

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

98TH MEETING

(by videoconference)

23 – 27 August 2021

DOCUMENT IATTC-98 INF-C

USING LIMITS ON THE NUMBER OF SETS TO MAINTAIN THE *STATUS QUO* (2017-2019) OF THE TROPICAL TUNA FISHERY IN THE EASTERN PACIFIC OCEAN: SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

SUMMARY

Two types of set limit options will be considered at the 98th Meeting of the IATTC to maintain the *status quo* conditions of the tropical tuna fishery in EPO within the period of 2022-2024. The first option is described in proposal C-5 (Japan) and follows the staff's recommended operational rule to extend the temporal closure of the purse seine fishery, only for floating object (OBJ) and unassociated schools (NOA) sets, when the number of OBJ sets exceeds the *status quo* level (average total number of OBJ sets during 2017-2019). This option has the advantage of automatically estimating and adopting the number of extra closure days needed to offset for any breaching of the *status quo*. This option will allow the staff to remain focused on the [original work plan](#) and improve the stock assessments and risk analysis for the tropical tuna during the management cycle of 2022-2024. The second option is described in proposal C-2 (Ecuador, option 2). This proposal consists of a penalty scheme to provide CPCs with the incentive not to exceed their *status quo* number of OBJ sets. The staff would have to evaluate if the *status quo* has been breached and provide recommendations for additional measures, if needed, on a yearly basis.

AUTOMATIC ADJUSTMENT OF THE TEMPORAL CLOSURE

Summary of proposals (C-5 Japan, staff's recommended operational rule)

- **Rationale:** some CPCs have expressed concerns regarding the operationalization and monitoring of set limits in real time. To address these concerns, the staff developed an operational rule to convert any excess levels of OBJ sets, relative to the *status quo* levels, into extra days of the purse seine closure in the following year.
- **Period:** 2022-2024.
- **Action:** If the total number of OBJ sets in the previous year exceeds the yearly average number of OBJ sets during the *status quo* period (2017-2019), apply an extended closure using the staff's proposed operational rule described in [Document SAC-12-08](#).
- **Vessel class and set types included:** The extended closure applies to all purse-seine sets on OBJ and NOA, except for the vessels that made mostly NOA sets.

Stock assessment workplan

- The evaluation of the effectiveness of any set limit measure relative to the 2017-2019 *status quo* fishing mortality conditions requires estimates of fishing mortality within the years in 2022-2024.
- **No update assessments are needed for bigeye (BET):** A positive, statistically significant relationship has been established between fishing mortality and the number of OBJ sets ([Document FAD-05 IND-D](#)). Therefore, the number of OBJ sets can be monitored to determine if $F_{status\ quo}$ has been exceeded and no update assessments are needed for this purpose. This will allow the staff to remain focused on the [original work plan](#) to improve the stock assessments and risk analysis for the tropical tuna.
- **Update assessments for skipjack (SKJ):**

- In the case that the measure applies to all purse-seine sets on OBJ and NOA, except for those vessels that made mostly all NOA sets (C-5 Japan and staff's recommendation), the staff will be able to maintain the interim Productivity Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) rationale to evaluate stock status for skipjack until the benchmark tagging stock assessment is completed in 2023 (see [Document IATC-98 INF-E](#)).
- If the measure applies to OBJ sets only, then the PSA rationale between SKJ and BET will be broken and an alternative form to evaluate SKJ stock status will be needed until the 2023 benchmark tagging assessment is available (see Document [IATTC-98 INF-F](#)).
- **Benchmark assessments:** Benchmark assessments for bigeye and yellowfin remain scheduled for 2024 as previously planned; a benchmark tagging assessment for skipjack has been moved forward to 2023 (see [Document IATC-98 INF-E](#) and [IATTC-98 INF-F](#)).

A PENALTY SCHEME TO AVOID BREACHING THE *STATUS QUO*

Summary of proposals (C-3 Ecuador, option 2)

- **Rationale:** Some CPCs may not be willing to commit to a pre-arranged agreement (operational rule) defining the number of extra days to be added to the purse-seine closure in case that the *status quo* is exceeded within the management cycle of 2022-2024 (e.g. via the staff's proposed operational rule described in [Document SAC-12-08](#)). As an alternative, a penalty scheme could be adopted as an incentive not to exceed the *status quo*. For example, penalizing a CPC with an extra fixed number of closure days in the following years when its *status quo* number of sets on FADs is exceeded.
- **Period:** 2022-2024.
- **Action:**
 - Establish an annual overall limit on OBJ sets: the total number of OBJ sets made by Class-6 vessels during 2018.
 - CPCs to receive an allocation of the overall limit of OBJ sets corresponding to its average proportion relative to the total number of sets during 2017-2019, adjusted by the overall set limit.
 - **Penalty of 10 additional days of closure:** In case that a CPC exceeds its assigned set limit during any year within the 2022-2024 period, a penalty of 10 additional closure days will apply in the following year to all vessels of that CPC that fish on OBJ.
 - **Staff's yearly evaluation if the *status quo* has been exceeded:** From 2023 to 2025, the staff will evaluate if the cumulative effect of the 10-day penalty applied to CPCs has prevented the 2017-2019 *status quo* to be exceeded. A relationship has been established between fishing mortality and the number of sets. Therefore, the number of sets can be monitored to determine if $F_{status\ quo}$ has been exceeded and no update assessments for bigeye are needed for this purpose (staff's interpretation). This will allow the staff to remain focused on the [original work plan](#) to improve the stock assessments and risk analysis for the tropical tuna.
 - In the case that the *status quo* conditions are exceeded, the staff may propose to the Commission a new number of penalty days.
 - **Update assessments for skipjack:** Since the measure applies to OBJ sets only, then the PSA rationale will be broken and an alternative form to evaluate the stock status of skipjack will be needed (see Document [IATTC-98 INF-F](#)).