

OUTCOMES OF THE 27th SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 06 OCTOBER 2025

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 16th Working Party on Methods (WPM16) of the recommendations arising from the 27th Session of the Scientific Committee (SC27) held in December 2024, specifically relating to the work of the WPM.

BACKGROUND

At the 27th Session of the SC, the SC noted and considered the recommendations made by the WPM in 2024 that included updates on the MSE process for various IOTC species.

Based on the recommendations arising from the WPM15, the SC27 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 29th Session held in April 2025. A separate paper, IOTC–2025–WPM16–04 addresses the responses and actions of the Commission from its 29th session.

A separate paper (IOTC–2025–WPM16–07) 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](#) and [Appendix B](#), the following extracts from the SC27 Report (IOTC–2024–SC27–R) are provided here for the consideration and action of the WPM16:

Report of the 15th Session of the Working Party on Methods (WPM15)

118. The SC **NOTED** the report of the 15th Session of the Working Party on Methods ([IOTC–2024–WPM15–R](#)), including the consolidated list of recommendations provided as an appendix to the report. The meeting was attended by 46 participants (cf. 42 in 2023). Two participants received funding through the MPF funding.
119. The SC **NOTED** that the WPM has reviewed and discussed a wide range of issues including MSE progress for IOTC species, multi-species MSE, exceptional circumstances considerations for bigeye tuna MSE, joint CPUE standardisations, and close kin mark recapture design study for yellowfin tuna.

7.5.1 Update on TCMP08

120. The SC **NOTED** document [IOTC-2023-TCMP08-R](#) on the Report of the 8th session of the TCMP held in May 2024. The SC **NOTED** that the WPM had taken into consideration the recommendations and discussions held at that meeting.

7.5.2 Management Strategy Evaluation Progress

121. The SC **NOTED** that the work of albacore is not mature enough that would require a TCMP in February and, therefore, **RECOMMENDED** that an extra TCMP meeting in February 2025 is not organized.

7.5.3 Bigeye tuna MP (Resolution 22/03)

122. 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:

- 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.

7.5.4 Skipjack tuna MP (Resolution 24/07)

123. The SC **NOTED** that the skipjack tuna MP will be applied during the WPM for endorsement by the SC in 2025. The SC further **NOTED** that the MP requires the Maldivian pole-and-line and EU FAD CPUEs, including 2024 data, using the methodology assumed in the Management Strategy Evaluation.

7.5.5 Swordfish tuna MP (Resolution 24/08)

124. The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission implement a TAC for 2026-2028 for swordfish based on the amended and retuned MP1 if the Commission wishes to ensure that it achieves the current objective in Res 24/08 to be in the Kobe green zone with at least 60% probability during 2034-2038 period. This would require a minor amendment to the Target CPUE value in Annex I of Res 24/08 from 0.7125 to 0.75. The SC **NOTED** that should the Commission continue to implement the current MP1, without retuning, it has a lower probability (54%) of being in the Kobe green zone and higher TAC variability, but otherwise similar performance statistics (Table 1 of IOTC–204–WPM15–R). The TAC derived from running SWO MP1 with or without retuning is 30527 t (i.e. the same and therefore not a severe impact) because the max TAC change constrain is reached in both MPs.
125. Irrespective of the MP chosen by the Commission, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission endorse the resultant TAC of 30,527 t for swordfish for 2026-2028.

7.5.7 General MSE issues

126. The SC **ENDORSED** the inclusion of the MSE task force meeting in the schedule of meetings for 2025.
127. The SC **ENDORSED** the WPM's **RECOMMENDATION** that the Commission ensure that the IOTC Secretariat is provided with the necessary resources to manage the curation of relevant documents and code to enable users to re-run assessments and other analyses, **NOTING** that the most important information to be curated would be the input file, executables and control files.

RECOMMENDATION

That the WPM:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2025–WPM16–03 which outlined the main outcomes of the 27th Session of the Scientific Committee, specifically related to the work of the WPM.
- 2) **UPDATE** Appendix B as required.
- 3) **CONSIDER** how best to progress these issues at the present meeting.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consolidated set of recommendations of the 27th Session of the Scientific Committee to the Commission, relevant to the Working Party on Methods.

Appendix B: Schedule of MSE for the WPM (2025–2029).

APPENDIX A

CONSOLIDATED SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 27TH SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE (2 – 6 DECEMBER 2024) TO THE COMMISSION RELEVANT TO THE WORKING PARTY ON METHODS

Extract of the Report of the 26th Session of the Scientific Committee

(IOTC–2024–SC27–R; Appendix 39)

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE 15TH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON METHODS (WPM15)

Management Strategy Evaluation Progress

SC27.19 (para. 121) The SC NOTED that the work of albacore is not mature enough that would require a TCMP in February and, therefore, **RECOMMENDED** that an extra TCMP meeting in February 2025 is not organized.

Bigeye tuna MP (Resolution 22/03)

SC27.20 (para. 122) 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:

- 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.

Swordfish tuna MP (Resolution 24/08)

SC27.21 (para. 124) The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission implement a TAC for 2026-2028 for swordfish based on the amended and retuned MP1 if the Commission wishes to ensure that it achieves the current objective in Res 24/08 to be in the Kobe green zone with at least 60% probability during 2034-2038 period. This would require a minor amendment to the Target CPUE value in Annex I of Res 24/08 from 0.7125 to 0.75. The SC **NOTED** that should the Commission continue to implement the current MP1, without retuning, it has a lower probability (54%) of being in the Kobe green zone and higher TAC variability, but otherwise similar performance statistics (Table 1 of IOTC–204–WPM15–R). The TAC derived from running SWO MP1 with or without retuning is 30527 t (i.e. the same and therefore not a severe impact) because the max TAC change constrain is reached in both MPs.

SC27.22 (para. 125) Irrespective of the MP chosen by the Commission, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission endorse the resultant TAC of 30,527 t for swordfish for 2026-2028.

General MSE issues

SC27.23 (para. 127) The SC **ENDORSED** the WPM's **RECOMMENDATION** that the Commission ensure that the IOTC Secretariat is provided with the necessary resources to manage the curation of relevant documents and code to enable users to re-run assessments and other analyses, NOTING that the most important information to be curated would be the input file, executables and control files.

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

SC27.25 (para. 159) 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.

IOTC species identification guides: Tuna and tuna-like species

SC27.26 (para. 165) 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 CPC scientific observers, both on board and at port need to have hard copies.

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

SC27.27 (para. 170) 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](#).

Other matters

SC27.28 (para. 174) The SC **NOTED** the occasional need of technical workshops, corresponding to a request by the SC or Commission. The SC **RECOMMENDED** that:

- Technical workshops are not to be nested within Working Party meetings
- The terms of reference for such technical workshops should be established ahead of time to clarify their role and decision-making process, including whether they can make direct recommendations to the SC.

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

SC27.29 (para. 199) **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.

Data preparatory meetings and Hybrid meetings

SC27.30 (para. 201) **ACKNOWLEDGING** that holding data preparatory meetings prior to stock assessments is considered to be best practice (as identified by the yellowfin stock assessment external reviewer, the WPTT and the WPDCS) and noting that since 2019 data preparatory meetings were successfully held for the WPTmT, WPTT and WPEB, the SC **AGREED** to continue the practice of having data preparatory meetings in addition to stock assessment meetings for the major IOTC species. The SC **RECOMMENDED** that data preparatory meetings could continue to be held virtually so as not to increase the travel and costs required for the already full IOTC timetable of meetings.

SC27.31 (para. 202) The SC **NOTED** that there had been a few teething problems holding meetings in a hybrid format in 2023 and 2024, especially related to the costs associated with the audio-visual equipment required, as well as the issues associated with ensuring the equipment was suitable to ensure full participation of both those in person as well as those connecting virtually. However, the SC **AGREED** on the utility of facilitating both in-person and virtual participation at future meetings to ensure increased participation and reduce the logistical costs for many CPCs and observers. As such, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that future Scientific Committee meetings continue to be held in a hybrid format, as well as working parties if possible. The SC further **RECOMMENDED** that all presentations at these meetings be made in person to ensure the aforementioned issues did not adversely affect the quality of the advice being provided.

SC27.32 (para. 203) The SC **NOTED** all IOTC working party meetings this year (except the WPDCS and WPSE) were held in Seychelles, as there were no offers to host them. The SC meeting was originally planned in Seychelles but this was not possible due to unavailability of the venue. There has been an increasing reluctance for CPCs to offer to host IOTC scientific working party and SC meetings. This reluctance may be due to budget constraints, as well as the logistical burdens of Hybrid meetings. The SC **NOTED** that there has been a number of issues when hosting meetings in Seychelles (e.g., high cost). The SC **RECOMMENDED** this issue be discussed at the Commission in order to find a way forward.

IOTC Scientific Strategic Research Plan

SC27.33 (para. 208) The SC **AGREED** that the draft updated IOTC Strategic Science Plan 2025–2029 will be distributed to Heads of Delegation from each CPC for comment during early 2025. Thereafter comments will be collated and consolidated and another version sent to CPCs for final review. Pending agreement of CPCs, and noting that the

IOTC Strategic Science Plan would be a dynamic document that would change over time, the SC **RECOMMENDED** that the revised draft of the IOTC Strategic Science Plan 2025–2029 be tabled at the Commission meeting in 2025.

REVIEW OF THE DRAFT, AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE 25TH SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

SC27.34 (para. 214) The SC **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission consider the consolidated set of recommendations arising from SC25, provided at [Appendix 39](#)

