

OUTCOMES OF THE 23rd SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 17 JUNE 2021

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 11th Working Party on Neritic Tunas (WPNT11) of the recommendations arising from the 23rd Session of the IOTC Scientific Committee (SC) held from 7 – 11 December 2020, specifically relating to the work of the WPNT.

BACKGROUND

At the 23rd Session of the SC, the SC noted and considered the recommendations made by the WPNT in 2020 that included requests for CPCs to improve data collection and reporting, recommendation for developing mechanisms to improve scientific advice and for funds made available to capacity building activities, or data compliance and support missions.

IOTC code	English name	Scientific name
LOT	Longtail tuna	<i>Thunnus tonggol</i>
FRI	Frigate tuna	<i>Auxis thazard</i>
BLT	Bullet tuna	<i>Auxis rochei</i>
KAW	Kawakawa	<i>Euthynnus affinis</i>
COM	Narrow-barred Spanish mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus commerson</i>
GUT	Indo-Pacific king mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus guttatus</i>

Based on the recommendations arising from the WPNT10, the SC23 adopted a set of recommendations, provided in [Appendix A](#) of this paper.

The recommendations contained in [Appendix A](#) were provided to the Commission for consideration at its 25th Session which was held in June 2021.

In addition, the SC23 reviewed and endorsed a Program of Work (2021–25) for the WPNT, including a revised stock assessment schedule, as detailed in [Appendix B](#) and [Appendix C](#). A separate paper (IOTC–2021–WPNT11–08) will outline the review and development process for a Program of Work for the WPNT for the next five years.

DISCUSSION

In addition to the recommendations outlined in [Appendix A](#), [Appendix B](#) and [Appendix C](#), the SC made several other comments relevant to the WPNT, which participants are asked to consider:

Report of the 10th Session of the Working Party on Neritic Tunas (WPNT09)

(Para. 41) The SC **NOTED** the report of the 10th Session of the Working Party on Neritic Tunas (IOTC–2020–WPNT10–R), including the consolidated list of recommendations provided as an appendix to the report. The meeting was attended by 43 participants (cf. 18 in 2019). No MPF funding was provided as the meeting was held online (cf. 6 in 2019).

(Para. 42) The SC **NOTED** the importance of these neritic tuna species in the structure and functioning of the marine ecosystems as well as exploited stocks for several fisheries, particularly to developing coastal nations in the Indian Ocean. The SC **EXPRESSED** its concern that assessments can still not be carried out for several species due to the quality of data available.

(Para. 43) The SC **NOTED** that catch limits for species that have not been assessed (Bullet and Frigate tunas and Indo-Pacific King Mackerel) are based on reference years corresponding to peak catches for species that have been

assessed (Longtail tuna, Narrow-barred Spanish Mackerel and Kawakawa). These reference years may no longer be applicable and therefore alternate means of providing catch advice should be investigated such as empirical harvest control rules.

(Para. 44) The SC **NOTED** that in the absence of any more detailed information, the SC should consider proposing MSY as a guidance on the catch limits for these species where it is available.

Executive summaries for neritic tuna species

The SC also adopted revised Executive Summaries for each of the neritic tuna species that can be found as appendices to the SC23 report, and which can be downloaded from the IOTC website in English and French:

English: <http://iotc.org/science/scientific-committee>

French: <https://iotc.org/fr/science/comité-scientifique>

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the WPNT:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2021–WPNT11–03 which outlined the main outcomes of the 23rd Session of the Scientific Committee (SC23), specifically related to the work of the WPNT.
- 2) **CONSIDER** how best to progress these issues at the present meeting.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consolidated set of recommendations of the 23rd Session of the Scientific Committee to the Commission, relevant to the Working Party on Neritic Tunas.

Appendix B: Schedule of stock assessments for the WPNT (2021–25).

APPENDIX A

CONSOLIDATED SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 22nd SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE (7-11 December 2020) TO THE COMMISSION RELEVANT TO THE WORKING PARTY ON NERITIC TUNAS

Extract of the Report of the 23rd Session of the Scientific Committee

STATUS OF TUNA AND TUNA-LIKE RESOURCES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Tuna and seerfish – Neritic species

SC23.03 (para. 132) The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission note the management advice developed for each neritic tuna (and mackerel) species under the IOTC mandate, as provided in the Executive Summary for each species, and the combined Kobe plot for the three species assigned a stock status in 2020 (Fig. 2):

- Bullet tuna (*Auxis rochei*) – [Appendix 17](#)
- Frigate tuna (*Auxis thazard*) – [Appendix 18](#)
- Kawakawa (*Euthynnus affinis*) – [Appendix 19](#)
- Longtail tuna (*Thunnus tonggol*) – [Appendix 20](#)
- Indo-Pacific king mackerel (*Scomberomorus guttatus*) – [Appendix 21](#)
- Narrow-barred Spanish mackerel (*Scomberomorus commerson*) – [Appendix 22](#)

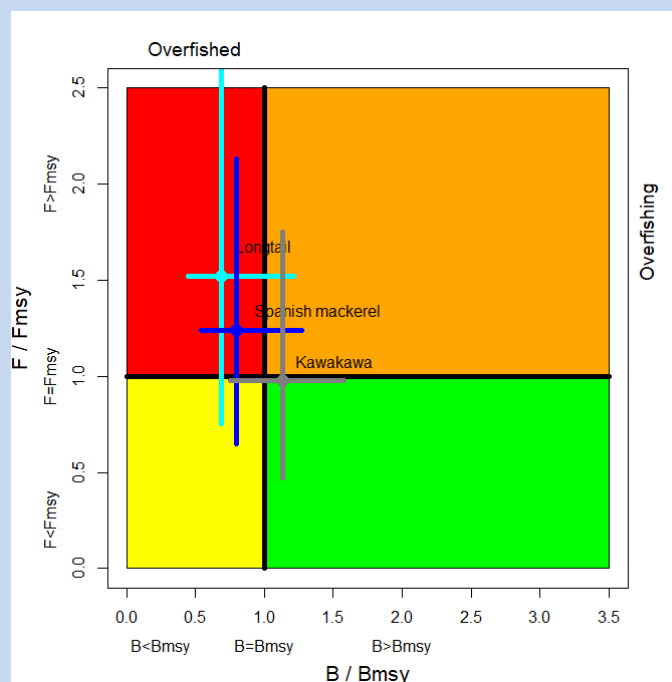


Fig. 2. Combined Kobe plot for longtail tuna, narrow-barred Spanish mackerel and kawakawa, showing the estimates of stock size (B) and current fishing mortality (F) in 2018 (assessment conducted in 2020) in relation to optimal spawning stock size and optimal fishing mortality. Cross bars illustrate the range of uncertainty from the model runs.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMISSION, TO SPECIFIC CPCs AND/OR OTHER BODIES

SUMMARY DISCUSSION OF MATTERS COMMON TO WORKING PARTIES (CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES – STOCK ASSESSMENT COURSE; CONNECTING SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT, ETC.)

Invited Expert(s) at the WP meetings

SC23.15 (para. 114) Given the importance of external independent review for working party meetings, the SC **RECOMMENDED** the Commission continues to allocate sufficient budget for invited scientific experts to

be regularly invited to scientific working party meetings.

Meeting participation fund

- SC23.16 (para. 116) The SC reiterated its **RECOMMENDATION** that the IOTC Rules of Procedure (2014), for the administration of the Meeting Participation Fund be modified so that applications are due not later than 60 days, and that the full Draft paper be submitted no later than 45 days before the start of the relevant meeting. The aim is to allow the Selection Panel to review the full paper rather than just the abstract, and provide guidance on areas for improvement, as well as the suitability of the application to receive funding using the IOTC MPF. The earlier submission dates would also assist with visa application procedures for candidates.

IOTC species identification guides: Tuna and tuna-like species

- SC23.17 (para. 117) The SC reiterated its **RECOMMENDATION** that the Commission allocates budget towards continuing the translation and printing of the IOTC species ID guides so that hard copies of the identification cards can continue to be printed as many CPCs scientific observers, both on board and port, still do not have smart phone technology/hardware access and need to have hard copies on board.

Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the SC and its subsidiary bodies

- SC23.18 (para. 118) The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission note and endorse the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons for the SC and its subsidiary bodies for the coming years, as provided in [Appendix 7](#).

PROGRAM OF WORK AND SCHEDULE OF WORKING PARTY AND SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Consultants

- SC23.19 (para. 163) Noting the highly beneficial and relevant work done by IOTC stock assessment consultants in previous years, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that the engagement of consultants be continued for each coming year based on the Program of Work. Consultants will be hired to supplement the skill set available within the IOTC Secretariat and CPCs.

APPENDIX B

ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE FOR IOTC SPECIES AND SPECIES OF INTEREST FROM 2021–2025

Extract of the Report of the 23rd Session of the Scientific Committee

(IOTC-2020-SC23-R; Appendix 36, PAGE 203)

The SC **ADOPTED** a revised assessment schedule, ecological risk assessment and other core projects for 2021–25, for the tuna and tuna-like species under the IOTC mandate, as well as the current list of key shark species of interest, as outlined in Appendix 36 (IOTC-2020-SC23-R, Para. 161).

<i>Working Party on Neritic Tunas</i>					
Species	2021*	2022**	2023*	2024**	2025*
Bullet tuna	Assessment	Data preparation	Data preparation	Assessment	Data preparation
Frigate tuna	Assessment	Data preparation	Data preparation	Assessment	Data preparation
Indo-Pacific king mackerel	Assessment	Data preparation	Data preparation	Assessment	Data preparation
Kawakawa	Data preparation	Data preparation	Assessment	Data preparation	Data preparation
Longtail tuna	Data preparation	Data preparation	Assessment	Data preparation	Data preparation
Narrow-barred Spanish mackerel	Data preparation	Data preparation	Assessment	Data preparation	Data preparation

* Including data-limited stock assessment methods;

** Including species-specific catches, CPUE, biological information and size distribution as well as identification of data gaps and discussion of improvements to the assessments (stock structure);

Note: the assessment schedule may be changed dependent on the annual review of fishery indicators, or SC and Commission requests