
OUTCOMES OF THE 23rd SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 06 OCTOBER 2021

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 12th Working Party on Methods (WPM12) of the recommendations arising from the 23rd Session of the Scientific Committee (SC23) held in December 2020, specifically relating to the work of the WPM.

BACKGROUND

At the 23rd Session of the SC, the SC noted and considered the recommendations made by the WPM in 2020 that included updates on the MSE process for various IOTC species.

Based on the recommendations arising from the WPM11, the SC23 adopted a set of recommendations, provided in [Appendix A](#) of this paper.

The recommendations contained in [Appendix A](#) was provided to the Commission for consideration at its 25th Session held in June 2021. A separate paper, IOTC–2021–WPM12–04 addresses the responses and actions of the Commission from its 25th session.

In addition, the SC23 reviewed and endorsed a Program of Work for the WPM, including a revised MSE schedule, as detailed in [Appendix B](#) and [Appendix C](#) respectively. A separate paper (IOTC–2021–WPM12–07) will outline the review and development process for a *Program of Work* for the WPM for the next five years.

DISCUSSION

In addition to the recommendations outlined in [Appendix A](#), [Appendix B](#) and [Appendix C](#), the following extracts from the SC23 Report (IOTC–2020–SC23–R) are provided here for the consideration and action of the WPM11:

7.5 Report of the 11th Session of the Working Party on Methods (WPM11)

88. The SC **noted** the report of the 11th Session of the Working Party on Methods (IOTC–2020–WPM11–R), including the consolidated list of recommendations provided as an appendix to the report. The meeting was attended by 55 participants (cf. 37 in 2019). No MPF funding was provided as the meeting was held online (cf. 7 in 2019).
89. The SC **NOTED** the progress made in Management Strategy Evaluation exercises for IOTC species in 2020. The SC **NOTED** that unfortunately the TCMP meeting in 2020 had been cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore no discussions on the progress had been undertaken in that forum.
90. The SC **NOTED** that the 9th workshop on MSE of IOTC WPM Scientists had also been cancelled, delaying the technical progress on MSE in 2020. The SC **NOTED** that the expert MSE workshops are very constructive and effective in discussing technical matters and the outcomes of the meetings are reflected in the MSE development. As such the SC **STRESSED** the importance of this meeting taking place in 2021.

7.5.1 Management Strategy Evaluation Progress

91. The SC **NOTED** that in 2020 the Commission stated that:

*The Commission **SUPPORTED** the ongoing Management Strategy Evaluation work and **NOTED** the revised workplan endorsed by the Scientific Committee in Appendix 6 of the 2019 Scientific Committee Report. The Commission particularly **NOTED** the importance of the work to specify the skipjack tuna harvest control rule as a full Management Procedure (MP) as well as the need to finalise the MP development for yellowfin tuna to provide sound management advice for this species.*

92. The SC **NOTED** that this schedule of work is once again included as [Appendix 6](#) to this report to clarify the revised MSE schedule.

7.5.2 Albacore MSE

93. The SC **NOTED** that the project was initiated in 2020 to further develop the ALB MSE. Work has started on updating the simulation platform to the new model structure including a proposal for a new OM grid. The SC **NOTED** the WPM has endorsed a new set of reference OM grid to capture the range of uncertainty identified.

7.5.3 Skipjack tuna MSE

94. The SC **NOTED** an MSE expert has been contracted in 2020 to undertake review of the skipjack tuna harvest control rule with a view to review and potentially revise the HCR as required by Res 16/02. The work conducted so far included (1) developing an Operating Model based on Stock Synthesis III; (2) developing a simple stock assessment model that can be fitted to simulated data from the skipjack stock assessment grid, and (3) Simulation test model-based Management Procedures. The aim of the review is to develop a full skipjack MP.

7.5.4 Yellowfin tuna MSE

95. The SC **NOTED** the attempt to conduct a full assessment of the yellowfin tuna has not been achieved this year and the current yellowfin OM is based on the 2018 yellowfin assessment. The SC further **NOTED** that YFT OM development explored a range of modelling issues including retrospective pattern, high F, and revised treatment of recruitment and CPUE auto-correlation.

7.5.5 Bigeye tuna MSE

96. The SC **NOTED** that bigeye tuna OMs were updated from the 2019 stock assessment, and a Pella-Tomlinson Random Effects surplus production model that includes process and observation errors was developed as a candidate for the MP.

7.5.6 Swordfish MSE

97. The SC **NOTED** that limited progress had been made on the Swordfish MSE. The modeller working on the MSE was currently not available. As such, very little progress had been made since the 2019 SC meeting. The work is expected to resume in late 2020, early 2021.

7.5.7 Stock status guide and other business

98. The SC were made aware that:

*The Commission **NOTED** the ongoing work of the Ad Hoc Reference Point Working Group and REQUESTED that the outcomes of this group are presented to the TCMP for its consideration in 2021.*

99. The SC **NOTED** the discussions on whether, for any given species with a harvest strategy, the OM requires reconditioning when there is an updated assessment. The SC **AGREED** that there is a need for deciding on when to stop the reconditioning of the OMs with new assessments. The SC **NOTED** that although there has been some general practice in assisting the decision (e.g. the new assessment biomass estimates fall outside the range of the OM) a more generic set of criteria and guidance is required. Such guidance will help expedite the progress of the MSE process towards focusing on the testing of candidate MPs. The SC further **NOTED** the issue is also related to determining when and whether any exceptional circumstances has occurred.

RECOMMENDATION

That the WPM:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2021–WPM12–03 which outlined the main outcomes of the 23rd Session of the Scientific Committee, specifically related to the work of the WPM.
- 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 Methods.

Appendix B: Schedule of MSE for the WPM (2021–2025).

APPENDIX A

CONSOLIDATED SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 23RD SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE (7 – 11 DECEMBER 2020) TO THE COMMISSION RELEVANT TO THE WORKING PARTY ON METHODS

*Extract of the Report of the 23rd Session of the Scientific Committee
(IOTC–2020–SC23–R; Appendix 38, Pages 207–211)*

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMISSION

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.

REVIEW OF THE DRAFT, AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE 23RD SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

SC23.20 (para. 168) The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission consider the consolidated set of recommendations arising from SC23, provided at [Appendix 38](#).

APPENDIX B**SCHEDULE OF STOCK ASSESSMENTS FOR IOTC SPECIES AND SPECIES OF INTEREST FROM 2021–2025, AND FOR OTHER WORKING PARTY PRIORITIES**

The SC **NOTED** that the WPM has selected five species for MSE (albacore, yellowfin, bigeye, skipjack and swordfish).

At the 21st session of the Commission:

Schedule of work for the development of management procedures for key species in the IOTC Area

(Para. 58): The Commission noted the presentation by Australia on the schedule of work for the development of management procedures for key species in the IOTC Area (IOTC-2017-S21-14). The schedule provides information on when and how the Commission ought to be engaged in the management procedures process, and was developed with inputs from CPC's, relevant IOTC working parties, the Scientific Committee, and uses, as its basis, the work plan of the Scientific Committee.

*(Para. 59): The Commission **ENDORSED** the schedule that was revised during S21 (provided in Appendix 9), noting it is a 'living document' to guide the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies in the future. The Commission also **REQUESTED** that a budget for implementation of the schedule be reviewed by the SCAF in 2018.*

The WPM11 should note however that at the 22nd session of the SC, a revised schedule was presented

*(Para 87) The SC **NOTED** paper IOTC-2019-SC22-15 which provided an updated schedule of work for the development of management procedures for key species in the IOTC Area. The SC **AGREED** to the schedule of work (Appendix 6), noting it is a living document to provide an indicative timeframe to guide the IOTC MSE development and may subject to change. The SC **ENCOURAGED** the schedule to be resubmitted to TCMP and Commission for final endorsement.*

The revised schedule is available in IOTC-2020-WPM11-04 as Appendix B: Schedule of Work for TCMP (Schedule of work for the development of management procedures for key species in the IOTC area) although it is still pending approval by the Commission.

In 2021, the TCMP further discussed this issue:

Workplan

(Para 85) The TCMP **NOTED** that there have been delays in the MSE development and that this will require a revision to the timetable for the development of Management Procedures. The TCMP **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission endorse a request that a revised timetable to be developed by CPCs with assistance from the SC and WPM chairs along with the Secretariat and this could be presented to the SC in 2021.