

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

93TH MEETING

La Jolla, California (USA)

24, 27-30 August 2018

DOCUMENT IATTC-93-03

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NINTH SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY
COMMITTEE MEETING

The ninth meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) makes the following recommendations to the Commission:

1. **Pacific bluefin tuna.** The SAC notes that fishing mortality on young Pacific bluefin tuna (age-0 to age has been reduced, and that reaching the first rebuilding target is likely ($\geq 98\%$) if current fishing and environmental conditions continue. However, the SAC also notes that the Pacific bluefin tuna stock remains depleted (3.3% of SSB0), and the preliminary assessment results indicate that, even though there are no target or limit reference points adopted, the stock is likely in an overfished condition and overfishing is likely occurring. Therefore, the SAC recommends that the Commission take note of the current status of Pacific bluefin tuna, the different impacts of harvesting small and large bluefin, and of the increased risks of not achieving the rebuilding targets, if the current resolution (C-16-08) is modified to increase current catch limits.
2. **South Pacific albacore.** Recent assessments of south Pacific albacore, which are conducted by SPC, have not considered the fisheries data in all of the EPO, and there are no plans to include these data in the upcoming 2018 assessment. Thus, the eastern part of the stock will remain effectively un- assessed. The SAC recommends that the IATTC staff work with SPC to ensure that the entire South Pacific be included in future assessments.
3. **Strategic Science Plan.** The SAC recognizes the importance and welcomes the presentation of the first draft of the Strategic Science Plan, and requests the scientific staff to send the detailed Plan to the CPCs to receive their feedback before being presented to the Commission in 2018.
4. **Bigeye growth.** The SAC recommends that a joint IATTC-WCPFC workshop of experts be convened to analyze methodologies of age and growth determination of tunas, with priority to bigeye tuna.
5. **Tagging program.** The SAC notes that a well-designed, large-scale tagging program is essential to both developing a fully-integrated assessment model for skipjack tuna and improving the bigeye tuna assessment model. Therefore, the SAC supports the development of such a tagging program and recommends that funding be provided for this project.
6. Present at the next meeting of the SAC an analysis of the relationship on the depth of purse-seine nets versus the levels of catch of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tunas.
7. That resources be provided to extend the **electronic monitoring pilot** project to vessels of all capacity classes.
8. Maintain training activities for captains on the handling of **bycatches** on board to ensure their return to the sea alive as far as possible.
9. **Longline fleet.** CPCs should provide an annual report to the IATTC Secretariat, with a list of their longline vessels that have fished in the EPO in the previous year.

10. **Longline abundance indices.** The SAC notes that the primary abundance indices for the yellowfin and bigeye tuna assessments are currently based on data from the Japanese longline fleet. However, Japanese longline effort in the EPO has decreased substantially, from about 101 million hooks in 2003 to about 31 million hooks in 2016, and is now a minor component (<20%) of reported longline effort in the EPO. Therefore, in order to improve the abundance indices, the SAC recommends that CPCs with large-scale longline fleets: 1) share the operational-level data with the IATTC through an appropriate way; and/or 2) collaborate with IATTC staff and other CPCs with large-scale longline fleets to develop improved abundance indices.

11. **Scientists-managers dialogue.** In order to support the establishment of harvest strategies, including an MSE process, the SAC recommends that the Commission create a dedicated working group to facilitate dialogue among scientists, managers, and other stakeholders.

12. **National reports.** The SAC recommends that the CPCs present their national reports to the SAC following the format adopted by the SAC in 2014. CPCs are urged to prepare these reports to be presented annually to the SAC.

13. **Publication of SAC/WG documents:** while noting a clear improvement, the SAC reiterates its previous recommendation that meeting documents (in particular stock assessments) are posted at the IATTC website three weeks in advance of the start of the meetings, and the recommendations regarding tunas two weeks in advance.