

March 21, 2017

ATTN: Heads of Delegation to IOTC, IATTC, ICCAT and WCPFC

Dear Delegates,

This letter is submitted on behalf of the undersigned companies, non-governmental organizations and fishing industry associations, all of whom recognise that the sustainability of tuna stocks is integral to businesses and livelihoods, as well as the health of the marine environment.

Our companies represent major seafood buyers that source seafood products from a diverse, international supply network. Our non-governmental organizations work in more than 100 countries and engage suppliers and provide advice to retailers, buyers and food service sectors regarding improvements in tuna sustainability. Our fishing industry associations represent a variety of gear types, including purse seine, longline, troll, pole and line and handline vessels active in tuna fisheries worldwide.

Your government serves as an important leader as a member of one or more of the four regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) charged with managing the world's tropical tuna fisheries throughout their range. We are writing to bring to your attention our views on the development of harvest strategies and the need for strengthened monitoring, control and surveillance tools, such as 100% observer coverage for purse seine vessels in those RFMOs that do not yet require it and at-sea transshipment activities and monitoring and management of fish aggregating devices (FADs) – pressing issues that we believe are fundamental to sustainable fisheries management - and those that necessitate immediate action by all tuna RFMOs.

We recognize that certain tuna RFMOs have made some initial progress in recent years to develop harvest strategies, including through the establishment of interim target and limit reference points, management objectives, rebuilding time frames for overfished stocks, and conducting management strategy evaluations. In addition, we observe that some RFMOs, such as the IATTC and WCPFC, already have 100% observer coverage for large scale purse seine vessels. All four tuna RFMOs require at least 5% observer coverage on longline and other types of vessels, and some RFMOs are actively developing standards for electronic reporting and monitoring. Finally, we note that all tuna RFMOs collect some data on FADs and have had working groups consider data needs and management options.

However, we wish to underscore that while this initial progress is positive, we urge accelerated action at this year's RFMO meetings to:

- Develop precautionary harvest strategies, including specific timelines to adopt target reference points, harvest control rules and the other elements of a harvest strategy approach that ensures sustainable fisheries for all tuna stocks;
- Adopt a 100% observer coverage requirement for purse seine vessels, where it is not already required, and of at sea- transshipment activities and require the use of the best available observer safety equipment, communications and procedures;
- Increase compliance with the mandatory 5% longline observer coverage rates by identifying and sanctioning non-compliance, and adopt a level of coverage that would reduce uncertainty and provide better estimates of bycatch, such as a minimum of 20% which has been recommended by the scientific committees of IATTC and ICCAT;
- Adopt standards for electronic reporting and electronic monitoring for all major gear types to enable the implementation of this technology to support robust decision making;
- Adopt effective measures for the use of non-entangling FAD designs as a precautionary measure to minimize the entanglement of sharks and other non-target species, and support research on biodegradable materials and the eventual transition to their use in FADs in order to mitigate marine debris; and
- Urgently develop science-based recommendations for the management of FADs, including how to integrate FAD based information into stock assessments to reduce uncertainties.

We request that your government, as a member of one or more of the tuna RFMOs, take active steps to ensure significant progress on these issues at each of the relevant RFMO meetings in 2017, as a matter of priority.

Sincerely,



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*David A. Wiedenfeld*



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*Niklaus Wild*



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*Niklaus Wild*



*H. P. Factor*





*N. Schreiber*



Coop Italia

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(Austria)



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*RF Wessott*



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THUNNUS OVERSEAS GROUP



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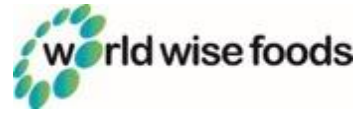
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WOOLWORTHS

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