

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

104TH MEETING

**Lisbon, Portugal
31 August - 4 September 2026**

DOCUMENT IATTC-104-02

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 17TH MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1. TROPICAL TUNAS
TROPICAL TUNAS – GENERAL
1.1. That the staff present to the Commission an analysis on the potential equivalence in cubic meters of carrying capacity in relation to the various options for reducing the number of days of closure, as well as possible alternatives for addressing pending capacity claims from CPCs in accordance with document SAC-06-INF-B and its Addendum, taking into account the current status of tropical tuna populations and the potential future impact of a possible activation of this pending capacity.
1.2. That the Commission consider positively maintaining the Individual Vessel Threshold (IVT) measure and the Integrated Port Sampling Program (IPSP) as a scientific data collection platform to support management of the tropical tuna fishery in the EPO.
1.3. That the Commission consider the scientific pre-requisites in paragraph 1 of Resolution C-25-01 to have been met because the SAC have concluded that the MSE results for bigeye tuna show the management measures in Resolution C-25-01 to be effective.
1.4. (a) In response to the IATTC scientific staff's recent analyses of the current status of bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack tuna stocks, recognize that the Commission can currently consider adopting gradual modifications in conservation measures within a Management Procedure framework, including the options identified by the staff.

(b) Highlighting the need to continue to monitor the status of these stocks through subsequent updates from the staff, that the staff present an analysis on the likely effects of ENSO to the Commission during the meetings in Lisbon in 2026, so that the results of this analysis be considered in any potential revisions of the conservation measures.
1.5. Considering that sampling protocol modifications were made during the first year of implementation of the port sampling program, that the staff present a clear, side-by-side comparison of protocols and potential data changes between the Traditional Port-Sampling Program (TPS) and the Integrated Port Sampling Program (IPSP), and that an analysis be conducted to assess implications for stock assessment data, and that the results be reported at SAC-18.
2. MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION (MSE)
2.1. That the scientific staff incorporate environmental and climate variables in the stock assessment and MSE of tropical tunas, evaluate the relative effects of climate/environmental change and management measures, and present the results to the SAC in the future for consideration.
2.2. That the scientific staff include longline management measures in the MSE, fully evaluate the impacts and trade-offs among different fisheries, and, upon this basis, consider candidate management procedures for bigeye tuna.
2.3. <i>Quantify F - effort relationship:</i> That the scientific staff conduct an empirical quantification of the Fishing mortality (F) –closure day (effort) relationship while considering the PS set type, IVT management, and recruitment variations.
2.4. <i>Exceptional circumstances criteria:</i> That the scientific staff develop criteria for Exceptional Circumstances, including situations involving explicit or implicit weakening of IVT management, higher estimated fishing mortality, lower SSB, or reduced LL CPUE in different range of the MSE uncertainty (e.g. 20%), as well as other relevant scenarios.
2.5. That the scientific staff continue making meaningful progress in furthering MSE work to test candidate harvest strategies with changes in total annual catches for longline fisheries, to assist the Commission in the selection of a management procedure for tropical tunas and ensure balance among different fisheries. Staff may coordinate this work with the MSE Dialogue Working Group.
2.6. That, during its next annual meeting, the Commission consider the work developed by the scientific staff on the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for bigeye tuna and the multi-stock approach as a basis to guide the discussion on the management measures corresponding to 2027 and 2028.
3. TEMPERATE TUNAS

3.1. Pacific Bluefin tuna (PBF)
That the Commission consider adopting a harvest strategy for PBF, noting the harvest strategy elements in the Newport Beach proposal by the IATTC-WCPFC/NC JWG, the exceptional circumstances protocol drafted by the ISC, as well as the further development of the harvest strategy by the JWG.
3.2. North Pacific albacore tuna
(a) That the Commission consider developing allocation rules for the Harvest Strategy of North Pacific Albacore, noting the scientific advice from the ISC, including that it is important to have allocation rules if the stock status falls below the threshold reference point and management actions are required. (b) That the scientific staff include, for North Pacific Albacore, the total catch and albacore-targeted effort (see Resolution C-18-03) for each CPC in the Annual Tuna Fishery in the EPO Report.
3.3. South Pacific albacore tuna
(a) That the Commission consider increasing support for scientific research on South Pacific albacore tuna. (b) That the scientific staff continue to collaborate with the Pacific Community (SPC) regarding the stock status and stock structure of South Pacific albacore tuna as well as on the 2027 South Pacific-wide benchmark assessment.
4. FADs
4.1. Recognizing the importance of the actions undertaken to advance the transition to biodegradable FADs, that the scientific staff additionally present to SAC18 an analysis of the possible negative ecosystem-level impacts of the sustained increase in FAD deployments.
4.2. That interested CPCs be encouraged to submit specific proposals for potential incentives that the Commission could consider and adopt to accelerate the implementation of Category 1 biodegradable FADs (Resolution C-23-04).
4.3. That the scientific staff, in cooperation with the CPCs and the industry, strengthen data collection efforts on the different prototypes of biodegradable and non-entangling FADs, in order to improve analyses of their catch efficiency, durability, and operational performance during fishing trips.
5. DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING
5.1. General

That the Commission consider amending Resolution C-03-05, per [SAC-16-INF-O](#), to include compulsory reporting of TASK II, level 1, operational-level (vessel-specific, set-by-set) logbook data—from the year the fleet began operating, where available, to the most recent year possible, the current or the previous year—using the data fields in Table 2, or at a minimum the fields in Tables 3a and 3b to harmonize with the WCPFC, to be used in scientific research pursuant to the objective, rules, and relevant provisions of the Antigua Convention and measures adopted by the IATTC. This may be currently achieved through a memorandum of understanding between the CPCs and the IATTC to make the data available during the development of the stock assessment.

5.2. Fleet characterization

That, based on the characterization described in document SAC-17-07, and recognizing the value of the process undertaken to facilitate scientific and management work, a case-by-case analysis of the currently applicable resolutions be conducted in order to identify the vessel and fleet categories that should be subject to compliance with the obligations established under each of those resolutions.

5.3. Electronic logbooks

That the scientific staff develop a work plan for presentation at SAC 18, covering activities for 2027 and 2028, to implement electronic logbooks on longline vessels >24m of length overall (LOA) in the IATTC Convention Area. The plan should be harmonized with WCPFC CMM 2022-06 and allow for CPCs to develop and utilize their own electronic logbooks.

5.4. Electronic Monitoring (EM)

That all CPCs with electronic monitoring programs and/or pilot projects and relevant EM experts be encouraged to submit their EM data and any lessons learned to the Staff by 1 February 2027, to facilitate the 2027 review called for in paragraph 2 of Resolution C-24-09

6. ECOSYSTEM CONSIDERATIONS

6.1. Elasmobranchs (sharks and rays)

- (a) That the Commission consider financial support for unfunded project M.1.f on the use of the shark Velcro and shark harness lifting devices (SAC-17-INF-K).
- (b) That the Commission consider urging staff and/or CPCs to seek funding for the shark assessment and sampling efforts proposed in Tier 2 in document SAC-17-09 to produce a silky shark stock assessment and additionally, take advantage of data gathered from other shark species in their range to strengthen the analyses. The Director is encouraged to seek collaboration with CPCs, industry, universities, NGOs, and other bodies to fund and execute the proposed study.
- (c) That the Commission consider including the finalized IATTC Best Handling and Release Practices (BHRPs) for sharks in an amendment to C-25-08 in 2026, per paragraph 12 of that Resolution.

(d) That the Commission consider the proposal for the Shark Research Plan presented by the scientific staff, with a view to its approval and implementation. (e) That the Commission promote funding mechanisms for the development of the Shark Research Plan through public or private organizations that maintain cooperation agreements with the IATTC, ensuring that such agreements include clauses on confidentiality, protection, and appropriate use of information, in order to avoid negative impacts on the fishing industry. (f) That the scientific staff, in coordination with the respective CPCs, promote greater technical cooperation with universities in the region and fisheries research centers for the implementation of the Shark Research Plan in the EPO, with the purpose of strengthening regional knowledge on these species and evaluating alternatives to optimize and reduce the estimated budget costs.
6.2. Best Handling and release practices (a) That the purse-seine observer data collection forms be reviewed to optimize monitoring of the application of best handling and release practices for species for which retention is prohibited (e.g. sharks, turtles, mobulid rays), — such as condition, method and time of release — with the objective of identifying areas for improvement, while taking care not to overburden the purse-seine observers' workload; and (b) That the scientific staff present the results of this review to the EBWG and SAC18 in 2027.
7. DORADO (MAHI-MAHI)
7.1. That, in collaboration with CPCs and the Dorado WG, the scientific staff develop and provide a detailed report to the SAC in 2027 on the spatial stock boundaries that is based on an explicit conceptual model for the upcoming stock assessments for Dorado in the EPO.
7.2. That the scientific staff continue collaborating with CPCs on other Dorado stocks in the EPO that are not included in the upcoming Dorado stock assessments led by the staff.
7.3. That the scientific staff develop a work plan for Dorado stock assessments for the SAC's and Commission's consideration, where the phases range from the development and validation of the conceptual model to the analysis of risks and uncertainties, with clear costs and staffing levels required to conduct the work plan.
7.4. That the Commission review the costs estimates and the work plan for Dorado stock assessments, including external sources of funding, and consider funding if appropriate, taking into consideration priorities of the Commission for stock assessments.
7.5. That the Commission manage the implementation of the roadmap developed at the 4th Technical Working Group Workshop on Dorado, and that the date of the stock status assessment be updated to 2027.

7.6. That the Commission provide the necessary support to the scientific staff to conclude, in 2027, the update of the stock assessment for dorado in accordance with IATTC Resolution C-23-09, so that its results may be presented at the meetings of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and the Commission during that year.
8. BILLFISH
8.1. That the Director, in collaboration with CPCs and other interested parties, develop a work plan for billfish data collection and stock assessments for the SAC's and Commission's consideration, with clear costs and staffing levels required to conduct the work plan as well as potential external sources of funding.
8.2. That the Commission endorse the recommendation of the IATTC scientific staff regarding the target and limit reference points presented in document SAC-14-INF-O for the swordfish fishery in the South-Eastern Pacific Ocean.
8.3. That the Commission promote an integrated approach to the management of swordfish in the southern Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO), through the establishment of regional protocols for data collection, incorporating the local knowledge of fishing communities, and strengthening institutional capacity and regional cooperation.
9. SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY
9.1. That the Commission consider undertaking a new Performance Review, considering available resources, conducted by an outside entity which would include the SAC functions in its review.
9.2. That the Commission consider providing additional funding for capacity building to encourage participation of scientists from coastal developing countries and territories at the SAC.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 10th MEETING OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON FADS AS ENDORSED BY THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Consistent with its terms of reference established in Resolution C-19-01, Annex III, **the Ad Hoc Permanent Working Group on FADs**, in reporting to the Scientific Advisory Committee on the results of its 10th meeting, and in the framework of the process of coordination with that Committee and with the scientific staff in the identification and review of feasible FAD management measures, as a preliminary step prior to the presentation of recommendations to the Commission, **wishes to recommend:**

1. Deactivations / Reactivations / Active FAD limits

- 1.1. That the scientific staff convene a technical workshop with FAD buoy service providers and the other t-RFMOs, with the aim of identifying cost-effective, standardized options for the remote, automatic reporting of buoy deactivations and reactivations, and other buoy data, building on providers' existing data streams to support FAD monitoring.
- 1.2. That the scientific staff conduct additional analyses to better understand and identify the relationship between the deployment of FADs and the risk of loss, as well as the routes and areas through which lost FADs drift, in order to provide better supporting information for optimizing FAD retrieval programs.
- 1.3. That the scientific staff continue to collaborate and harmonize with the WCPFC/SPC to produce joint RFMO FAD analyses for cross-Pacific issues including, but not limited to, data on FAD strandings, FAD recoveries, development of FAD registries and equivalents (e.g. FAD structure ID marking), FAD loss, FAD watch programs, implementation timelines, identifying cost-effective, standardized options for the remote reporting of buoy deactivations and reactivations, and definitions for FAD design. This work should continue to ensure that data from both convention areas are not duplicated.

2. Indicators

- 2.1. That the scientific staff be provided with the historic raw buoy data received by their original users, when available, including both trajectories and acoustic biomass information; where the complete historical series cannot be provided at once, it should at least be supplied progressively over time.
- 2.2. That the scientific staff develop and incorporate, within the annual FAD indicators, metrics that distinguish among the different categories of biodegradable FADs, in order to monitor the transition to biodegradable materials under Resolution C-23-04 and support evaluation of its implementation.
- 2.3. That the scientific staff develop and incorporate indicators of the bycatch-to-tuna catch ratio disaggregated by type of fishing-strategy cluster, in order to characterize how different fishing behaviors affect bycatch relative to target catch and to help identify mitigation opportunities.

2.4. That the scientific staff explore the possibility of incorporating “aircraft/helicopter” as one of the location methods recorded by observers, in order to help monitor fishing behavior and practices on FADs. 2.5. That data transmission reporting be expanded beyond the Antigua Convention Area for buoys deployed in the EPO, so that geofencing at 150°W (or any other operational boundary) does not obscure the analysis of active buoys after leaving the IATTC. This can also be considered as part of measures to retrieve FADs.
3. On biodegradability: materials, certifications, standards and trials
3.1. The impact on the marine environment of sinking biodegradable FADs on non-sensitive seabeds should be examined. 3.2. Consider improving the design of FADs, including biodegradable ones, to reduce their structural impact on the seabed of sensitive coastal ecosystems. 3.3. Continue trials of biodegradable FAD materials and report the results to the FADWG, so that the costs of testing and certifying materials can be optimized through coordination and the avoidance of duplicative testing 3.4. Support the creation and update of a catalogue of successful and failed FAD materials for integration into the IATTC databases. The catalogue should be developed initially through a voluntary pilot program open to interested fishing companies and organizations. 3.5. Continue conducting skippers’ workshops on biodegradable FADs and other topics of interest, harmonizing and coordinating with IATTC efforts, to the extent possible, other relevant skippers’ workshops in the region to ensure a consistent regional approach. 3.6. CPCs and other entities be encouraged to engage in further BioFADs trials comparing Category I and II FADs to Category III or IV FADs. Trials should aim to achieve adequate CPUE and continue to deploy FADs in broad regions of the EPO in a random fashion adequate to making scientific comparisons.
4. On the implementation of Resolution C-23-04
4.1. That a dedicated technical group be established to assist in the interpretation and consistent implementation of Resolution C-23-04 on the design and biodegradability of FADs. This group would clarify outstanding technical questions—including definitions, the qualification of materials as non-entangling and biodegradable, the application of the Annex I specifications, and verification against recognized standards—to support harmonized compliance across CPC fleets.
5. On FAD marking.

- 5.1. The FADWG does not recommend a specific marking method beyond the current buoy-based system at this stage. The objectives of FAD marking should first be clarified as well as the minimum number of FADs that need to be marked to produce accurate scientific estimates of where stranded FADs originate, and prioritizing biodegradable options for marking FADs, as they will determine the appropriate technical approach.
- 5.2. That the IATTC scientific staff engage with the ICES-FAO WGFTFB fishing gear marking Topic Group to exchange knowledge on gear marking methods, registries, and other relevant elements.
- 5.3. Explore the possibility of carrying forward a pilot on a physical marking system to identify different categories of biodegradable FADs (C-23-04). Any such marking should itself be made of biodegradable materials to remain consistent with the objectives of the bio-FAD transition.

6. On FAD loss, retrievals and recovery programs

- 6.1.** To continue to work on the development of indicators to enable monitoring of the performance of FAD retrieval programs to recommend improvements.
- 6.2.** The Commission consider urging flag CPCs not already doing so to participate in efforts similar to “FAD Watch” and other FAD recovery programs and collaborative initiatives to minimize the impact of FADs on sensitive habitats.
- 6.3.** The Commission amend paragraph 6 of Resolution C-25-07 to replace the reference to "the FAD sighting form from Appendix 3 of FAD-09-INF-A" with “the FAD Sighting and Recovery Form Version developed and harmonized collaboratively by IATTC and SPC staff” (e.g., SAC-17-10b – Appendix A).
- 6.4.** Explore supporting FAD recovery programs at sea, including self-funding models and potential incentives for companies that participate.
- 6.5.** That the staff continue evaluating incentive mechanisms and systems to promote recovery of lost, abandoned, or beached FADs, and report options to FADWG

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 4th MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON ECOSYSTEM AND BYCATCH AS ENDORSED BY THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

PRELIMINARY NOTE	
(a)	The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) reviewed the report of the 4 TH meeting of the Working Group on Ecosystem and Bycatch (EBWG), including its recommendations. Although SAC generally supported the recommendations, several suggestions and clarifications were raised and as a result SAC did not endorse the recommendations of EBWG4 as its entirety. Instead, SAC took all the recommendations from EBWG4, made necessary modifications, and adopted them as part of SAC17 recommendations.
(b)	The SAC noted that the Terms of Reference of EBWG (Resolution C-22-06) states that EBWG recommendations may be submitted to the Commission directly, whenever they could not be considered and/or endorsed by the SAC or upon the request of the Commission itself (para. 3ii).
(c)	Given that all the EBWG4 recommendations were reproduced as part of SAC recommendations with necessary modifications, the SAC agreed that it is not necessary for the original EBWG4 recommendations to be submitted to the Commission directly. The original EBWG4 report including its recommendations can be found in its meeting website.
(d)	The SAC also noted that there is ambiguity in paragraph 3 of C-22-06 and, in fact, there were differences of opinion in its interpretation and implementation. The Commission may wish to clarify the intention of the said paragraph if deemed necessary.
(e)	One member did not agree with the interpretation that the EBWG could not send forward recommendations to the Commission in the present circumstance and considers provision to allow direct forwarding to Commission in event that SAC does not reach consensus on endorsement because one or members do not join consensus.
The EBWG recommends:	
1. Ecosystems	
The Commission staff collaborate and engage with the International Seabed Authority (ISA) to better understand the effects of deep-sea mining on tuna and tuna-like fisheries in the IATTC convention area and eventually to identify measures that the Commission might consider taking to mitigate them, and to report back to the EBWG and the SAC.	
2. Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM)	

(a) That the implementation of the Ecocard workplan continue to be supported, noting the criteria established for delineation of ecoregions and indicator selection in EB-04-03. (b) To consider measures or actions to have improved bycatch data coverage and quality across all IATTC fisheries, including small-scale and longline fleets, with a view at strengthening regional Ecocard development and supporting the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM). (c) That the IATTC monitor and assess the potential impact of fisheries targeting mesopelagic species and other ecologically important “hub” species in the IATTC fisheries. Such monitoring would enable the Commission to evaluate potential ecosystem consequences at an early stage and ensure that any future fishery developments are considered within an ecosystem-approach to fisheries management framework.
3. Reporting Templates and Requirements
That work be undertaken intersessionally to develop a new, standardized shark reporting template that facilitates that all CPCs provide necessary scientific data on all shark measures for adoption by the Commission in 2026. The EBWG has taken note of the importance of CPCs facilitating compliance regarding data that should be provided and that the COR follows up on these obligations
4. Shark Research Plan
(a) To support the proposed shark research plan outlined in document SAC-17-09 to advance shark conservation and management in the EPO. (b) Funds be allocated or obtained for the shark assessment and sampling efforts proposed in Tier 2 in document SAC-17-09 to produce a silky shark stock assessment. The IATTC Scientific Staff is encouraged to continue collaborating with CPCs, industry, universities, NGOs, and other bodies to fund and execute the proposed study. (c) To support allocating or obtaining funding for the development of a conceptual model for hammerhead sharks, similar to the one described in Talwar et al. (2025) for silky sharks, which will serve as the foundation for a Close Kin Mark Recapture (CKMR) assessment for hammerhead sharks (see unfunded project F.2.b in document SAC-17 INF-E)..
5. Mobulids

That studies analyzing individual vessel-specific fishing strategies continue and be further refined, as these offer a promising avenue for identifying practices that reduce the bycatch of vulnerable species.
6. Seabird Mitigation Research
(a) That the IATTC Staff-proposed seabird mitigation reporting template be considered. (b) Convening an intersessional meeting of the EBWG to review current seabird mitigation measures and related matters in greater depth, with a goal to develop an effective seabird conservation and management measure. (c) Encourage CPCs to undertake feasibility and performance studies regarding the technical standards for mitigation measures in Table 1 (C-11-02), such as the effectiveness of different towing objects of tori lines, based on their specific operational conditions, and present the results to the EBWG and SAC for consideration. (d) That the technical information for towed objects, required to ensure the effectiveness of the tori line, be further clarified (e) That the IATTC Scientific Staff collaborate on and support additional research of seabird bycatch mitigation measures for artisanal longline fisheries, such as the NISURI system (EBWG4, see presentation 8.v.).
7. Best Handling and Release Practices (BHRP) Implementation
(a) CPCs are encouraged to collaborate with IATTC Staff to undertake feasibility and performance studies regarding the use of Velcro and harnesses, utilizing IATTC Staff-developed protocols. (b) That the finalized IATTC Best Handling and Release Practices (BHRPs) for sharks be discussed for inclusion in the guidelines (see resolution C-25-08, paragraph 12). (c) That the IATTC Staff link to existing educational resources on the IATTC website while IATTC-specific materials are under development. (d) That the IATTC Staff collaborate with CPCs and utilize existing resources to develop and disseminate simplified BHRP educational materials, such as illustrated infographics with minimum text for on-vessel reference and educational videos. (e) That the Commission consider authorizing that a portion of the Special Capacity Development Fund (Resolution C-14-03) be allocated to finance the development of additional educational toolboxes on BHRPs that do not already exist.

