SEFRA) model was achieved and agreed on by CCSBT Members. Development of the SEFRA Technical Report is now underway, and engagement with non-Member fleets is being initiated to ensure broad data representation and to strengthen the planned comparison with the 2016 risk assessment.

- ✓ A data preparation meeting, for onboarding other participants into the SEFRA process will take place in Sao Paolo, August 2025.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Gender mainstreaming is "a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated".

The Tuna project and its partners are actively working to improve gender equality and support a balanced participation and equitable benefits across genders within the fisheries sector. This work is being led by the FAO Fisheries Gender Team and will follow a structured three-phase approach, including a stocktaking study to analyze gender roles and gender-based constraints, followed by development of a toolkit to support capacity development efforts, coupled with awareness-raising efforts.

The validation phase of the stocktaking study was completed in March 2025. The main output of this process is a draft work plan for the development of a gender toolkit and capacity-building activities.

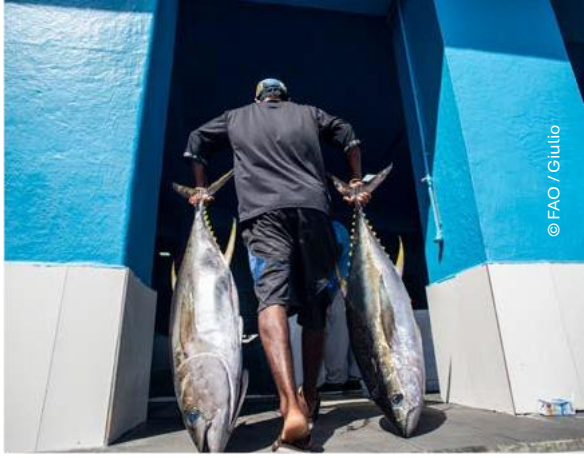
Successes from Common Oceans Tuna Project phase I

From 2014 until 2021, in collaboration with the five tuna RFMOs and partners, including intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the private sector - the Common Oceans Tuna Project phase I supported:

- **Enhanced international cooperation to improve the management and environmental performance of tuna fisheries.**
- **Better decision making in fisheries management and the adoption of harvest strategies for tuna stocks.**
- **Strengthening MCS systems and showcased the benefits of electronic monitoring and reporting systems.**
- **Reducing bycatch in tuna fisheries.**

These achievements paved the way for future cooperation and knowledge sharing to ensure a positive and lasting impact on the world's tuna fisheries

The Common Oceans Program is a global partnership funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), promoting sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) with a particular focus on tuna and deep-sea fisheries, the Sargasso Sea and cross-sectoral cooperation. Led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Program brings together the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), regional fisheries management organizations, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, civil society and academia.



FACTS & FIGURES

25 partners

5 Tuna RFMOs

$15M
Project budget

$200M
Project co-financing

COMMON OCEANS | Tuna project

common-oceans@fao.org

IN COLLABORATION WITH: Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), BirdLife International (BLI), Conservation International (CI), INFOPESCA, International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF/ISSA), International MCS Network (IMCSN), International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF), International Whaling Commission (IWC), Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Pacific Community (SPC), Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), PEW Charitable Trusts, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), The Ocean Foundation (TOF), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

iotc ctoi | CCSBT | CIAT IATTC | ICCAT CICTA CICAA | WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC FISHERIES COMMISSION