



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

## COMMON OCEANS PROGRAM



PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND BIODIVERSITY  
IN THE OCEAN AREAS BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTION

# Tuna Project II - UPDATE

**IOTC 29**

**13 - 17 April 2025**

**La Réunion, France**

The Project “Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction” is a continuation of an earlier project (2014-2019) of the same name. The Project seeks to achieve responsible, efficient, and sustainable tuna production and biodiversity conservation in the face of a changing environment.

This is a GEF- funded project, implemented by FAO, with activities carried out by the partners of the project - including intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the private sector.



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INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

### WHAT WE DO

#### Improve tuna fisheries management

Ensure all major tuna stocks are fished at sustainable levels using harvest strategies.

Operationalize ecosystem approach to fisheries management in regional fisheries management organizations.

#### Improve compliance and tackle IUU fishing

Training in monitoring, control and surveillance for more efficient enforcement of regulations. Improve compliance with fishing regulations by promoting innovative tools like electronic monitoring and traceability systems.

#### Improve environmental performance

Decrease bycatch with better monitoring and promoting best practices in bycatch mitigation and alternative gear.

Reduce impacts by advocating for ocean-friendly fishing devices.



## IMPROVE TUNA FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

### Develop capacity to implement harvest strategies

Project partner, The Ocean Foundation (TOF), supports capacity building in Harvest Strategies/Management Strategy Evaluation in tuna RFMOs through technical support, developing e-learning courses and interactive tools, hosting quarterly webinars with simultaneous interpretation, and producing supporting outreach materials.

- ✓ More information can be found here [Harvest Strategies | 21st century fisheries management](#).

### Operationalize EAFM, including climate change, in tuna RFMOs

Project partner, the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), in collaboration with the FAO, supports the operationalization of Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) in tuna RFMOs. The emphasis is on how to formalize the implementation of EAFM, building on the outputs from workshops held in 2016 and 2019.

Three workshops are planned to bring together stakeholders from the tuna RFMOs, including managers and scientists, to discuss approaches to address the integration of ecosystem science and climate change impacts into decision-making processes. The outputs from these workshops will be disseminated broadly.

- ✓ *The first EAFM workshop of the second phase of the Project was organized from 21–23 January 2025 at FAO headquarters in Rome. Read web story here: [Developing a blueprint for ecosystem-based management in tuna fisheries](#).*

Project partners, Conservation International, The Pacific Community (SPC), and Mercator Oceans International will extend the SEAPODYM model to simulate spatiotemporal dynamics of tuna populations under the influence of both fishing and environmental pressures in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The goal of this work is to project climate change impacts on tuna distribution and provide this information on to decision-makers for appropriate action.

This work builds on work carried out by SPC in the Pacific Ocean to model the effects of climate change on tuna fisheries which showed dramatic shifts eastward in the distribution of tuna stocks in the Pacific, hence predicting changes in the availability of the resources for some Pacific Island countries.

- ✓ A Steering Committee comprising tuna RFMO and project staff has been established to guide this work. Engagement with ICCAT and IOTC via the respective Chairs of the Scientific Committees and subcommittees is envisioned.

### Convene joint tuna RFMO working groups

Project partner, Secretariat of the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), together with FAO, will organize three joint tuna RFMO Working Groups on topics of global relevance for managers and scientists. A steering group was formed comprising officials from the tuna RFMOs, as well as other relevant stakeholders. The proposed themes include bycatch, management strategy evaluation (MSE), and stock assessment.

- ✓ *The first working group meeting focused on bycatch and was held from 27-29 January 2025 at FAO headquarters in Rome. Read web story here: [Reducing bycatch in tuna fisheries](#).*



## IMPROVE COMPLIANCE AND TACKLE IUU FISHING

### Support establishing electronic monitoring (EM) and traceability systems

As of December 2024, four tuna RFMOs (IOTC, ICCAT, IATTC, and WCFPC) have adopted minimum standards for Electronic Monitoring and are poised to remedy the longstanding problem of subpar observer coverage in some fleets.

Project partner, International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), will convene two workshops involving relevant stakeholders from all tuna RFMOs to identify opportunities for EM standard technical harmonization (1st workshop) and implementation aspects (2nd workshop), to support the further development of regional standards for [electronic monitoring systems](#) to improve fisheries sustainability:

- ✓ The first workshop on EM minimum standards harmonization was held from 10-12 December 2024 in San Sebastian, Spain.

Project partner, the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), with support from the New Zealand which has mandated EM systems on southern bluefin vessels since 2004, is providing capacity development to member countries on the use of EM systems with a special emphasis on monitoring the use of seabird bycatch mitigation measures:

- ✓ A first national innovation workshop was held in South Africa in September 2024.
- ✓ An EM workshop took place in Indonesia in February 2025 where officials developed a draft roadmap for implementing EM systems nationally. Follow-up activities to support implementation are being planned.
- ✓ An EM workshop is scheduled to take place in South Korea in March 2025.

Project partner, World Wildlife Fund (WWF-US), published a [Technical Source Document on the Governance of Electronic Monitoring \(EM\) Systems for Industrial Tuna Fisheries](#). The findings were presented to stakeholders as an EM toolkit with two resources:

- ✓ [Implementing Electronic Monitoring Governance for RFMO managed fisheries](#)
- ✓ [The Governance of Electronic Monitoring Systems for Industrial Tuna Fisheries](#)





## Tuna project

### Develop human capacity for fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS)

Project partner, the International Monitoring Control and Surveillance Network (IMCS Network), continues to convene the [Tuna Compliance Network \(TCN\)](#), which brings together compliance officers from the five tuna RFMOs, to review monitoring processes for compliance in tuna RFMOs and to identify drivers of compliance rates and measures to improve compliance.

- ✓ [A comparative review of compliance assessment in the Tuna RFMOs](#) was developed to support contracting parties to better meet their obligations and improve the performance of RFMOs.
- ✓ The fifth meeting of the Tuna Compliance Network (TCN) was held in Seychelles from 20-23 June 2024.
- ✓ *The sixth Tuna Compliance Network meeting is scheduled for 9-13 June 2025 in Tokyo, Japan.*

## IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

### Pilot more sustainable fishing gears and enhance value chains

The Indian Ocean gillnet fishery produces between 34-40 percent of tuna catches in the region, and the catch share of this gear type continues to increase. These gillnet fisheries produce concerning levels of vulnerable species bycatch, with sharks, turtles and cetaceans being the most affected taxa.

Project Partner, the International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF), is working towards improving the socio-economic performance of one-by-one tuna fisheries. IPNLF is working with fishing communities in Kawa (Indonesia), Pemba Island (Tanzania) and Maseirah Island (Oman) on several pilots, including adoption of innovative technologies to support traceability, handling improvements to increase the value of catch, and a pilot on the economic and environmental benefits of converting gillnet fisheries to one-by-one tuna fishing techniques.

- ✓ In August 2024, IPNLF delivered training workshops on quality tuna handling in Kenya targeting more than 100 fishers from Lamu town and Kiwayu Island. The workshop was followed by an at-sea trial aboard two local boats.
- ✓ An instructional field guide for maintaining the highest quality landed product and maximizing the value of the tuna was developed: [Best practice-handling for handline and rod-and-reel fisheries](#)

Project partner, WWF Pakistan, will carry out a pilot trial conversion of 10 fishing vessels from gillnet to longline gear in the Pakistani gillnet fleet. To demonstrate the commercial benefits of gear conversion a business case will be developed.

### Quantify, mitigate and reduce bycatch

Project partner, the Secretariat of the Convention for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), is providing enhanced education, outreach, and capacity building for the monitoring and implementation of seabird bycatch mitigation measures. An [infographic providing at-a-glance visual representations of technical, safety and practical aspects of seabird bycatch mitigation regulations and recommendations](#) was produced for fishers.

- ✓ The 2016 global seabird risk assessment is being updated to further support mitigation efforts.
- ✓ Fishing industry-directed education and train-the-trainer workshops were held in South Africa (July 2024), Chinese Taipei (October 2024), and Indonesia (February 2025) together with BirdLife International (BLI) and ISSF.
- ✓ National observer and compliance officer capacity building and train-the-trainer workshops were held in Chinese Taipei (October 2024), South Africa (December 2024), and Indonesia (February 2024)





## Tuna project

Project partner, the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), continues efforts in bycatch mitigation, including a) develop and promote biodegradable/non-entangling FADs; b) holding skippers' workshops to adopt best practices in bycatch mitigation; c) develop acoustic technology to support selective fishing and bycatch avoidance, and d) produced and disseminated policy paper, [ISSF 2024-04: Inputs for Comprehensive Bycatch Management Strategy Evaluation in Tuna Fisheries](#).

Project partner, the International Whaling Commission (IWC), started work in the Indian and Western Pacific Ocean basins to (i) assess cetacean bycatch and identify data gaps, (ii) build regional capacity and raise awareness, and (iii) collaboratively develop recommendations to address cetacean bycatch. A Cooperation Agreement was established with the IOTC. Two technical reports on Awareness Raising on cetacean bycatch in the Indian and Pacific Oceans were produced. IWC is developing a draft tender for a consultancy to address knowledge gaps and bycatch assessments in the Indian Ocean and collaborating with stakeholders in the western Pacific to organize a workshop to raise awareness on cetacean bycatch and other activities.

### **Assess the impact of marine waste from fishing gear**

Project partner, Secretariat of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), will carry out three surveys to estimate abandoned, lost, and otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) in priority fisheries in the Indian Ocean. This work builds on two surveys carried out in Pakistan and the Seychelles under the first phase of the Tuna Project.

The work on ALDFG will contribute to the [FAO Global ALDFG Survey programme](#) and address data gaps identified by the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection Working Group 43 ([GESAMP WG 43](#)), providing estimations of the quantity and causes of ALDFG.

- ✓ The first survey was administered and covered 45% of Chinese longline fishing vessels operating in the Indian Ocean. A total of 42 questionnaires were completed, 18 were from Mauritius and 24 from ports in 3 different provinces of China.
- ✓ Two additional surveys will be conducted and a detailed report describing the methodology, analysis undertaken and conclusions will be published and presented.

## **GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

Gender mainstreaming is “a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated”.

The Tuna project and its partners are actively working to improve gender equality and support a balanced participation and equitable benefits across genders within the fisheries sector. This work is being led by the FAO Fisheries Gender Team and will follow a structured three-phase approach, including a stocktaking study to analyze gender roles and gender-based constraints, followed by development of a toolkit to support capacity development efforts, coupled with awareness-raising efforts.

The validation phase of the stocktaking study is expected to be completed in March 2025.

# Successes from Common Oceans Tuna Project phase I

From 2014 until 2021, in collaboration with the five tuna RFMOs and partners, including intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the private sector - the Common Oceans Tuna Project phase I supported:

- Enhanced international cooperation to improve the management and environmental performance of tuna fisheries.
- Better decision making in fisheries management and the adoption of harvest strategies for tuna stocks.
- Strengthening MCS systems and showcased the benefits of electronic monitoring and reporting systems.
- Reducing bycatch in tuna fisheries.

These achievements paved the way for future cooperation and knowledge sharing to ensure a positive and lasting impact on the world's tuna fisheries

The Common Oceans Program is a global partnership funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), promoting sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) with a particular focus on tuna and deep-sea fisheries, the Sargasso Sea and cross-sectoral cooperation. Led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Program brings together the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), regional fisheries management organizations, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, civil society and academia.

## COMMON OCEANS | Tuna project

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IN COLLABORATION WITH: Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), BirdLife International (BLI), Conservation International (CI), INFOPESCA, International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF/ISSA), International MCS Network (IMCSN), International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF), International Whaling Commission (IWC), Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Pacific Community (SPC), Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), PEW Charitable Trusts, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), The Ocean Foundation (TOF), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).



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## FACTS & FIGURES

25 partners

5 Tuna RFMOs

\$15M  
Project budget

\$200M  
Project co-financing



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