

PROGRESS MADE ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF WPTT26

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 18 MAY 2025

PURPOSE

To provide participants at the 27th WPTT(DP) with an update on the progress made in implementing those recommendations from the previous Working Party on Tropical Tunas (WPTT) meeting which were endorsed by the Scientific Committee (SC), and to provide alternative recommendations for the consideration and potential endorsement by participants as appropriate given any progress.

BACKGROUND

At the 26th Session of the WPTT, participants agreed on a series of actions to be taken by participants, CPCs, and the IOTC Secretariat on a range of issues. The subsequent table developed and agreed to by the WPTT was provided to the SC for its endorsement at its December 2024 meeting.

DISCUSSION

The Rules of Procedure of the Scientific Committee include the following seven core tasks, which are to be supported by the various Working Parties.

- a) recommend policies and procedures for the collection, processing, dissemination and analysis of fishery data;
- b) facilitate the exchange and critical review among scientists of information on research and operation of fisheries of relevance to the Commission;
- c) develop and coordinate cooperative research programmes involving Members of the Commission in support of fisheries management;
- d) assess and report to the Commission on the status of stocks of relevance to the Commission and the likely effects of further fishing and of different fishing patterns and intensities;
- e) formulate and report to the sub-commission, as appropriate, on recommendations concerning conservation, fisheries management and research, including consensus, majority and minority views;
- f) consider any matter referred to by the Commission;
- g) carry out other technical activities of relevance to the Commission.

Recalling that the SC, at its 16th Session adopted a set of reporting terminology SC16.07 (para. 23), which was subsequently endorsed by the Commission at its 18th Session in 2014 (S18, para 10), to further improve the clarity of information sharing from, and among the science bodies, the following two term levels should be noted when interpreting the Reports and [Appendix I](#) to this paper:

Level 1: From a subsidiary body of the Commission to the next level in the structure of the Commission:

RECOMMENDED, RECOMMENDATION: Any conclusion or request for an action to be undertaken, from a subsidiary body of the Commission (Committee or Working Party), which is to be formally provided to the next level in the structure of the Commission for its consideration/endorsement (e.g. from a Working Party to the Scientific Committee; from a Committee to the Commission). The intention is that the higher body will consider the recommended action for endorsement under its own mandate, if the subsidiary body does not already have the required mandate. Ideally this should be task specific and contain a timeframe for completion.

Level 2: From a subsidiary body of the Commission to a CPC, the IOTC Secretariat, or other body (not the Commission) to carry out a specified task:

REQUESTED: This term should only be used by a subsidiary body of the Commission if it does not wish to have the request formally adopted/endorsed by the next level in the structure of the Commission. For example, if a Committee

wishes to seek additional input from a CPC on a particular topic, but does not wish to formalise the request beyond the mandate of the Committee, it may request that a set action be undertaken. Ideally this should be task specific and contain a timeframe for the completion.

In addition to the Recommendations endorsed by the SC at its 27th Session, the SC also made several requests which, although are not passed to the Commission for its endorsement, are considered actions which the Scientific Committee has the mandate to issue. The revised recommendations are contained in [Appendix I](#) for the consideration and potential endorsement by the WPTT27(DP).

RECOMMENDATION

That the WPTT:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2025–WPTT27(DP)–06 which detailed the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the WPTT26, and the requests of the 27th Session of the Scientific Committee (SC27), taking into consideration the recommendations from the SC and decisions of the Commission;
- 2) **AGREE** to consider and revise as necessary, the recommendations, and for these to be combined with any new recommendations arising from the WPTT27(DP), noting that these will be provided to the SC for its endorsement.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Progress made on the Recommendations and Requests of WPTT26

APPENDIX I

Progress made on the recommendations of WPTT26

WPTT26 Rec. No.		SC27 Rec. No.	Recommendation adopted by the SC27 (& the Special Session of the SC on 26th February 2025)
<p>WPTT26.01 (para 37):</p> <p>WPTT26.02 (para 95):</p> <p>WPTT26.03 (para 99):</p> <p>WPTT26.04 (para 121):</p> <p>WPTT26.05 (para 124):</p>	<p>Yellowfin tuna Stock Assessment</p> <p>The WPTT RECOMMENDED that the work towards the implementation of the Indian Ocean Digital Atlas (IODA) be continued to consolidate the proposal before the Scientific Committee.</p> <p>The WPTT NOTED that the proposal to adjust MSY-based/benchmark reference points using recent average recruitment is new and has major implications for the yellowfin tuna assessment and other IOTC assessments. Therefore, the WPTT RECOMMENDED that the SC discuss this approach thoroughly and if appropriate, request the development of further guidance on this from the WPM.</p> <p>After in-depth discussions on different aspects of the modelling work, the WPTT AGREED and RECOMMENDED additional research and actions to further refine future yellowfin stock assessments. These will also address the suggestions and requests raised during the detailed discussions. These recommended action points are listed in Appendix IX</p> <p>The WPTT ADOPTED the stock status advice developed for yellowfin tuna as provided in the draft resource stock status summary and REQUESTED that the IOTC Secretariat update the draft stock status summary for yellowfin tuna with the latest 2023 catch data (if necessary), and RECOMMENDED for the summary to be provided to the SC as part of the draft Executive Summary, for its consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yellowfin tuna (<i>Thunnus albacares</i>) – Appendix VI <p>The WPTT NOTED that the K2SM short-term projections of 3 years for management advice is challenging to implement given the 2-year lag between stock assessment data and the ability for the Commission to implement any management actions. As such, the WPTT RECOMMENDED</p>	<p>SC27.15 (para. 104)</p> <p>SC27.16 (para. 108)</p>	<p>Yellowfin tuna stock assessment</p> <p>The SC NOTED that the Joint CPUE workshop had limited participation and was conducted over a short time period. However, it was noted that the workshop format and standardisation methods have remained the same for a long time. The SC NOTED the importance of the Joint Longline CPUE Index as a primary input for the stock assessments of several key IOTC species, including yellowfin, bigeye and albacore tunas, and AGREED on the need to ensure a transparent, inclusive, and replicable process in the development of the Joint CPUE Index using operational data. The SC therefore, RECOMMENDED that the Commission investigate options to allow independent scientists or Secretariat stock assessment experts to provide inputs and advice through attending meetings of the Joint Longline CPUE standardisation group. The SC RECALLED that during the 2015–2019 period analysis was conducted by a consultant by participating in the meetings.</p> <p>Given the uncertainty associated with the new CPUE, the SC RECOMMENDED that the Commission set a TAC for 2026 only, of no more than the estimated median MSY, which is comparable to the average catch of the last five years, as a precautionary measure to allow time for further investigation (i.e. resolving of uncertainty associated with the new CPUE) and development of advice for 2027 onwards.</p>

WPTT26 Rec. No.		SC27 Rec. No.	Recommendation adopted by the SC27 (& the Special Session of the SC on 26th February 2025)
	that the Scientific Committee consider amending the standard short-term reporting period when using the K2SM, for example, from 3 to 5 years		
WPTT26.06 (para 131):	<p>Bigeye tuna Management Procedure</p> <p>The WPTT NOTED that exceptional circumstances of adopted MPs need to be considered at both species WPs and WPM. The WPTT also NOTED that there is benefit in species WPs being held before WPM to allow discussions on issues such as new information on biology before the consideration of potential modelling implications and as such RECOMMENDED that in the future the WPM be held after the WPTT.</p>	SC27.20 (para. 122)	<p>Bigeye tuna MP (Resolution 22/03)</p> <p>The SC NOTED that a standardised CPUE index based on the agreed methodology (as per Resolution 22/03) was not yet available to run the Bigeye Tuna MP, but needs to be available in time for the Scientific Committee to review (as required by Resolution 22/03). However, a member of the joint CPUE group responsible for producing the index indicated that logistically (due to the need to have a physical workshop to share the data) it would not be possible to provide the CPUE index in time for SC, but that it might be possible to provide following a meeting of the group in February 2025. The SC DISCUSSED options for ensuring that the WPM is able to review and participate in the running of the MP. Following this discussion, the SC RECOMMENDED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the joint CPUE working group produce a BET CPUE index, as per the requirements/specifications of Williams et al (2022), at its meeting in early February 2025, and provide this for the WPM(MSE)Taskforce. the WPM(MSE) Taskforce meet online on 24-25 February 2025 with one day to review and run the BET MP and one day to consider progress on the Albacore Tuna MSE. the Scientific Committee convene a special session, online (for two hours) on 26 February 2025, to review and if appropriate endorse the BET MP run and its associated BET TAC outcomes.
(para 136):	<p>The WPTT NOTED that a joint CPUE standardisation was presented to the WPTT Data Prep meeting in June 2024. However, it was not derived using the prescribed approach required for running the MP. The WPM agreed that this is considered an exceptional circumstance and hence, that it would not be appropriate to run the MP using this CPUE index. The WPTT NOTED the way forward proposed by the WPM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Joint CPUE team reconvene early Feb 2025 to complete CPUE standardisation using the prescribed approach. The WPM (MSE Task Force) will run the MP and present results to an ad-hoc SC session in Feb 2025. IOTC–2024–WPM15–09 will then be updated with details from running the MP and present to TCMP in April 2025 	SSC01.01 (para. 15)	<p>The SC NOTED that the application of the bigeye management procedure generated an unconstrained estimated TAC of 175,005 t which is more than 15% higher than the TAC set for 2024 and 2025. The SC NOTED that by applying the maximum 15% change in the TAC as per Resolution 22/03, the MP recommended a TAC of 92,670 t. per year for 2026-2028. Therefore, the SC RECOMMENDED that</p>

WPTT26 Rec. No.		SC27 Rec. No.	Recommendation adopted by the SC27 (& the Special Session of the SC on 26th February 2025)
		SSC01.02 (para. 21)	the Commission adopt the TAC advice for Bigeye tuna of 92,670 t resulting from the MP NOTING that the CPUE standardisation conducted by the joint CPUE working group differs slightly from the specified methods in the MP (Williams et al., 2022), the SC RECOMMENDED that a fixed set of CPUE standardization code is developed for each MP to ensure that it is developed following the specifications of the MP.
WPTT26.07 (para 161):	Update on MSE for Tropical Tunas The WPTT NOTED that the yellowfin MSE has been inactive for several years (awaiting revision of the stock assessment) and RECOMMENDED that the SC resume the process.		
WPTT26.08 (para 164):	FAD related topics The WPTT NOTED that after the recent resolutions on FAD were adopted, CPCs seem less inclined to submit papers to WGFAD. This led to the shortening of WGFAD06 to a single day and the cancellation of WGFAD07 this year due to a shortage of papers. Therefore, the WPTT RECOMMENDED that the SC advise the Commission to schedule only one WGFAD meeting in 2025. The WPTT also suggests that this meeting should take place before the WPEB, as FAD issues are relevant to WPEB, to allow the findings to be reported to both WPEB and WPTT.	SC27.17 (para. 116)	Update on the WGFAD06 The SC NOTED that after the recent resolutions on FAD were adopted, CPCs seem less inclined to submit papers to WGFAD. This led to the shortening of WGFAD06 to a single day and the cancellation of WGFAD07 this year due to a shortage of papers. Therefore, the SC RECOMMENDED that the Commission schedule only one WGFAD meeting in 2025. The SC also suggests that this meeting should take place before the WPEB, as FAD issues are relevant to WPEB, to allow the findings to be reported to both WPEB and WPTT
WPTT26.09 (para 169):	Revision of the WPTT Program of Work (2025–2029) The WPTT RECOMMENDED that the SC consider and endorse the WPTT Program of Work (2025–2029), as provided in Appendix VII.	(para 193) (para 197)	Program of Work (2023–2027) and assessment schedule The SC NOTED IOTC–2024–SC27–08 which provided the SC with a proposed Program of Work for each of its working parties, including prioritisation of the elements requested by each working party. The SC NOTED the proposed Program of Work and priorities for the SC and each of the working parties and AGREED to a consolidated Program of

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			Work as outlined in Appendix 36a-g and in accordance with the IOTC Strategic Science Plan 2020-2024. The Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of each working party will ensure that the efforts of their respective working parties are focused on the core areas contained within the appendix, taking into account any new research priorities identified by the Commission at its next Session
WPTT26.10 (para 172)	<p><i>Date and place of the 27th and 28th Sessions of the WPTT</i></p> <p>The Secretariat will continue to liaise with CPCs to determine their interest in hosting these meetings in the future. The WPTT RECOMMENDED the SC consider late October 2025 as a preferred time period to hold the WPTT27 meeting in 2025. It was also AGREED that the WPTT Assessment meeting should continue to be held back-to-back with the WPM.</p>	(para 204)	The SC REQUESTED that the schedule of Working Party and Scientific Committee meetings for 2024 and 2025 provided at Appendix 37 be communicated by the IOTC SC Chairperson to the Commission for its endorsement.
WPTT24.08 (para. 218)	<p><i>Review of the draft, and adoption of the Report of the 26rd Session of the WPTT</i></p> <p>The WPTT RECOMMENDED that the Scientific Committee consider the consolidated set of recommendations arising from WPTT26, provided at Appendix VIII, as well as the management advice provided in the draft resource stock status summary for each of the three tropical tuna species under the IOTC mandate, and the combined Kobe plot for the three species assigned a stock status in 2023 (Figure 1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bigeye tuna (<i>Thunnus obesus</i>) – Appendix IV ○ Skipjack tuna (<i>Katsuwonus pelamis</i>) – Appendix V ○ Yellowfin tuna (<i>Thunnus albacares</i>) – Appendix VI 	SC27.01 (para. 175)	<p><i>Tuna – Highly migratory species</i></p> <p>The SC RECOMMENDED that the Commission note the management advice developed for each tropical and temperate tuna species as provided in the Executive Summary for each species, and the combined Kobe plot for the four species assigned a stock status in 2024 (Fig. 1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Albacore (<i>Thunnus alalunga</i>) – Appendix 8 ○ Bigeye tuna (<i>Thunnus obesus</i>) – Appendix 9 ○ Skipjack tuna (<i>Katsuwonus pelamis</i>) – Appendix 10 ○ Yellowfin tuna (<i>Thunnus albacares</i>) – Appendix 11

WPTT26 Report	WPTT26 REQUESTS	Update/Progress
Para. 13	<p>Data available at the Secretariat</p> <p>The WPTT REQUESTED that the WPDCS explore optimal methods for estimating accuracy and precision in retained catches (e.g., via subsampling techniques). It was NOTED that some variability can be incorporated into stock assessment models (using a standard deviation), and alternative catch time series may be used in sensitivity analyses. The WPTT further RECALLED that time series of retained catches serve as the primary input for data-limited models used for neritic species under IOTC management.</p>	<p>Update: Ongoing. The WPDCS in 2024 has reviewed catch re-estimation by Oman and Indonesia.</p>
Para. 56	<p>CPUE discussions</p> <p>The WPTT ACKNOWLEDGED that discussions could not resolve the observed differences between the current and previous indices. The WPTT was informed that the standardisation methods have remained essentially the same. However, considering the importance of the longline CPUE in driving the key model results for the yellowfin assessment, the WPTT REQUESTED the modellers to dedicate further efforts to understanding the factors causing these significant differences between analyses. Additionally, the rationale for including Region 1a data requires more</p>	<p>Update: Complete. The CPUEWG has convened a workshop in April 2025 to review the Joint CPUE of yellowfin tuna</p>
Para. 58	<p>Size data discussions</p> <p>The WPTT AGREED on the need to validate the assumption of size composition of the handline fishery of Oman and REQUESTED Oman to develop and implement a system of data collection and reporting of size-frequency data to the Secretariat to improve the assessment model and comply with IOTC Res. 15/02.</p>	<p>Update: CPC to complete.</p>
Para. 65	<p>The WPTT NOTED that the size distribution of purse seine free schools in region 2 (FS2) shows a more pronounced mode for younger fish (30–70 cm) compared to adults (>90 cm). This is unexpected, as free schools are typically composed primarily of larger yellowfin tuna. One possible explanation is that in the Mozambique Channel, especially in the southern areas, there are many mixed schools found near floating natural objects (which may not have been seen by the vessel). In these schools, small yellowfin tuna mix with skipjack and bigeye tuna, which might be reported as free schools. Similar free mixed schools composed of juvenile yellowfin tuna, skipjack tuna and juvenile bigeye tuna have also been observed in the Cape Lopez area of the Atlantic Ocean. The WPTT NOTED that there might also be some sampling bias, even though it was noted that fish under 10 kg are sampled separately. Nevertheless, the WPTT REQUESTED the EU scientists to look at this issue more closely.</p>	<p>Update: CPC to complete.</p>

Para. 99	<p><i>Projection and reference points</i></p> <p>After in-depth discussions on different aspects of the modelling work, the WPTT AGREED and RECOMMENDED additional research and actions to further refine future yellowfin stock assessment. These will also address the suggestions and requests raised during the detailed discussions. These recommended action points are listed in Appendix IX</p>	Update: Ongoing.
Para 122	<p><i>Development of Management Advice for Yellowfin tuna</i></p> <p>The WPTT AGREED to perform the final projections of the assessment model grid, with future recruitment assuming the average recruitment from the recent 20 years (2002 – 2021), and to calculate the K2SM statistics using the scaled benchmark reference points (with a scalar based on the average recruitment from the recent 20 years 2002 – 2021). A request to also run additional projections using the long-term recruitment (on the basis that recent higher estimated recruitment was not guaranteed in future) was discussed but ultimately not agreed by WPTT.</p>	Update: Completed.
Para 168	<p><i>Revision of the WPTT Program of Work (2025–2029)</i></p> <p>The WPTT REQUESTED that the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the WPTT, in consultation with the IOTC Secretariat, develop Terms of Reference (TOR) for each of the high priority projects that are yet to be funded, for circulation to potential funding sources.</p>	Update: Completed.