

**Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Year 3 Surveillance Report  
SZLC, CSFC & FZLC Cook Islands EEZ South Pacific Albacore and  
Yellowfin Longline Fishery**

**On behalf of Liancheng Overseas Fishery (Shenzhen) Co. Ltd  
(SZLC), China Southern Fishery Shenzhen Co. Ltd (CSFC) and  
Liancheng Overseas Fishery (FSM) Co. Ltd. (FZLC)**

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## 1 General summary

<b>Fishery name</b>	SZLC, CSFC & FZLC Cook Islands EEZ South Pacific albacore & yellowfin longline		
<b>Unit(s) of assessment</b>	<p><b>Species and stock:</b> UoAs 1, 3, 5: South Pacific albacore (<i>Thunnus alalunga</i>) UoAs 2, 4, 6: Western Central Pacific yellowfin (<i>Thunnus albacares</i>)</p> <p><b>Geographical range:</b> Cook Islands Exclusive Economic Zone (excluding the internal waters and territorial sea of the Cook Islands)</p> <p><b>Method of capture:</b> Longline</p> <p><b>Management System(s):</b> At national level: Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources; At regional level: Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)</p> <p><b>Client group:</b></p> <p>UoAs 1, 2: Liancheng Overseas Fishery (Shenzhen) Co. Ltd (SZLC); China Southern Fishery Shenzhen Co. Ltd (CSFC); and Liancheng Overseas Fishery (FSM) Co. Ltd (FZLC)</p> <p>UoAs 3, 4: C.F Incorporated C/- Cook Islands Trust Corporation Ltd / C.B. Incorporation Ltd. Note: these vessels are operating under CSFC.</p> <p>UoAs 5, 6: Shenzhen Shengang Overseas Industrial Co., Ltd / Rongcheng Ocean Fishery Co., Ltd. Note: these vessels are operating under CSFC.</p>		
<b>Date certified</b>	9th June 2015	<b>Date of expiry</b>	8th June 2020
<b>Surveillance level and type</b>	Surveillance level 6, on-site assessment		
<b>Date of surveillance audit</b>	25, 26 September 2018		
<b>Surveillance stage (tick one)</b>	1st Surveillance		
	2nd Surveillance		
	3rd Surveillance	x	
	4th Surveillance		
	Other (expedited etc)		
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## 2 Background

### 2.1 Overall changes

This report outlines the process and outcome of the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) annual surveillance audit for the SZLC, CSFC & FZLC Cook Islands EEZ South Pacific albacore and yellowfin longline fishery. The fishery is carried out by the vessels listed in Appendix 1, some of which have MSC Chain of Custody certification.

The certified fishery operates in the EEZ of the Cook Islands; a small proportion of trips may include out of zone sets (e.g. in High Seas areas or other EEZs), but these are not included in the Unit of Certification. Note not all vessels listed in Appendix 1 are licensed to fish in the Cook Islands simultaneously and vessels may transfer their charter arrangements with the Cook Islands to other island states or vice versa within a fishing season (also see Section 2.5). At the time of the surveillance audit, there were 43 longliners licensed to fish in the Cook Islands EEZ, down from 57 the previous year.

This fishery was certified by ME Certification (MEC) on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015 with 8 conditions and one recommendation. Following an expedited assessment for scope extension, 2 new conditions were added in relation to yellowfin. The conditions, with their status ahead of the Year 3 surveillance audit, are summarised in Table 1. All recommendations raised are shown in Table 2. Progress against the conditions and recommendations is further discussed in Sections 4.1 and 4.2.

**Table 1. Summary of Assessment Conditions and scoring and status prior to this audit.**

Condition number	Performance indicator (PI)	Condition	Stock (P1)	UoAs	Status at Year 2	PI original score	PI revised score
1	1.1.2	The management system should formally adopt a target reference point for the South Pacific albacore stock which is consistent with maintaining the stock at $B_{MSY}$ or some other measure with similar intent or outcome. This target reference point should be used for management purposes.	Albacore	1, 3, 5	Behind target	75	Not revised
2	1.2.1	The fishery should put in place a regional harvest strategy, incorporating limit and target reference points (management objectives), a harvest control rule and management actions, such that the strategy is responsive to the status of the stock and the elements of the strategy work together to maintain the stock at or around the target level.  The key missing elements of the harvest strategy at present are 1. a target reference point formally adopted by the regional management system, and 2. a well-defined harvest control rule with associated management actions. These issues are also addressed specifically in conditions 1 and 3.	Albacore	1, 3, 5	On target	70	Not revised
3	1.2.2	The fishery must put in place a well-defined regional-level harvest control rule, and associated management actions (in the form of a CMM or another form as appropriate) which together act effectively to reduce exploitation rates as the limit reference point is approached. The selection of the harvest control rule should take into account the main uncertainties regarding the status of the stock or the impact of the fishery (or other uncertainties if considered important).	Albacore	1, 3, 5	Behind target	60	Not revised
4	2.3.1, 2.3.3	The occurrence and outcome of all catches of ETP species by UoA vessels (sharks, sea turtles, seabirds and cetaceans) should be systematically and accurately reported on so that fishery-related mortality on ETP species can be quantitatively determined and the effectiveness of the management strategies can be determined.	All	All	Behind target	75	Not revised

Condition number	Performance indicator (PI)	Condition	Stock (P1)	UoAs	Status at Year 2	PI original score	PI revised score
		Where a need has been identified, the collected data should enable further development of management strategies to ensure that the fishery does not hinder recovery of ETP species.					
5	2.3.2	The client should provide evidence that all Cook Islands regulations on fishery interactions with sea turtles are consistently respected and adhered to by UoA crew so that it can be demonstrated that the fishery does not pose a risk of serious harm to sea turtles, mortality of sea turtles is minimized and the fishery does not hinder recovery of vulnerable sea turtle populations.	All	All	On target	75	Not revised
6	3.1.2	The client must provide evidence that processes at national level are put in place to i) regularly engage with key stakeholders to seek and accept relevant information, and ii) demonstrate that the information obtained from such engagement has been duly considered.	All	All	On target	75	Not revised
7	3.1.4	The client should demonstrate that the subsidies identified by FFA and acknowledged by the client do not lead to perverse incentives that are inconsistent with achieving the outcomes expressed by MSC principles 1 and 2;  Or  Implement a harvest strategy that includes strengthened harvest control rules that are more responsive to increasing effort in the albacore and yellowfin fishery, such that the impact of subsidies is restricted to lowering the operating costs of subsidized fleets, rather than acting as an incentive to increase effort.	All	All	On target	60	Not revised
8	3.2.2	By working with the relevant Cook Islands management agencies, the client should demonstrate i) that decision-making processes at national level respond to serious and other important issues identified in relevant research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation, in a transparent, timely and adaptive manner and take account of the wider implications of decisions and ii) that	All	All	On target	75	Not revised

Condition number	Performance indicator (PI)	Condition	Stock (P1)	UoAs	Status at Year 2	PI original score	PI revised score
		information on fishery performance and management action at national level is available to stakeholders on request, and that explanations are provided for any actions or lack of action associated with findings and relevant recommendations emerging from research, monitoring, evaluation and review activity.					
9	1.2.1	<p>The fishery should put in place a regional harvest strategy, incorporating limit and target reference points (management objectives), a harvest control rule and management actions, such that the strategy is responsive to the status of the stock and the elements of the strategy work together to maintain the stock at or around the target level.</p> <p>The key missing element of the harvest strategy at present is a well-defined harvest control rule with associated management actions. This issue is also addressed specifically in condition 10.</p>	Yellowfin	2, 4, 6	On target	70	Not revised
10	1.2.2	The fishery must put in place a well-defined regional-level harvest control rule, and associated management actions (in the form of a CMM or another form as appropriate) which together act effectively to reduce exploitation rates as the limit reference point is approached. The selection of the harvest control rule should take into account the main uncertainties regarding the status of the stock or the impact of the fishery (or other uncertainties if considered important).	Yellowfin	2, 4, 6	Behind target	60	Not revised

**Table 2. Summary of Assessment Recommendations and status prior to this audit**

Recommendation	Status
<p>The audit team reviewed 2012 and 2013 observer reports and noted frequent infringements against Marpol regulations due to the dumping at sea of plastics, metals, chemicals, and old fishing line. The exact frequency of these types of incidents is unknown and therefore the impact cannot be estimated. While there is no provision in the MSC standard to assess this type of activity against the scoring guideposts, any fishery proclaiming to provide the best environmental choice in seafood (through the MSC logo) should be discouraged from any form of dumping at sea. The team acknowledges that this is a widespread problem across global fisheries; however, it is recommended that incidents of dumping at sea are demonstrably reduced.</p>	Open
<p>The audit team noted some confusion within the MMR regarding the procedure to be followed in the case of contraventions against the Marine Resources (Shark Conservation) Regulations 2012 (i.e. for the Shark Sanctuary) and have made the following recommendation:</p> <p>The formal process for infractions of this kind should be documented and should be presented at the next (year 2) surveillance audit. The audit team will then also verify the outcome of the decision-making process regarding the shark finning incidents mentioned in the Year 1 surveillance report.</p>	Closed at Year 2

The fishery is managed at both the regional level (through the WCPFC, via its Conservation and Management Measures - CMMs) and at national level (through the Cook Islands MMR). The WCPFC is responsible for management of tuna stocks in its area (as agreed by its member countries), while the Cook Islands may also take additional measures to manage fisheries in its EEZ. Since the initial assessment, several new WCPFC CMMs have come into force. These are applicable across the three MSC Principles, and are summarised in Table 3.

One major change for 2018 has been the establishment of 50 nm Marine Protected Area closures around all 15 islands within the Cook Islands EEZ, as stipulated under Part 3, Section 24 of the Marae Moana Act (2017). Approximately 20 % of the EEZ is now closed to commercial fishing and based on VMS data, the closures are being well respected. These closures have apparently led to some fishing effort concentration in certain areas. The MMR has engaged with SPC for technical assistance in conducting a bioeconomic analysis of the effects of the Marine Protected Areas implementation on longline operations. Cooperation is being sought from the client fleet in providing operational and financial data input to the analysis effort.

**Table 3. List of current Conservation and Management Measures and Resolutions of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission relevant to this fishery**

CMM Reference	Title	Change from Year 2 surveillance?	Impact on scoring?
Resolution 2005-03	Resolution on Non-Target Fish Species	No	N/a
2006-04	Conservation and Management Measure for Striped Marlin in the Southwest Pacific	No	N/a
2006-07, 2007-01	Conservation and Management Measure for the Regional Observer Programme	No	N/a
2006-08	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Boarding and Inspection Procedures	No	N/a
2008-03	Conservation and Management of Sea Turtles	No	N/a
Resolution 2008-01	Resolution on Aspirations of SIDS and Territories	No	N/a
2009-03	Conservation and Management Measure for Swordfish	No	N/a
2009-06	Conservation and Management Measure on the Regulation of Trans-shipment	No	N/a
2010-06	Conservation and Management Measure to Establish a List of Vessels Presumed to have carried out Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing activities in the WCPO	No	N/a
2010-07	Conservation and Management Measure for Sharks	No	N/a
2011-04	Conservation and Management Measure for Oceanic Whitetip Sharks	No	N/a
2013-07	Conservation and Management Measure on the special requirements of Small Island Developing States and Territories	No	N/a
2013-08	Conservation and Management Measure for Silky Sharks	No	N/a
2014-05	Conservation and Management Measures for Sharks <i>(This CMM does not replace or prejudice any other existing shark CMM)</i>	No	N/a
2014-06	Conservation and Management Measures to develop and implement a harvest strategy approach for key fisheries and stocks in the WCPO	Yes	Revised harvest strategy workplan issued – see Section 2.2.

CMM Reference	Title	Change from Year 2 surveillance?	Impact on scoring?
2015-02	Conservation and Management Measure for South Pacific Albacore	No	N/a
2015-06	Conservation and Management Measure on target reference point for skipjack tuna	No	N/a
2017-01	Conservation and Management Measure for bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (with Resolution 2017-01 on the Provisional Application of CMM 2017-01)	Yes	No – same outcome as for previous CMMs (e.g. 2016-01, 2015-01).
2017-02	Conservation and Management Measure on minimum standards for Port State Measures	Yes	No
2017-03	Conservation and Management Measure for the protection of WCPFC Regional Observer Programme Observers	Yes	No
2017-04	Conservation and Management Measure on Marine Pollution (effective 1 January 2019)	Yes	No (but has implications for assessment recommendation regarding fleet's garbage management plan implementation – Section 4.2)
2017-05	WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels and Authorisation to Fish	Yes	No
2017-06	Conservation and Management Measure to mitigate the impact of fishing for highly migratory fish stocks on seabirds	Yes	No – see Section 2.3
2017-07	Conservation and Management Measure for Compliance Monitoring Scheme	Yes	No

## 2.2 Principle 1

### 2.2.1 General

In 2017, 745 tonnes of yellowfin were caught by the UoC fleet, compared to the WCPO total of 670,890 t for the same year (i.e. < 0.1 % of the total YFT catch). For south Pacific albacore the 2017 UoC catch was 2,858 t, compared to a WCPO total of 92,291 t (i.e. 3.09 % of the total ALB catch).

For the past year, beginning 1 January 2017, the albacore (and bigeye) fishery has been managed at the national level through a Quota Management System (QMS with a Total Allowable Commercial Catch or TACC), replacing the license cap previously in place. The 2017 albacore quota amounted to 9,698 t (derived from peak landings in 2012); however only ~50 % of the in-zone south Pacific albacore TACC was caught in 2017; it is thought that this is likely more a result of a reduction in the number of boats fishing, as according to MMR staff, albacore CPUE has shown signs of improvement over the past year. Overall, the implementation of the QMS was deemed successful, with no TACC overages to date. At the regional level, CMM 2015-02 continues to be in effect. Although an interim target reference point of 0.56  $SB_{F=0}$  was agreed for this stock at the most recent Commission meeting (WCPFC15), this has yet to be formally incorporated into management.

The Tokelau arrangement for the management of south Pacific albacore had 11 FFA member signatories when it came into force on 14 December 2014. Each member agreed to transitional in-zone limits on catch of albacore. In December 2017, Solomon Islands announced it was pulling out of the Arrangement and is now implementing a longline VDS through its membership with PNA. Apart from Solomon Islands, signatories to the Tokelau Arrangement include: Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, New Zealand, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Amongst those, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Tokelau are also PNA member countries and thus abide by a longline VDS, similar to the purse seine VDS, which came into force in 8 of the 9 member countries on 1 January 2015. As a non-PNA country, the Cook Islands have been pushing for more holistic WCPFC-level albacore management to include non-FFA countries and more consideration of high seas catch management.

For yellowfin there is no Cook Islands TACC. This stock therefore continues to be managed through CMM 2017-01 which replaces CMM 2016-01, which came into effect on 6 February 2018 and shall remain in effect until 10 February 2021 unless earlier replaced or amended by the Commission. The Cook Islands are however currently exploring the possibility of incorporating yellowfin tuna into their QMS with no immediate plans of signing up to the longline VDS.

**Table 4. TACC and catch data for albacore and yellowfin for the two most recent years (note: TACC does not yet apply to yellowfin). Data provided by Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources.**

Stock	Albacore		Yellowfin	
	2017	9,698 tonnes	2017	N/a
TACC	2017	9,698 tonnes	2017	N/a
UoA share of TACC	2017	5,430 tonnes	2017	N/a
UoC share of TAC	2017	5,430 tonnes	2017	N/a
Total green weight catch by UoC	2017	2,858 tonnes	2017	745 tonnes
	2016	2,923 tonnes	2016	765 tonnes

## 2.2.2 Stock assessments

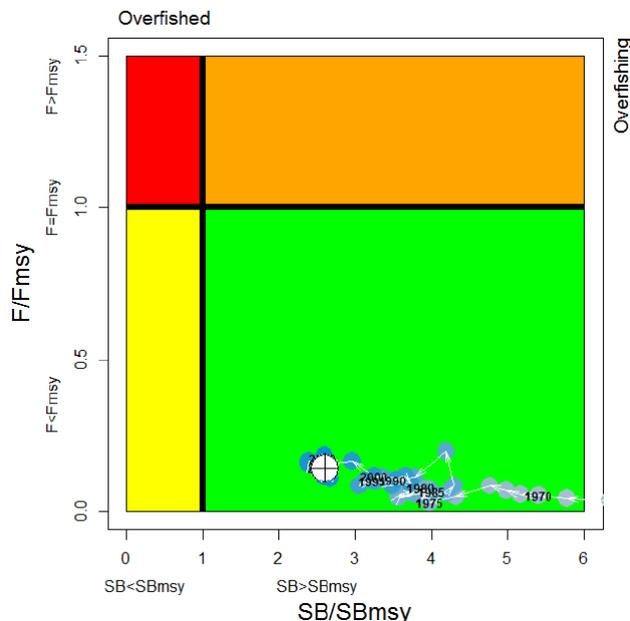
Both South Pacific albacore and Western Central Pacific yellowfin have had new stock assessments since they were initially certified for this fishery. A synopsis on both stock assessments is given in the following sections, together with a determination as to whether they are likely to result in a material change for the fishery, thus requiring rescoring.

### 2.2.1.1 Albacore

A new stock assessment for South Pacific albacore was conducted by the Pacific Community (SPC) in 2018 (Tremblay-Boyer et al., 2018), extending the model time period to the end of 2016. Aside from updating the datasets to the end of 2016, the key changes to the assessment were:

- Using standardised CPUE indices based on operational longline data (including historical data) not available to previous assessments;
- Simplifying the regional structure;
- Standardisation of the CPUE time series using geostatistics instead of traditional GLM methods;
- The use of an ‘index fishery’ in each region.

The conclusions of the assessment do not change the perception of stock status relative to reference points (Figure 1). In terms of biomass trends, the assessment estimates that spawning potential and biomass vulnerable to longline fisheries has been stable or perhaps slightly increasing over the last 20 years. This trend is largely driven in the model by recruitment which is estimated to have increased somewhat since ~2000 relative to previous decades. Adult F has increased over most of the time series but has declined since the reduction of catches seen since ~2010. Since this species is taken mainly by longline fisheries, juvenile F is estimated to be low throughout the time series.



**Figure 1. Temporal trend in annual stock status, relative to  $SB_{MSY}$  (x-axis) and  $F_{MSY}$  (y-axis) reference points, for the model period (starting in 1960). The colour of the points is graduated from lavender (1960) to blue (2009) and white cross (2010), and points are labelled at five-year intervals. The last year of the model (2011) is excluded because it is highly uncertain (WCPFC, 2017).**

The key uncertainties for the stock assessment remain with assumptions around natural mortality and growth. For  $M$ , the assessment used two alternative values (fixed across all age classes);  $M=0.3$  (consistent with the previous 2015 assessment) or  $M=0.4$  (giving more optimistic conclusions); age-dependent  $M$  was also evaluated as a one-off sensitivity. For growth, the outcome of studies of size/age for SP albacore (Farley et al., 2013) was incorporated into the reference case model, while the same growth model was used in the North Pacific albacore assessment (WCPFC, 2017) as a sensitivity. The stock assessment team identifies further work on age and growth (otolith analysis) as a key research priority. Overall, uncertainty remains high, although decreasing over time at each assessment. Nevertheless, the estimates of stock status put the stock largely on the right side of biological reference points across the whole structural uncertainty grid, and on that basis, there is reasonable confidence in the conclusions of the assessment.

Overall, the team considered that the above does not constitute a material change requiring rescoring of Principle 1 for this stock. Note that this fishery is due to commence its reassessment in the coming months at which point all of Principle 1 will be rescored against the MSC Fisheries Standard and Guidance v2.01.

#### 2.2.1.2 Yellowfin

The most recent stock assessment for WCPO yellowfin was carried out in 2017 (Tremblay-Boyer et al., 2017). The new yellowfin assessment does not make any major changes to the assessment structure or assumptions, except for aligning the regional structure with the new regional structure for bigeye (i.e. changing the boundary between equatorial regions (Regions 3 and 4) and northern sub-tropical regions (Regions 1 and 2) from  $20^{\circ}$  N to  $10^{\circ}$  N). The three additional years of data included in the assessment however, cover a period of strong El Niño conditions and increasing catch levels.

SPC recommend that the stock status is evaluated and management advice formulated, but not based directly on the reference case (diagnostic case) model, rather on the overall structural uncertainty grid, which incorporates the conclusions of the one-off sensitivity analyses considered to be the most important. Majuro plots for the full grid and key sensitivities are given in Figure 2.

SPC themselves summarise the results of the stock assessment as follows (Tremblay-Boyer et al., 2017):

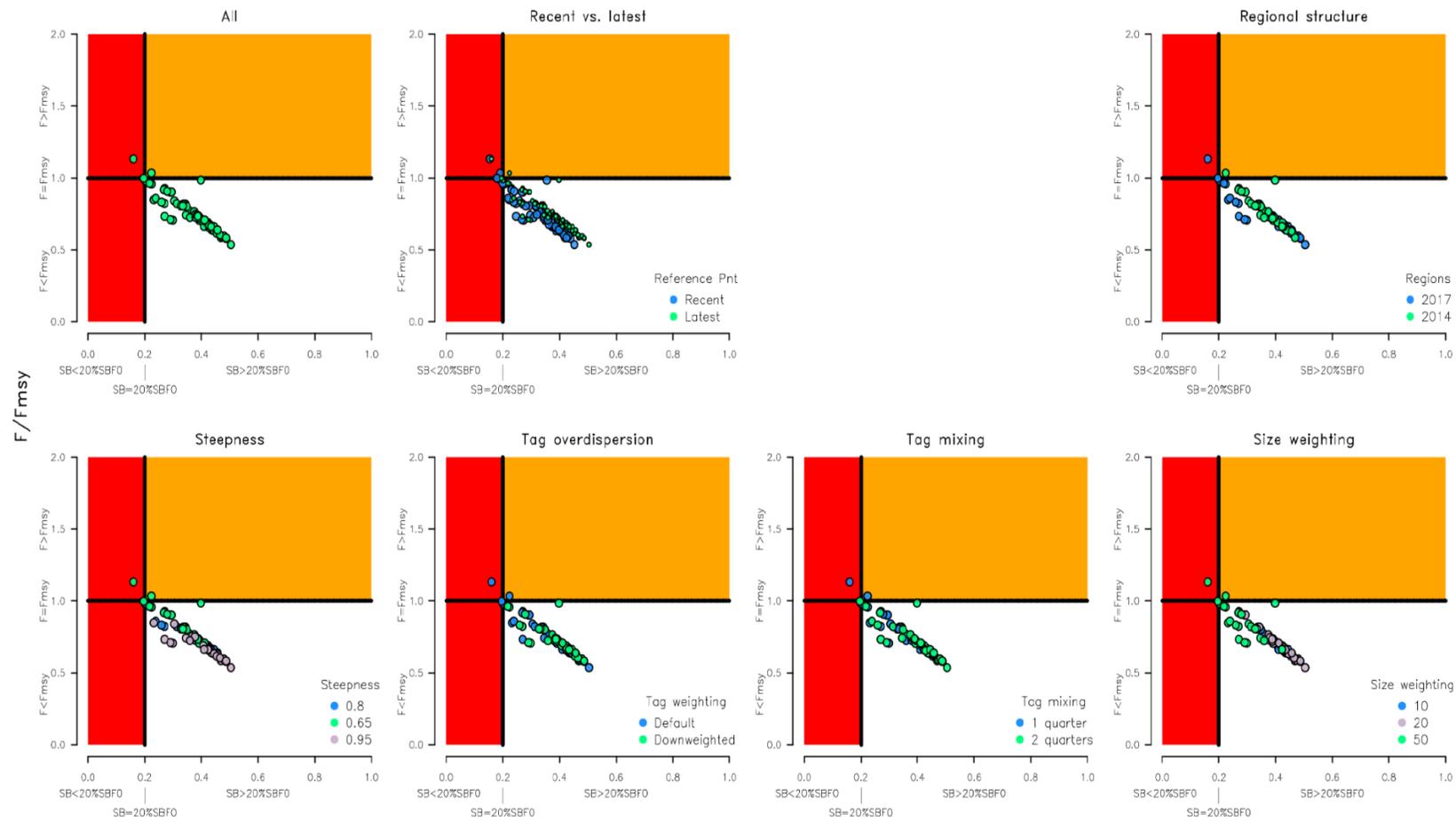
- Spawner biomass is estimated to have declined across the whole model period for all models, and for most of the model regions.
- The median estimate of spawner depletion is like the previous assessment, and the probability of spawner biomass being below the LRP is estimated to be <5 %; the same is true for  $F/F_{MSY}$ .
- $F$  has increased continuously since the start of industrial fishing;  $F$  has in the past increased most rapidly on juveniles but is also increasing on adults. A significant proportion of juvenile fishing mortality comes from surface fisheries in the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam, from which data are uncertain.
- Recent recruitment is estimated to be relatively high; it is not known why this is, but good recruitment also estimated for skipjack and WCPO and EPO bigeye suggests it might be environmentally driven.

The 75 %ile of  $F_{recent}/F_{MSY}$  is 0.82 (Table 5); Figure 2 shows that two runs (latest and recent) estimate that  $F < F_{MSY}$ . Since the stock is generally declining in all scenarios and the median estimate of  $SB_{recent}/SB_{MSY}$  is 1.39,  $F$  must have been above  $F_{MSY}$  in the past. On this basis, it can be concluded that the stock is at or fluctuating around a level consistent with MSY (Sieben et al., 2018a).

As for albacore, the team did not consider the above information to constitute a material change in the fishery and no rescoring was undertaken. Here also, it is worth noting that this fishery is due to commence its reassessment in the coming months at which point all of Principle 1 will be rescored against the MSC Fisheries Standard and Guidance v2.01.

**Table 5. Summary of stock status estimates relative to reference points, across all 72 models in the structural uncertainty grid used to characterise uncertainty; latest = 2015, recent = 2011-14;  $SB_{F=0}$  = average spawning potential in the absence of fishing for 2005-14, following the definition of the LRP agreed by the SC. Taken from Table A6 in Tremblay-Boyer et al. (2017).**

Parameter	Min.	25%	Median	75%	Max.
$F_{recent} / F_{MSY}$	0.54	0.66	0.73	0.82	1.13
$SB_{latest} / SB_{F=0}$	0.16	0.30	0.39	0.43	0.50
$SB_{latest} / SB_{MSY}$	0.80	1.24	1.41	1.62	1.91
$SB_{recent} / SB_{F=0}$	0.15	0.27	0.35	0.39	0.45
$SB_{recent} / SB_{MSY}$	0.81	1.28	1.43	1.59	1.93
$SB_{MSY} / SB_{F=0}$	0.16	0.25	0.26	0.29	0.35



**Figure 2. Majuro plots summarising the results for each of the models in the structural uncertainty grid individually; y-axis =  $F/F_{MSY}$ ; orange zone =  $F > F_{MSY}$ ; x-axis =  $SB/SB_{F=0}$  (contrary to how it is labelled in the original figure); red zone =  $SB < 20\% SB_{F=0}$ , i.e. LRP agreed by WCPFC. All figures show  $SB_{latest}$ , except where otherwise indicated. Top left: all models for  $SB_{latest}$ ; top middle: ditto, also including  $SB_{recent}$ . Remaining five models show key sensitivity runs, with blue the diagnostic case model in each case: Top right: regional structure; bottom left: steepness; bottom mid-left: tag overdispersion; bottom mid-right: tag mixing; bottom right: size data weighting. Figure A41 in Tremblay-Boyer et al. (2017).**

### 2.3 Variation request

On 14 February 2019 MSC accepted a variation request submitted by all fisheries CABs for all RFMO-managed highly migratory stocks in the MSC programme, including tuna and swordfish.

The overarching logic of the CAB's joint proposal was as follows:

- All tuna and tuna-like fisheries certified against Certification Requirements v1.3 will be upgraded to v2.0 to foster harmonisation efforts. No suspension action will be undertaken for fisheries that are behind target on P1 conditions raised against v1.3
- Timelines for P1 conditions (limited to those with respect to harvest strategies and harvest control rules) will be aligned for all fisheries on the same stock
- These timelines will be based on the calendar year that RFMO workplans are due to be completed, for all stocks where relevant workplans exist
- Fisheries currently in assessment and new fisheries are not directly covered under this variation request, but CABs have committed to apply the same logic with respect to harmonising condition timelines aligned against RFMO work plans

For the Cook Islands fishery, which was assessed against v1.3 of the MSC Standard, the acceptance of this variation request means that 1) no suspension action will be undertaken should conditions be found to be behind target for two consecutive years and 2) Principle 1 will be rescored against version 2.01 of the MSC Standard at the next available opportunity. This will be the Year 4 surveillance audit, due in 2019 and likely to take place simultaneously with the fishery's reassessment site visit.

Further detail on the variation request and the MSC's acceptance of it can be found in Appendix 3.

### 2.4 Principle 2

To identify changing trends in retained and discarded catch data (for species other than albacore and yellowfin), logbook and observer data for all vessels within the UoC for 2017 were requested, as summarized in Table 6 and Table 8. The overall catch profile of the fishery remains as per the initial assessment with only bigeye exceeding the 5 % threshold for 'main' retained + discarded species. As discussed in the Year 2 surveillance report (Sieben and Daxboeck, 2017), a new stock assessment was carried out for bigeye in 2017 which provides a more optimistic view on stock status than was the case during the initial assessment of this fishery (Gascoigne et al., 2015). Taking into consideration the additional work on the growth model carried out in 2018 (Project 81, Farley et al. (2018)), there is now a high degree of certainty that this stock is above the point of recruitment impairment. Although this would result in a slightly higher overall score for this fishery, the team has not carried out a complete rescored of the retained species PI. This information will instead be considered at the upcoming 2019 reassessment. As was the case last year, bigeye catches are now also subject to an annual Cook Islands TACC as part of the quota management system for albacore (see Section 2.2). License holders are required to purchase a minimum quota allocation of 25 t albacore and 20 t bigeye, with the overall bigeye quota fixed at 2,500 t, in line with CMM 2015-01.

**Table 6. % Catch composition in UoC for 2013 – 2017. Data based on UoC logbook data provided by MMR.**

Species		% Catch composition					Total landings 2017 (tonnes)
		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
ALB	Albacore ( <i>Thunnus alalunga</i> )	72.57	58.14	58.70	63.90	67.35	2,858

BET	Bigeye ( <i>T. obesus</i> )	4.99	7.13	6.83	8.32	4.59	195
YFT	Yellowfin ( <i>T. albacares</i> )	9.01	24.40	24.21	16.72	17.55	745
MLS	Striped marlin ( <i>Kajikia audax</i> )	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.09	0.08	3.4
BUM	Blue marlin ( <i>Makaira nigricans</i> )	6.77	4.82	4.69	4.89	2.15	91.2
BLM	Black marlin ( <i>Istiompax indica</i> )	0.00	0.21	0.24	0.10	0.88	37.2
SWO	Swordfish ( <i>Xiphias gladius</i> )	0.70	0.55	0.55	1.12	0.89	37.8
SFA	Indo-Pacific sailfish ( <i>Istiophorus platypterus</i> )	0.44	-	-	0.75	0.81	34.5
LAG	Moonfish/Opah ( <i>Lampris guttatus</i> )	0.16	-	-	0.33	0.25	10.7
OIL	Oilfish ( <i>Ruvettus pretiosus</i> )	0.48	-	-	0.89	0.77	32.7
DOL	Mahi mahi ( <i>Coryphaena hippurus</i> )	1.51	0.52	0.48	0.19	0.76	32.4
WAH	Wahoo ( <i>Acanthocybium solandri</i> )	2.63	2.06	1.95	1.82	1.92	81.5
OTH	Other	0.74	2.15	2.33	0.88	1.82	84
Total							4,243

Observer coverage has normally been at around 10 %, but in 2017 it dropped to 5 % (although at 6.7 % coverage for the client fleet). However, based on SC14 Cook Islands Part 1 Country Report, the coverage for the National Fleet was 7.7 % in 2016 and 7.6 % for 2017 (see Table 6 in MMR (2018)). The MMR has been working to address this issue for the 2018 fishing season by prioritizing placement of observers on each foreign-flagged vessel for at least one trip in the calendar year (consistent for compliance with provisions of CMM 2017-05, despite these vessels having charter status in the Cook Islands). Through a bilateral MOU, the MMR supported the E-monitoring trials on the 2 EU purse seine vessels, in collaboration with OPAGAC (Organizacion de Productores Atunero Congeladores - Spanish Organization of Associated Producers of Large Tuna Freezers - representing 8 companies and 40 purse seine vessels) using Satlink SeaTube, an on-board Electronic Monitoring (EM) and video recording system. Electronic monitoring officers at the MMR Ocean Monitoring Center (OMC) review and analyse video from at least six cameras operating 24 hours a day on board the vessels Aurora B and Rosita C. This pilot programme is designed to be expanded to the entire Cook Islands fleet over the next few years to also give fisheries managers camera oversight of fishing activity onboard fishing vessels under Cook Islands licence. The trials are also being rolled out to the longline fleet, with installation of closed-circuit television video surveillance planned for 2 or 3 vessels operating out of Apia or Pago Pago.

For bait, the fishery continues to rely on the Indian oil sardine, sourced from Oman and China. The volumes used in this fishery are shown in Table 7 and still only represent a fraction of the total landings of the species. No changes to the scoring are therefore proposed. However, this fishery uses the same bait as the Client Group's recently certified yellowfin longline fishery in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) for which a recommendation was issued (Sieben et al., 2018b). The surveillance team therefore adopted the same recommendation on the sourcing of bait, as follows:

*The fishery uses Indian oil sardine (*Sardinella longiceps*), sourced from China. By far the largest fishery is in India, which is the most likely source of the bait for this fishery although this is an assumption made by the team. It is therefore recommended that the client company reviews its bait sourcing policy to ensure the necessary information is collected so that all bait can be traced to its source; be it at stock level, country of capture or ideally, in the case of the Indian oil sardine, at Indian state level.*

**Table 7. Bait use by the UoC (volume shown in tonnes).**

Bait	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Indian oil sardine ( <i>Sardinella longiceps</i> )	2,297	2,688	1,930	1,401	1,438	2,166

**Table 8. Summary of 2014 – 2017 observer data for the UoC fleet, showing yearly number of discarded individuals (with numbers of observed trips) and summarised (2014 – 17) total observed catch, discards as % composition of overall observed catch and overall % composition for the species. Data provided by MMR. ETP species are shown in grey**

Species	No. discarded					Total no. observed catch (2014-17)	Discards as % total no. observed catch	% of total (no. observed retained and discarded) catch
	2014 (4 trips)	2015 (1 trip)	2016 (5 trips)	2017 (5 trips)	Total (2014-17)			
ALBACORE	120	63	150	43	376	29168	0.74	57.56
YELLOWFIN	102	64	98	33	297	9865	0.59	19.47
BIGEYE	43	22	20	17	102	3283	0.20	6.48
WAHOO	20	10	0	6	36	2210	0.07	4.36
MAHI MAHI / DOLPHINFISH / DORADO	8	1	0	4	13	544	0.03	1.07
ESCOLAR	14	6	28	9	57	932	0.11	1.84
SKIPJACK	26	4	0	3	33	1169	0.07	2.31
BLUE MARLIN	4	1	0	3	8	448	0.02	0.88
PELAGIC STING-RAY	88	92	77	249	506	502	1.00	0.99
SHORT-BILLED SPEARFISH	2	0	0	2	4	206	0.01	0.41
STRIPED MARLIN	2	8	2	1	13	316	0.03	0.62
BLUE SHARK	62	110	85	110	367	367	0.72	0.72
OILFISH	128	2	51	88	269	289	0.53	0.57
SLENDER SUNFISH	43	2	82	27	154	163	0.30	0.32
SHORTSNOUTED LANCETFISH	37		3	3	43	46	0.08	0.09
SNAKE MACKEREL	79	9	2	15	105	107	0.21	0.21

Species	No. discarded					Total no. observed catch (2014-17)	Discards as % total no. observed catch	% of total (no. observed retained and discarded) catch
	2014 (4 trips)	2015 (1 trip)	2016 (5 trips)	2017 (5 trips)	Total (2014-17)			
LONGSNOUDED LANCETFISH	33	33	26	66	158	158	0.31	0.31
SWORDFISH	3	17	0	11	31	160	0.06	0.32
BARRACUDA	35	21	17	18	91	125	0.18	0.25
SILKY SHARK	57	41	21	10	119	129	0.23	0.25
SAILFISH (INDO-PACIFIC)	0	1	0	1	2	79	0.00	0.16
SICKLE POMFRET	35	11	7	47	100	120	0.20	0.24
OCEANIC WHITE-TIP SHARK	14	15	4	4	33	37	0.07	0.07
LONG FINNED MAKO SHARK	33	21	6	3	63	63	0.12	0.12
SHORT FINNED MAKO SHARK	18	4	0	0	22	22	0.04	0.04
BLACK MARLIN	0	0	0	0	0	29	0.00	0.06
OPAH / MOONFISH	0	0	1	1	2	38	0.00	0.07
BIGEYE THRESHER SHARK	6	2	0	11	19	20	0.04	0.04
SARGENT MAJOR	0	0	0	0	0	4	0.00	0.01
PELAGIC THRESHER SHARK	5	0	0	0	5	5	0.01	0.01
GIANT MANTA	1	3	0	0	4	5	0.01	0.01
OMOSUDID	1	0	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00
ROUDI ESCOLAR	6	0	0	1	7	8	0.01	0.02
SHARKS (UNIDENTIFIED)	3	0	0	0	3	3	0.01	0.01

Species	No. discarded					Total no. observed catch (2014-17)	Discards as % total no. observed catch	% of total (no. observed retained and discarded) catch
	2014 (4 trips)	2015 (1 trip)	2016 (5 trips)	2017 (5 trips)	Total (2014-17)			
LOGGERHEAD TURTLE	3	0	0	0	3	3	0.01	0.01
CRESTFISH/UNICORNFISH	3	0	0	0	3	4	0.01	0.01
RAINBOW RUNNER	0	0	0	0	0	5	0.00	0.01
LEATHERBACK TURTLE	1	0	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00
SNAKE MACKERELS AND ESCOLARS	0	0	0	0	0	10	0.00	0.02
SHARPTAIL MOLA	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.00	0.00
DEEPWATER RED SNAPPER	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.00	0.00
UNSPECIFIED	1	0	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00
BATFISH	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.00	0.00
RED SEA CATFISH	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.00	0.00
HAIRTAILS, CUTLASSFISHES	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.00	0.00
RAYS (TORPEDINIDAE, NARKIDAE)	0	1	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00
GOLDRIBBON SOAPFISH	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.00	0.00
BLACK BREAM	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.00	0.00
LUMINOUS HAKE	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.00	0.00
GREAT HAMMERHEAD	1	0	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00
OCEAN SUNFISH	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.00	0.00
DRIFT FISH	0	1	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00

Species	No. discarded					Total no. observed catch (2014-17)	Discards as % total no. observed catch	% of total (no. observed retained and discarded) catch	
	2014 (4 trips)	2015 (1 trip)	2016 (5 trips)	2017 (5 trips)	Total (2014-17)				
ATLANTIC POMFRET / RAY'S BREEM	1	0	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00	
CHINA ANCHOVY	1	0	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00	
GREEN TURTLE	0	0	1	0	1	1	0.00	0.00	
BLACK GEMFISH	0	0	0	6	6	6	0.01	0.01	
SEALSHARK/ BLACK SHARK	0	0	0	1	1	1	0.00	0.00	
Total						3,064	50,671	6.05	100.00

Based on the observer data presented in Table 8 above, there have been no major changes in either overall species composition or in the rate of interactions with ETP species:

- Seabirds: no interactions reported in 2017.
- Sea turtles: no reported interactions in 2017.
- Marine mammals: no interactions, other than those reported on during the initial assessment (i.e. false killer whale and bottlenose dolphin).
- Sharks and rays: With the status of the Cook Islands as a shark sanctuary, and the newly established 50 nm marine protected zones under the Marae Moana Act (Section 2.1), MMR has been receiving some backlash from local fishermen because of a perceived increase in populations of inshore sharks. Anecdotal evidence was given of increasing losses of lures and bait specifically to sharks. In response to the expressed concerns, MMR is working with industry to significantly improve logbook and e-reporting on incidental shark takes. MMR is also working with an NGO on oceanic whitetip and silky shark electronic tagging using both purse seine as well as longline platforms. Within the UoC, significant improvements have been made in the reporting of shark interactions. Crew now receive training to report shark catches as accurately as possible in the logbooks (Section 4.1), as shown in Table 9 below for 2016 and 2017.

**Table 9. Comparison of 2016/17 reported shark discards between logbook and observer data.**

Species	2016		2017	
	Logbook	Observer	Logbook	Observer
BLUE SHARK	2628	85	2531	110
HAMMERHEAD SHARKS	7	0	9	
MAKO SHARKS	41	6	14	3
OCEANIC WHITETIP SHARK	840	4	647	4
PELAGIC THRESHER SHARK	7	0		
PORBEAGLE SHARK	39	0	5	
SILKY SHARK	339	21	63	10
THRESHER SHARKS	29	0	42	11

Finally, except for likely effort contraction due to the new 50nm zone closures under the Mare Moana Act, there have been no changes in fishing footprint or in the fishing gear used.

## 2.5 Principle 3

For the better part of 2017 and up to the national elections June 14, 2018 the Cook Islands lacked a sitting government. Prime Minister Henry Puna was since re-elected, has formed a new government and has assumed the position of Minister of Marine Resources. Because of this, the new Marine Resources Bill (2017) was not promulgated until July 2018. In addition, the Secretary of the MMR Ben Ponia, has stood down and has now been replaced by Pamela Maru, former FFA Fisheries Management Advisor. Her appointment as Head of Ministry (HOM) was officially announced September 28, 2018. There have also been several staff departures in the intervening year, with vacant posts yet to be filled, although the overall audited performance rating was not affected by the lack of full staffing. These annual performance reviews are conducted by the Public Service Commissioner under Section 3, Article 3.2 (g) of the Public Service Act (2009). The Commissioner is appointed by the Queen's Representative on the advice of the Prime Minister (Article 73, Cook Islands Constitution). As a postscript to the abovementioned events, Ben Ponia was appointed Chief of Staff at the Office of the Prime Minister as of October 2018.

To address Cook Islands commitment to combatting IUU fishing and minimum standards for port state measures, MMR has agreed to terms and conditions under a general FAO agreement for its 2 trawl vessels in the Indian Ocean (inspections in Port Louis, Mauritius). To be in compliance with CMM 2017-02, Cook Islands has designated Pukapuka as landing/transshipment port in the Cook Islands (although not very frequently used), and exercise port state inspection rights for Cook Islands agents in the designated ports of Apia, Suva, Kosrae, Pago Pago and Papeete (French Polynesia). Therefore, Cook Islands exercise quasi-port state measures as they are not a true port state per se – very few vessels land catch there. In most cases pre-license inspections are also required of fishing vessels. At sea inspections are also conducted by Cook Islands Police Maritime Patrol boat and other Patrol Boats from Samoa and Tonga, who often do combined patrols within the Cook Islands EEZ. Usually, every licensed longline vessel is boarded at least once a year. High seas boarding are also conducted by the Cooks Patrol Boat and some vessels that simply transit through the EEZ are also boarded at sea. Thus, Cook Islands does exercise full flag state responsibilities and will be adopting the WCPFC minimum port state standards as presented in CMM 2017-02 for inscription into the Marine Resources Bill.

Logbook data submission has been good especially because of weekly reporting requirements under the QMS. The MMR is developing a database in collaboration with FFA to better track TACC more effectively and in quasi-real time. E-reporting for longline vessels is being trialled where input duplicates logbook information on computer tablets using the SPC TUFMAN 2 programme. These reports can also be sent via email. This means data can be submitted directly to the QMS database when necessary. The required data inputs, as laid out in the SPC log sheets and unloading forms, are first submitted through e-reporting and then in hard copy within 2 weeks of return to a port. If the port of landing is not in Rarotonga, they may be collected by MMR agents at time of inspection of offloading. However, MMR does note that the 2-week hard copy submission is sometimes late because of delays in mailing collected copies from distant landing sites to Rarotonga when an agent cannot be on site.

The team confirmed that the VMS ping interrogation rate is normally every 4 hours but since the data are stored in a database, position information can be reduced retrospectively to 15 minutes, for investigative purposes. MMR staff mentioned that some UoC vessels have been experiencing electrical/electronic malfunctioning with their VMS units. However, even during periods of VMS units malfunctioning, e-reports of catches from affected vessels can still be submitted on a weekly basis, as required and there are no indications of illegal or suspect activities occurring during periods with VMS problems.

The MMR did indicate to the team that there are some administrative issues with charter arrangements between vessels fishing in the FSM EEZ and also in the Cook Islands EEZ. Many of the UoC vessels may fish in both EEZs, sometimes switching back and forth often throughout the year, depending on fish availability. Since they have charter arrangements with both Island States, and transfer between two EEZs can be over a short space of time, there have been issues with charter notifications. This results, *inter alia*, in catches being attributed to the wrong state. However, the MMR is currently addressing this issue and is retrospectively rectifying incorrect catch allocations. They are confident that this issue can be resolved easily.

Because the Marine Resources Bill (2017) was only promulgated in July 2018, the Ministry of Marine Resources had not yet gone through the process of legislative validation of the Rules of Procedure for a “Quota Management Advisory Committee” which was to replace the previous “Licensing Committee”, nor the “Quota Management System Allocation Policy” document. These articles of law are publicly available policy statements on matters which will guide MMR in the annual allocation process to ensure relevant stakeholder input to the new management process. Therefore, a QM Advisory Committee has not yet convened.

## **2.6 Traceability**

At the time of certification, albacore and yellowfin caught by this fishery were deemed eligible to enter further chains of custody, subject to the following requirements:

- Any trips which include sets in the high seas area (or other areas outside the Cook Islands EEZ) shall be classed as non-MSC certified and will not be eligible to enter further chains of custody;
- LTFV also commits to ensuring that all fishing trips (defined as a ‘trip that commences and finishes with an empty hold and only fishes in MSC certified waters in between’) shall start and finish with empty holds.

In February 2017, part of the client fleet obtained separate Chain of Custody certification which means those vessels have the separation systems in place required for having both MSC and non-MSC albacore and yellowfin on board. The traceability verification exercise therefore mainly focused on B-list vessels (i.e. those without MSC CoC in place).

As per previous surveillances, the audit team conducted a review of traceability records for a 10 % sub-sample of the MSC trips undertaken after the eligibility date. The review included a traceback exercise for each trip, covering commercial invoices, bills of lading (packing lists), logsheets and trip VMS data. Although four trips did include some out-of-zone VMS tracks, internal investigation by the Client Group and the assessment team revealed no sets were carried out in those instances (as confirmed by logbook data). The audit team were overall satisfied that the client fleet continues to abide by the terms listed above. Product therefore remains eligible to enter further chains of custody. This will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Currently eligible ports of landing are Rarotonga, Pago Pago, Papeete, Apia and Kosrae.

### 3 Assessment Process

The SZLC, CSFC & FZLC Cook Islands EEZ South Pacific albacore longline fishery was certified on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015. The initial assessment team consisted of Dr Jo Gascoigne (Team Leader, Principle 1), Dale Kolody (Principle 1), Chrissie Sieben (Principle 2) and Ian Cartwright (Principle 3). The site visit for the assessment took place in Cairns, Australia in December 2013, simultaneously with WCPFC10, and in Rarotonga, Cook Islands in February 2014. The initial assessment was conducted in accordance with the MSC Certification Requirements v1.3.

A scope extension for the addition of yellowfin and new client groups to the certificate was completed on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2017. The scope extension was carried out following an expedited assessment undertaken at the same time as the Year 1 surveillance audit in Rarotonga. The assessment team consisted of Chrissie Sieben (Team Leader, Principle 2) and Dr Jo Gascoigne (Principle 1).

Based on the relatively high risk-level of this fishery, as well the number and nature of conditions to which the certification is subject, a surveillance level of 6 was awarded in accordance with the MSC FCR v2.0 (7.23.2). Level 6 is the maximum level of surveillance, requiring 4 annual on-site visits.

The year 2 and 3 surveillance audit team consisted of Chrissie Sieben (Team Leader) and Charles Daxboeck, with the on-site audit held at the MMR offices Rarotonga, Cook Islands from 12 to 13 September 2017, and 25 to 26 September 2018. The 2018 audit was attended by the participants and stakeholders listed in Table 10. The audit was carried out in accordance with the MSC Fisheries Certification Requirements v2.0 for procedure and Annex CB of the MSC CR v1.3 for scoring.

**Table 10. Audit participants**

Name	Role / organisation
Tim Costelloe	Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources, Director, Offshore Division
Marino Wichman	Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources, Data Manager
Ruiruia David	Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources, Fisheries Officer
Saiasi Sarau	Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources, Fisheries Officer
Joe Murphy	LTFV (remote participant)
Eric Gilman	LTFV (remote participant)
Hao Wang	Huanan Fishery (Cook Islands) Co.,Ltd.
Charles Daxboeck	CU Pesca (Independent consultant)
Chrissie Sieben	CU Pesca

The fishery remains in conformity with the scope criteria of the MSC Fisheries Standard (7.4 of the MSC Certification Requirements v2.0).

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Conditions

Progress against the conditions raised during the initial assessment is shown below. No new conditions were raised during this surveillance audit.

#### 4.1.1 Condition 1 - Reference points albacore

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	1.1.2	<b>The target reference point is such that the stock is maintained at a level consistent with <math>B_{MSY}</math> or some measure or surrogate with similar intent or outcome.</b>	75
<b>Condition</b>	The management system should formally adopt a target reference point for the South Pacific albacore stock which is consistent with maintaining the stock at $B_{MSY}$ or some other measure with similar intent or outcome. This target reference point should be used for management purposes.		
<b>Original milestones</b>	<p>By the first annual surveillance audit, there shall be evidence that the client has started a process of consultation and representation for the establishment of a precautionary target reference point with appropriate regional management bodies.</p> <p>By the third annual surveillance audit a target reference point for regional management of the South Pacific albacore stock should be formally adopted by the WCPFC.</p>		
<b>Revised milestones (following pilot harmonisation)</b>	<p><i>One of the agreed outcomes of the pilot harmonisation process for Principle 1 for WCPFC stocks (Hong Kong, April 2016) was that milestones for 1.1.2 should be aligned with the CMM 14-06 workplan.</i></p> <p><i>Note: this workplan was revised in December 2016 but the milestones remain in line with the initial workplan.</i></p> <p>By the second annual surveillance audit (i.e. at WCPFC 2016) a target reference point for regional management of the South Pacific albacore stock should be formally adopted by the WCPFC, as set out in the agreed workplan for CMM 14-06.</p>		
<b>Client action plan</b>	<p><i>The client action plan was already consistent with the revised milestones.</i></p> <p><b>Client Actions:</b></p> <p><u>Action 1.</u> During 2014 and 2015, encourage the FFA Southern Committee, Sub-Committee on South Pacific Tuna and Billfish Fisheries (SC-SPTBF), through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation, to adopt an explicit target reference point for south Pacific albacore to be used in management of sub-regional pelagic longline fisheries.</p> <p><u>Action 2.</u> During 2014, 2015 and 2016, encourage WCPFC, through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation to the Commission, to adopt an explicit target reference point for south Pacific albacore to be used in management of regional pelagic longline fisheries.</p> <p><u>Action 3:</u> From 2014 onwards, participate in meetings and joint activities of the WCPO Tuna MSC Alignment Group to pursue adoption of a sub-regional and WCPFC target</p>		

	<p>reference point for south Pacific albacore. The Group is comprised of client groups of fisheries certified and under assessment against the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standard and of participants of Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) for fisheries for albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tunas in the Convention Area of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), and other stakeholders. The Group participants work together to coordinate and align policy activities of relevant MSC client groups and participants of FIPs related to sub-regional and regional management of fisheries for albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tunas in the Convention Area of the WCPFC. (see <a href="https://sites.google.com/site/seafoodcompaniestunamanagement/home/wcpo_tuna-p1_alignment">https://sites.google.com/site/seafoodcompaniestunamanagement/home/wcpo_tuna-p1_alignment</a>).</p> <p><b>Outcomes &amp; Schedule:</b></p> <p><u>Outcome 1.</u> In 2016, FFA SC-SPTBF formally adopts a target reference point for sub-regional management of south Pacific albacore.</p> <p><u>Outcome 2.</u> By December 2016 at WCPFC 14, WCPFC formally adopts a target reference point for regional management of south Pacific albacore.</p>
<p><b>Progress on Condition [Year 1]</b></p>	<p>A series of ‘management options workshops’ (MOW) and a ‘harvest strategy workshop’ (HSW) have been held over the last few years, immediately preceding the WCPFC plenary meeting. The MOW/HSW process considered options for bio-economic reference points, based on an analysis by SPC (Pilling et al., 2015). At WCPFC12 (December 2015) FFA proposed a TRP of 45 %B<sub>0</sub> (which would require cuts in longline fishing catch of 37 %), but the proposal was not adopted. The Cook Islands spoke in favour of cuts in catch, putting on the table an offer to reduce their catch limit to 7,000 t if an agreement could be reached on compatible cuts elsewhere, particularly the eastern high seas pocket (see WCPFC summary report 2015, paras. 345 and 354).</p> <p>In December 2014, WCPFC adopted CMM 2014-06 which requires the development and implementation of a formal harvest strategy for both Pacific Ocean albacore stocks (as well as WCPO skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye). CMM 2014-06 has an associated timetable, which provides for the agreement of a TRP for South Pacific albacore in 2016.</p>
<p><b>Progress on Condition [Year 2]</b></p>	<p>Significant progress has already been made by the Cook Islands on a national harvest strategy for albacore. The focus of this condition however is on the agreement of a TRP at regional level among WCPFC member states. According to the initial workplan 14-06, the key objectives for WCPFC13 (end 2016) for South Pacific albacore and yellowfin were to record management objectives and agree acceptable levels of risk for both stocks, and to agree a target reference point for albacore. At the time of writing, none of these things were achieved, except to note that an acceptable level of risk could not be &gt;20 %. A revised workplan (WCPFC, 2017; Attachment N) was agreed at WCPFC13 in which the possible adoption of an interim Target Reference Point for the South Pacific Albacore stock, originally agreed to take place in 2015 under the Harvest Strategy Work Plan, was deferred until December 2017 at the latest. Noting the considerable effort made by the Cook Islands in implementing a national HCR on albacore, this progress is unfortunately not being met at regional level. Until at least an interim TRP has been agreed upon, this condition cannot be closed out.</p> <p>In mid-2017, the WCPO Tuna MSC alignment group was disbanded. The client therefore revised the client action plan to address this change, as follows:</p> <p>REVISED CLIENT ACTIONS (Adopted Nov. 2017):</p> <p>Action: The client will annually discuss all conditions of certification with staff of the Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources, including the schedule required by the conditions to fill gaps in south Pacific albacore and WCPO yellowfin tuna harvest strategies.</p>

	<p><b>OUTCOMES AND SCHEDULE</b></p> <p>Outcome: Dec. 2017 (at WCPFC14), WCPFC adopts a TRP for south Pacific albacore, originally scheduled to be adopted in 2016 under the CMM 14-06 harvest strategy workplan.</p> <p>The audit team was satisfied that the actions above are covered by the initial client action plan as detailed in the initial Public Certification Report (MEC, 2015). No additional letter of support from the MMR was therefore required.</p>
<p><b>Progress on Condition [Year 3]</b></p>	<p>The WCPFC15 meeting took place in December 2018 (WCPFC, 2018), during which the Commission agreed on the following <i>“an interim target reference point (TRP) for south Pacific albacore at 56 percent of spawning stock biomass in the absence of fishing (<math>0.56 SB_{F=0}</math>)<sup>1</sup> with the objective of achieving an 8 percent increase in catch per unit of effort (CPUE) for the southern longline fishery as compared to 2013 levels.<sup>2</sup> If a future stock assessment indicates that this interim TRP will not result in the desired longline CPUE, then the interim TRP will be revised in order to meet this objective. The TRP shall be reviewed every 3 years, consistent with the south Pacific albacore assessment schedule.</i></p> <p><i>The Commission shall amend or develop appropriate conservation and management measures to implement a harvest control rule, developed in accordance with CMM 2014-06, with the objective of maintaining the south Pacific albacore spawning stock biomass at the target level on average and according to the timeframes specified in paragraph 29 (...) In order to manage the required reduction in catches, the timeline for achieving the interim target reference point shall be no later than 20 years.”</i></p>
<p><b>Status of condition</b></p>	<p>The condition calls for adoption of a target reference point consistent with maintaining the stock at <math>B_{MSY}</math> or some other measure with similar intent or outcome. The interim TRP agreed on above is well above the default reference point of <math>B_{MSY}=40\%B_0</math> specified in MSC guidance (GSA2.2.3.1). The condition, however, also calls for the TRP to be used for management purposes. The intent of the TRP is clear, however this condition cannot be closed out until it has been formally adopted by WCPFC, for example through a CMM. <u>The condition remains open</u>. Although significant progress has now been made, the condition is considered behind target for its Year 2 milestone. Note that a CAB-wide variation request was recently accepted by the MSC for this and other WCPFC fisheries (see Section 2.3). No suspension action is therefore taken.</p>

#### 4.1.2 Condition 2 - Harvest strategy albacore

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	1.2.1	<b>The harvest strategy is responsive to the state of the stock and the elements of the harvest strategy work together towards achieving management objectives reflected in the target and limit reference points</b>	70
<b>Condition</b>	<p>The fishery should put in place a regional harvest strategy, incorporating limit and target reference points (management objectives), a harvest control rule and management actions, such that the strategy is responsive to the status of the stock and the elements of the strategy work together to maintain the stock at or around the target level.</p> <p>The key missing elements of the harvest strategy at present are 1. a target reference point formally adopted by the regional management system, and 2. a well-defined harvest control rule with associated management actions. These issues are also addressed specifically in conditions 1 and 3.</p>		
<b>Original milestones</b>	By the fourth annual surveillance audit the client should provide evidence that the key missing elements of the harvest strategy are put in place.		
<b>Revised milestones (following pilot harmonisation)</b>	<p><i>One of the agreed outcomes of the pilot harmonisation process for Principle 1 for WCPFC stocks (Hong Kong, April 2016) was that milestones for 1.2.1 should be aligned with the CMM 14-06 workplan. The condition and milestones for 1.1.2 are linked with the condition and milestones for 1.2.1; hence the revised milestones below.</i></p> <p><i>Note: this workplan was revised in December 2016 but the milestones remain in line with the initial workplan.</i></p> <p>By the fifth annual surveillance audit the client should provide evidence that the key missing elements of the harvest strategy are put in place.</p>		
<b>Client action plan</b>	<p><i>The client action plan has been revised to align with the revised milestones.</i></p> <p><b>Client Actions:</b></p> <p><u>Action 1.</u> During 2014 and 2015, encourage FFA SC-SPTBF, through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation, to define a preferred option for the sub-regional system to monitor, conduct stock assessments, and define a harvest control rule and management actions (collectively referred to as a harvest strategy) for south Pacific albacore to ensure that if a TRP were to be exceeded, that the sub-regional management authorities would respond to the change in status of the stock to bring the stock back to within the TRP in a fully effective and timely way.</p> <p><u>Action 2.</u> During 2014, 2015 and 2016 and ongoing as necessary, encourage WCPFC, through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation to the Commission, to adopt a harvest strategy for south Pacific albacore that is consistent with any FFA sub-regional harvest strategy, and that ensures that if a TRP were to be exceeded, that WCPFC would respond to the change in status of the stock to bring the stock back to within the TRP in a fully effective and timely way.</p> <p><u>Action 3.</u> From 2014 onwards, participate in meetings and joint activities of the WCPO Tuna MSC Alignment Group to pursue adoption of a sub-regional and WCPFC robust and precautionary harvest strategy for south Pacific albacore.</p> <p><b>Outcomes &amp; Schedule:</b></p>		

		<p><u>Outcome 1.</u> In 2016, FFA SC-SPTBF formally adopts a harvest strategy for sub-regional management of south Pacific albacore.</p> <p><u>Outcome 2.</u> In 2017, WCPFC formally adopts a harvest strategy for regional management of south Pacific albacore.</p> <p><u>Outcome 3.</u> By December 2019 at WCPFC 16, there is evidence that the harvest strategy for south Pacific albacore is responsive to the state of the stock and the elements of the harvest strategy work together towards achieving management objectives reflected in the target and limit reference points is in place.</p>
<b>Progress Condition [Year 1]</b>	<b>on</b>	<p>CMM 14-06 commits WCPFC to adopting a formal harvest strategy for South Pacific albacore, with an associated timetable running to December 2018 (WCPFC 16) (which does not, however, cover the full development of the harvest strategy).</p> <p>At the same time, a sub-regional process is underway via FFA, based on the Tokelau Arrangement. As detailed above, the FFA is currently working on a sub-regional catch management scheme for albacore, but the Cook Islands has taken the initiative on its own account to develop a TAC/quota scheme for its own albacore fishery – the legislation, regulations and management plan required to implement this are in the final stages of public consultation, and MMR hope to obtain final Parliament and Cabinet approval before the end of the year (2016), so the scheme can be implemented in 2017. The TAC for albacore under this scheme will be based initially on the existing agreed limits under the Tokelau Arrangement, but as noted under Condition 1, the Cook Islands have publicly expressed a willingness to take a cut in their TAC, as part of a wider regional or sub-regional agreed reduction.</p>
<b>Progress Condition [Year 2]</b>	<b>on</b>	<p>In addition to the ongoing work on a WCPFC harvest strategy, the Cook Islands government has on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 implemented the new QMS which sets a TACC for albacore and bigeye. The QMS is part of the newly adopted Marine Resources (Large Pelagic Longline Fishery and Quota Management System) Regulations 2016 and is independent from the discussions taking place under the Tokelau Arrangement which has yet to agree on a catch management system. While the implementation of the QMS is certainly an important development and demonstrates the willingness of the CI government to control albacore (and bigeye) catches, there remains a need for an agreed-upon harvest strategy at regional (WCPFC) level.</p> <p>Note: the WCPO Tuna MSC alignment group was disbanded in 2017. See Condition 1 for further detail and for the revised Client Action Plan.</p>
<b>Progress Condition [Year 3]</b>	<b>on</b>	<p>See condition 1 – an interim TRP was agreed on for SP ALB at WCPFC15. Progress on this condition is on target.</p>
<b>Status condition</b>	<b>of</b>	<p><u>On target</u></p>

#### 4.1.3 Condition 3 - Harvest control rules albacore

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	1.2.2	Well defined harvest control rules are in place that are consistent with the harvest strategy and ensure that the exploitation rate is reduced as limit reference points are approached. The selection of the harvest control rules takes into account the main uncertainties. Available evidence indicates that the tools in use are appropriate and effective in achieving the exploitation levels required under the harvest control rules.	60
<b>Condition</b>	A well-defined regional-level harvest control rule should be put in place, with associated management actions (in the form of a CMM or another form as appropriate) which together act effectively to reduce exploitation rates as the limit reference point is approached. The selection of the harvest control rule should consider the main uncertainties regarding the status of the stock or the impact of the fishery (or other uncertainties if considered important).		
<b>Original milestones</b>	<p>By the first annual surveillance audit, there shall be evidence that the client has started a process of consultation and representation for the establishment of a precautionary and robust harvest control rule with appropriate regional management bodies.</p> <p>By the third annual surveillance audit, the client should provide evidence that the harvest control rule and associated management actions are put in place.</p>		
<b>Revised milestones (following pilot harmonisation)</b>	<p><i>One of the agreed outcomes of the pilot harmonisation process for Principle 1 for WCPFC stocks (Hong Kong, April 2016) was that milestones for 1.1.2 should be aligned with the CMM 14-06 workplan. <u>Note:</u> this workplan was revised in December 2016 but the milestones remain in line with the initial workplan.</i></p> <p>By the first annual surveillance audit, there shall be evidence that the client has started a process of consultation and representation for the establishment of a precautionary and robust harvest control rule with appropriate regional management bodies.</p> <p>By the second annual audit (mid-2017), WCPFC adopts a target reference point (TRP) for south Pacific albacore, WCPFC identifies an acceptable level of risk of breaching the existing limit reference point (LRP), and WCPFC identifies management objectives and performance indicators to evaluate candidate harvest control rules (HCRs).</p> <p>By the third annual audit (mid-2018), WCPFC has defined options for an HCR for South Pacific albacore - defined by MSC as, "A set of well-defined pre-agreed rules or actions used for determining a management action in response to changes in indicators of stock status with respect to reference points." The HCR should be designed to keep stocks near the proposed new TRP and to have a low risk of exceeding the existing LRP. HCR actions are to be designed to reduce fishing mortality rates as limit reference points are approached and keep stocks fluctuating around the new TRP.</p> <p>By the fourth annual audit (mid-2019), WCPFC has reviewed advice from SPC on the likely effects of alternative HCRs on the south Pacific albacore stock, and WCPFC continues to make progress in considering options for a formal HCR.</p>		

	<p>By the fifth annual audit (mid-2020), WCPFC has adopted an HCR and tools, and began implementation of the HCR and tools, for South Pacific albacore, as well as monitoring to assess the efficacy of the TRPs and HCR.</p>
<p><b>Client action plan</b></p>	<p><i>The client action plan has been revised to align with the revised milestones.</i></p> <p><b>Client Actions:</b></p> <p><u>Action 1:</u> During 2014 and 2015, encourage FFA SC-SPTBF, through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation, and continued participation in the WCPO Tuna MSC Principle 1 Alignment Group, to adopt the proposed Tokelau Arrangement, and to take steps to ensure full compliance.</p> <p><u>Action 2:</u> During 2014, 2015 and 2016 and ongoing as required, encourage WCPFC, through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation to the Commission, and continued participation in the WCPO Tuna MSC Principle 1 Alignment Group, to adopt a HCR for the stock that establishing catch limits by CCM, and explicit pre-agreed actions to be taken to reduce the exploitation rate if the stock approaches or falls below reference points.</p> <p><b>Outcomes &amp; Schedule:</b></p> <p><u>Outcome 1.</u> By the end of 2015, FFA SC-SPTBF adopts a well-defined and effective harvest control rule for sub-regional management of south Pacific albacore, establishing catch limits for the FFA member SIDS, and explicit pre-agreed actions to be taken to reduce the exploitation rate if the stock approaches or falls below reference points.</p> <p><u>Outcome 2.</u> By December 2019 at WCPFC 17, WCPFC adopts a well-defined and effective harvest control rule for regional management of south Pacific albacore, that is consistent with any adopted FFA sub-regional measure, and at a regional level establishes catch limits by CCM, and explicit pre-agreed actions to be taken to reduce the exploitation rate if the stock approaches or falls below reference points.</p>
<p><b>Progress on Condition [Year 1]</b></p>	<p>The Year 1 milestone has been retained from the original milestones: <i>By the first annual surveillance audit, there shall be evidence that the client has started a process of consultation and representation for the establishment of a precautionary and robust harvest control rule with appropriate regional management bodies.</i></p> <p>Under the sub-regional Tokelau Arrangement, the Cook Islands has agreed to a limit on albacore catch from their zone, and they are taking steps to enforce this limit via a TAC/quota system (the framework for which is currently being established). It is proposed that these limits be reduced across the region to maintain stock biomass compatible with bio-economic reference points, and the Cook Islands have agreed to be part of this sub-regional process of reduction, as long as the high seas can be included (the Eastern high seas pocket being adjacent to the CI's EEZ). They have made a public commitment to reduce their limit to 7,000 t as a first step, as detailed under Condition 1.</p> <p>Meanwhile, WCPFC has adopted CMM 14-06, which commits to a formal harvest strategy, including harvest control rules and tools, although the associated workplan (through 2018) does not reach the point of a formal agreement of an HCR and tools. The above milestones have been re-aligned with the 14-06 workplan.</p>
<p><b>Progress on Condition [Year 2]</b></p>	<p>Significant progress has already been made by the Cook Islands on a national harvest strategy for albacore. The focus of this condition however is on the agreement of an HCR at regional level among WCPFC member states. The revised 14-06 workplan has delayed the decision on an interim TRP for albacore until December 2017 with the other elements of the workplan (Agreement on acceptable levels of risk for breaching LRP, management objectives and performance indicators) all folded into the ongoing process of evaluation of candidate HCRs. The revised workplan again does not reach a point of a formal agreement of an HCR and tools.</p>

	<p>Noting the considerable effort made by the Cook Islands in implementing a national HCR on albacore, this progress is unfortunately not being met at regional level.</p> <p>Note: the WCPO Tuna MSC alignment group was disbanded in 2017. See Condition 1 for further detail and for the revised Client Action Plan.</p>
<p><b>Progress Condition [Year 3]</b>      <b>on</b></p>	<p>An interim TRP has now been adopted by WCPFC (see Condition 1). The timeline for achieving the interim target reference point shall be no later than 20 years. WCPFC tasked the SC with identifying a range of alternative catch pathways and timeframes that achieve this, for consideration in 2019. Other than the adoption of the interim TRP, no other agreements appear to have been reached at WCPFC15, in relation to an acceptable level of risk of breaching the existing limit reference point (LRP), or management objectives and performance indicators to evaluate candidate harvest control rules (HCRs). Although significant progress has now been made, the condition is considered behind target for its Year 2 milestone. Note that a CAB-wide variation request was recently accepted by the MSC for this and other WCPFC fisheries (see Section 2.3). No suspension action is therefore taken.</p>
<p><b>Status condition</b>      <b>of</b></p>	<p><u>Behind target</u></p>

#### 4.1.4 Condition 4 - ETP species outcome / information and monitoring

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	2.3.1	The effects of the fishery are known and are highly likely to be within limits of national and international requirements for protection of ETP species.	75
	2.3.3	information is collected to support the management of fishery impacts on ETP species, including: - information for the development of the management strategy; - information to assess the effectiveness of the management strategy; and - information to determine the outcome status of ETP species.	75
<b>Condition</b>	The occurrence and outcome of all catches of ETP species (sharks, sea turtles, seabirds and cetaceans) by LTFV vessels should be systematically and accurately reported, so that fishery-related mortality on ETP species can be quantitatively determined and the effectiveness of the management strategies can be determined. Where a need has been identified, the collected data should enable further development of management strategies to ensure that the fishery does not hinder recovery of ETP species.		
<b>Milestones</b>	<p>By the first annual audit, demonstrate that training is underway for vessel crew members in identification, handling and reporting of relevant ETP species.</p> <p>By the second annual audit it should be demonstrated that an appropriate reporting system is in place and is being used by all LTFV crew.</p>		
<b>Client action plan</b>	<p><b>Client Actions:</b></p> <p><u>Action 1:</u> By August 2014, develop a ‘train-the-trainer’ ETP workshop to build the capacity for Cook Islands government and catch sector company dockside staff to train longline captains in the Cook Islands longline albacore fishery to: (i) understand Cook Islands government longline rules, (ii) improve species identification, (iii) understand proper methods for completing SPC logbook forms, (iv) understand handling and release practices for seabirds, sea turtles, cetaceans and elasmobranchs to optimize the probability of post-release survival.</p> <p><u>Action 2:</u> By the end of 2015, all captains of vessels in the client group attend a minimum of one ETP training workshop per year.</p> <p><u>Action 3:</u> If data suggest an issue with ETP interactions (such that PI 2.3.1 is not being met at the 80 level) then the fishery will develop and implement further management actions to address the issue(s) identified.</p> <p><b>Outcomes &amp; Schedule:</b></p> <p><u>Outcome 1:</u> Materials for the ETP workshop, bilingual English/Chinese, are completed by June 2015. Materials include: a PowerPoint presentation to lead the training workshop, summary of Cook Islands longline rules, handling/release methods guides for each of the four groups (turtles, cetaceans, seabirds, elasmobranchs), species identification guide.</p>		

	<p><u>Outcome 2:</u> By the end of 2016, records confirm that all captains of vessels in the client group that were active in the fishery during 2015 attended at least one workshop during 2015.</p> <p><u>Outcome 3:</u> By June 2016, logbook records of interactions with ETP species are consistent with observer records (demonstrated that an appropriate reporting system is in place and is being used by all LTFV crew).</p> <p><u>Outcome 4:</u> By June 2016, Observer records of handling and release practices for ETP species demonstrate longline fisher compliance with relevant binding measures.</p> <p><u>Outcome 5:</u> By December 2016, data on interactions with ETP species have been analysed and any issues in terms of outcomes for ETP species have been flagged.</p> <p><u>Outcome 6:</u> By June 2017, if necessary, new management measures are agreed and in place to deal with any outstanding issues for ETP species, such that the 80 level is met for PI 2.3.1 for all relevant ETP species.</p>
<p><b>Progress on Condition [Year 1]</b></p>	<p>The training programme commenced during the 1<sup>st</sup> year of certification with an initial captain training workshop taking place on 26-27 August 2014: fisheries consultant Mike McCoy met with staff from the Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources (MMR) and the Huanan Fishery Cook Islands Company, a subsidiary of Luen Thai Fishing Venture (LTFV), to review the objectives, draft workshop presentation and training materials for a workshop on 28 August. The purpose of the workshop was to augment the capacity of Cook Islands government and longline fishing company staff to lead workshops for captains of longline vessels that fish in the Cook Islands Exclusive Economic Zone. On 28 August a two-hour workshop took place attended by MMR and fishing company staff, and by available longline captains.</p> <p>A refresher train-the-trainer workshop was again conducted by Mike McCoy on 14 April 2016 in Zhoushan, China to train LTFV staff who train fishing base managers to instruct captains of pelagic longline tuna vessels that are based out of the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Cook Islands. In addition to the LTFV trainers, three longline vessel captains and their crew attended the workshop. A summary of the workshop is shown in Appendix 4. Note that this training is being undertaken because of this condition, as well as in the context of several tuna Fishery Improvement Programmes (FIPs), including the Federated Stated of Micronesia and Marshall Islands Longline Tuna Fishery Improvement Projects.</p> <p>The aim of the workshops is to provide longline captains with an improved understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Cook Islands rules for longline vessel operators</li> <li>(ii) how to properly complete government logbook forms</li> <li>(iii) how to use a guide to identify catch to the species level, to augment the rigor of logbook records</li> <li>(iv) prescribed methods to handle and release sea turtles, sharks, rays, cetaceans and seabirds to maximize the probability of their survival after release, and</li> <li>(v) LTFV Venture company policy restricting gear and fishing methods and prohibiting the retention of sharks, including shark fins.</li> </ul> <p>More information can be seen here: <a href="http://fishing-living.org/category/cook-islands/#sthash.ivqflkV1.ceg0AvEi.dpuf">http://fishing-living.org/category/cook-islands/#sthash.ivqflkV1.ceg0AvEi.dpuf</a></p> <p>Training materials are made available to captains via this link: <a href="https://sites.google.com/site/fsmlonglinefip/home/captain-training-workshop-materials/">https://sites.google.com/site/fsmlonglinefip/home/captain-training-workshop-materials/</a></p>

	<p>Li Pan is the LTFV lead for coordinating the captain training and supplied the audit team with a summary of the captains and vessels that are currently fishing in the Cook Islands that have received training so far during calendar year 2016.</p> <p>With regards to the training programme, the audit team was satisfied that the client group is on target with their action plan and with addressing the condition.</p> <p>While this is not a formal milestone of the condition, the action plan did identify the following outcome: <u>Outcome 3</u>: By June 2016, logbook records of interactions with ETP species are consistent with observer records (demonstrated that an appropriate reporting system is in place and is being used by all LTFV crew). A comparison of shark discard data recorded in logbooks vs observer data indicates that significant inaccuracies in the recording of ETP species (in this case, sharks) remain. Silky and mako sharks continue to be underreported in the logbooks. There is further no indication that interactions with other ETP species such as turtles are being recorded by the crew in logsheets. The fishery is therefore not on target with the action plan outcome; however, it is overall on target with the condition.</p>
<p><b>Progress on Condition [Year 2]</b></p>	<p>The client demonstrated that the training programme continues. Two kinds of training are now taking place: one is the Crew Capacity-Building training (which includes the Garbage Management Plan training – see Year 2 surveillance report), the other is the NOAA Dolphin Safe Training Program Training. The training covers the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic longline regulations;</li> <li>• Company policy banning the use of gear designs to target sharks and banning the retention of sharks and rays, including shark fins;</li> <li>• Best practice methods to handle and release at-risk species, including sharks, rays, marine mammals, sea turtles and seabirds;</li> <li>• Use of prescribed handling and release equipment to safely release at-risk species;</li> <li>• Completing logsheets, including training in species identification to improve logsheet data quality;</li> <li>• Implementation of garbage management plans; and</li> <li>• NOAA Dolphin Safe Training.</li> </ul> <p>Despite this the audit team was unable to confirm whether interactions with ETP species are being accurately reported on by the crew in logsheets. This is due to a potential change in how MMR produces summaries of logbook data following a staffing change. For this reason the client has decided that, as MMR is unable to provide the audit team with a logbook data summary for subsequent annual surveillance audits that includes information on the number of interactions with ETP species by trip., The client will enter data from original logsheets to produce the summary data required by the CAB to address the condition on 2.3.1 (ETP outcome).</p>
<p><b>Progress on Condition [Year 3]</b></p>	<p>The training programmes described for the Year 1 and 2 surveillance audits continue. During Year 3, the Client Group demonstrated that significant improvements were made in the reporting of ETP and particularly shark interactions as shown in the following table. Note that this condition was raised during the initial assessment as recording of shark discards is a requirement under the Marine Resources (Shark Conservation) Regulations 2012. At the time of the initial assessment, there were significant discrepancies in the number of discards recorded in the logbook data vs observer data. The table below provides a more realistic picture. Bearing in mind the difficulties with accurately recording shark interactions (most sharks are cut off the lines), the surveillance team considered that between the logbooks and the observer data, sufficient data are now available so that the effects of the fishery on ETP species, and particularly sharks, are known. This PI was therefore rescored, and the condition closed.</p> <p><b>Comparison of 2016/17 reported shark discards between logbook and observer data:</b></p>

Species	2016		2017	
	Logbook	Observer	Logbook	Observer
BLUE SHARK	2628	85	2531	110
HAMMERHEAD SHARKS	7	0	9	
MAKO SHARKS	41	6	14	3
OCEANIC WHITETIP SHARK	840	4	647	4
PELAGIC THRESHER SHARK	7	0		
PORBEAGLE SHARK	39	0	5	
SILKY SHARK	339	21	63	10
THRESHER SHARKS	29	0	42	11

<b>Status of condition</b>	<u>Closed</u> , see Appendix 2 for rescoring.
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#### 4.1.5 Condition 5 - ETP species management

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	2.3.2	<b>There is evidence that the strategy is being implemented successfully.</b>	75
<b>Condition</b>	The client will provide evidence that all Cook Islands regulations on fishery interactions with sea turtles are consistently respected and adhered to by LTFV crew so that it can be demonstrated that the fishery does not pose a risk of serious harm to sea turtles, mortality of sea turtles is minimized, and the fishery does not hinder recovery of vulnerable sea turtle populations.		
<b>Milestones</b>	<p>By the first annual audit, demonstrate that training is underway for vessel crew members in identification, handling and reporting of relevant ETP species.</p> <p>By the second annual audit, demonstrate awareness in crew members of the regulations and handling requirements for sea turtles.</p> <p>By the third annual audit, the client should demonstrate that all Cook Islands regulations on fishery interactions with sea turtles are consistently respected and adhered to by LTFV crew.</p>		
<b>Client action plan</b>	<p><b>Client Actions:</b></p> <p><u>Action 1.</u> By the end of 2016, via a dockside inventory of longline vessel gear designs, estimate the depth of hooks in a basket (between 2 floats) when gear is soaking, and if some of the hooks are soaking shallower than 50m, identify options to get all hooks below 50m (a best practice gear design to avoid and minimize catch of sea turtles and some elasmobranch species).</p> <p><u>Action 2:</u> Improvement in identification of ETP species to the species level (including for sea turtles) and recording on SPC logbook forms by captains and crew of vessels in the client group will be pursued via the training workshop described under condition 4.</p> <p><u>Action 3:</u> Captains of vessels in the client group will be required to annually attend an ETP training workshop, described under Condition 4, in part to improve compliance with required sea turtle handling and release methods.</p> <p><b>Outcomes &amp; Schedule:</b></p> <p><u>Outcome 1:</u> By the third annual audit, client demonstrates that all Cook Islands regulations on fishery interactions with sea turtles are consistently complied with, including through the implementation of the subsequent Outcomes under this condition.</p> <p><u>Outcome 2:</u> By June 2017, all vessels in the client group are employing gear designs that are predicted to result in the terminal tackle soaking below 50m depth.</p> <p><u>Outcome 3:</u> (Same as Outcome under Condition 4) By June 2016, logbook records of interactions with ETP species are consistent with observer records (demonstrated that an appropriate reporting system is in place and is being used by all LTFV crew).</p>		
<b>Progress on Condition [Year 1]</b>	<p>Progress on the training programme is discussed under condition 4.</p> <p>During the 1<sup>st</sup> certification year, LTFV base managers were consulted to obtain information on vessel gear designs, with information on float line length, branchline length, and number of hooks between floats. In addition, on 27 Jan 2015, the client group submitted an inquiry to Cooks MMR to review observer data for the most recent 3 years to obtain mean float line and branchline lengths and hooks per float to confirm information provided by the vessel captains. Based on the gear designs, including accounting for the distance between floatlines and the first branchlines attached closest to floats, the depth of shallowest hooks was estimated to soak at a depth &gt;50m.</p>		

	As per condition 4, the observer and logbook discard data for ETP species indicates that outcome 3 of the client action plan is behind target. However here also, the condition does not specify this requirement as a formal milestone for Year 1; the fishery is therefore on target overall with addressing the condition.
<b>Progress on Condition [Year 2]</b>	The client demonstrated that the training programme continues. Two kinds of training are now taking place: one is the Crew Capacity-Building training, the other is the NOAA Dolphin Safe Training Program Training. Other than the isolated shark finning incidents referred to in the Year 2 surveillance report, the MMR confirmed through observer reports that the client fleet is generally compliant with the Cook Islands regulations on fishery interactions with sea turtles, which this condition ultimately relates to. As per Condition 4, however, the audit team was unable to verify whether reporting on interactions with ETP species is improving.
<b>Progress on Condition [Year 3]</b>	As discussed under Condition 4, the reporting on interactions with ETP species has improved significantly and Condition 4 is now closed. Observer reports, as well interviews with MMR staff, indicate that the client fishery continues to abide by Cook Islands and by extension WCPFC regulations. Interactions with sea turtles have been at best sporadic over the last 4 years according to observer data. On this basis, the surveillance team was satisfied that Cook Islands regulations on fishery interactions with sea turtles are respected and adhered to by LTFV crew and that the fishery does not pose a risk of serious harm to sea turtles, mortality of sea turtles is minimized, and the fishery does not hinder recovery of vulnerable sea turtle populations. This condition can therefore be closed.
<b>Status of condition</b>	<u>Closed</u> , see Appendix 2 for rescoring.

#### 4.1.6 Condition 6 - Consultation, Roles and Responsibilities

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	3.1.2	The management system includes consultation processes that regularly seek and accept relevant information, including local knowledge. The management system demonstrates consideration of the information obtained.	75
<b>Condition</b>	The client must provide evidence that processes at national level are put in place to i) regularly engage with key stakeholders to seek and accept relevant information, and ii) demonstrate that the information obtained from such engagement has been duly considered.		
<b>Milestones</b>	<p>By the first annual audit, demonstrate that there has been discussion with MMR regarding stakeholder consultation processes</p> <p>By the second audit, demonstrate that the development by MMR of formal stakeholder consultation processes has started.</p> <p>The processes should be in place by the third annual audit</p>		
<b>Client action plan</b>	<p><b>Client Actions:</b></p> <p><u>Action 1:</u> By June 2015, the client will request in a letter to MMR that MMR convene at least one stakeholder consultation per year to provide a venue to discuss and collect information on the domestic management framework for the Cook Islands longline albacore tuna fishery, and to request that, if the number of applications for longline licenses exceeds the limit, that a consultative Licensing Committee be convened. The client will emphasize that the national consultation process should provide opportunity and encouragement for all interested and affected parties to be involved, and facilitates their effective engagement, and that the management system demonstrates how information received during the stakeholder consultations was considered, and how it was used or not used, and why.</p> <p><b>Outcomes &amp; Schedule:</b></p> <p><u>Outcome 1:</u> The domestic consultative processes are in place by the third annual audit.</p>		
<b>Progress on Condition [Year 1]</b>	<p>The Marine Resources Bill as currently drafted makes provision for a Fisheries Advisory Committee (FAC) (Section 10) to provide management advice to MMR. The bill does not stipulate who should be on the FAC, but it is proposed that it include stakeholders from industry and NGOs. The bill also requires the preparation of a fishery plan for any 'designated fishery' (which includes the offshore longline fishery), and requires a formal public consultation process in the preparation of a fishery plan. It also requires a formal public consultation process before any quota system is put in place and regarding the designation of marine parks and protected areas.</p> <p>The draft of the bill, as well as the fishery plan for the offshore longline fishery and the new fishery regulations, are currently out for their final phase of public consultation prior to presentation to Parliament and Cabinet for final approval.</p> <p>The process of preparing the quota management system included a full week of formal public consultation – presentation of the outline plan to the public on the Monday, incorporation of comments into a three-day workshop, supported by experts from New Zealand and FFA during which the details were developed, and finally presentation of the workshop results to the</p>		

	public on the Friday. It was reported that stakeholder comments were generally positive, although the industry had concerns about cost.
<b>Progress Condition [Year 2]</b>	<p>The Draft Marine Resources Bill (version 2017) which will repeal the current Marine Resources Act 2005, makes provision for various formal mechanisms by which stakeholders are able to provide management advice to MMR in a transparent and legislated manner. The Bill does not stipulate who should be members of any proposed committees but in the Draft QMAC (Quota Management Advisory Committee) Rules, membership is spelled out under Section 9. The 2017 Draft Bill also requires the preparation of a fishery plan for any ‘designated fishery’ (which includes the offshore longline fishery), and requires a formal public consultation process in the preparation of a fishery plan. It also requires a formal public consultation process before any quota system is put in place and regarding the designation of marine parks and protected areas.</p> <p>The Cook Islands Marine Resources Act (2005) is currently the legal national instrument in force for fishery resource management. Under provisions of this Act, in sections 6 and 92, the Executive Council enacted the “Marine Resources (Large Pelagic Longline Fishery and Quota Management System) Regulations on 6th December 2016. Included under these new regulations are provisions for: i) a formal stakeholder consultation process (Schedule 4, Part 14), including Draft Rules of Procedure; ii) the creation of a Quota Management Advisory Committee (Schedule 4, Part 15) and: iii) regular review of the fishery plan (Schedule 4, Part 16).</p>
<b>Progress Condition [Year 3]</b>	<p>The Marine Resources Bill (2017) was promulgated as of July 2018 and with that, the Marae Moana Act was also enacted. An important feature of this Act is the creation of the 50nm Marine Protected Areas around all islands in the Cook Islands EEZ. However, validation of the Rules of Procedure for a “Quota Management Advisory Committee” and the “Quota Management System Allocation Policy” have not yet progressed. As a consequence, a QM Advisory Committee has not yet convened. Complicating this situation is the fact that only 6 of the allocated 12 management staff position are filled at the MMR at the time of this audit. In addition, given the fact that an effective sitting government was not in session until July 2018, this condition should probably be considered only slightly behind target but moving in the right direction.</p> <p>Nonetheless, the Ministry of Marine Resources continues to produce Annual Reports which are readily available and also downloadable from their site (<a href="http://www.mmr.gov.ck/publications/annual-reports">http://www.mmr.gov.ck/publications/annual-reports</a>) as well as much more information.</p> <p>For increased social media presence, the Ministry of Marine Resources has an active Facebook Policy and presence. Radio Cook Islands News has a regular “The Maroro Show” on Fridays at 10am where an MMR agent discusses topics of public interest about the Ministry. In addition, the MMR has taken out newspaper press releases and sent articles to Radio NZ, Pacific Islands News Agency regularly profiling activities of interest to the greater Pacific community.</p> <p>In October, Chinese TV CCTV will be interviewing MMR staff about the activities of their agency of interest to the Chinese audience.</p> <p>Finally, on October 18, 2018 the MMR held a stakeholder consultation on the Monitoring and Control and Surveillance Plan Gap analysis.</p>
<b>Status condition of</b>	<p>The Bill and Act of concern have now been promulgated and MMR confirmed that progress in establishing the appropriate consultative committees and mechanisms associated with this new legislation would move forward as expeditiously as possible. Therefore, the team concluded that they would prefer to see the new system in full operation and the Marine Resources Bill 2017 operational for more than just 2 months, before closing the condition. <u>Therefore, the condition is considered behind target</u> and should be closed out at the Year 4 surveillance audit.</p>

#### 4.1.7 Condition 7 - Incentives for Sustainable Fishing

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	3.1.4	The management system provides for incentives that are consistent with achieving the outcomes expressed by MSC Principles 1 and 2, and seeks to ensure that perverse incentives do not arise.	60
<b>Condition</b>	<p>The client should demonstrate that the subsidies identified by FFA and acknowledged by the client do not lead to perverse incentives that are inconsistent with achieving the outcomes expressed by MSC principles 1 and 2;</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Implement a harvest strategy that includes strengthened harvest control rules that are more responsive to increasing effort in the albacore fishery, such that the impact of subsidies is restricted to lowering the operating costs of subsidized fleets, rather than acting as an incentive to increase effort.</p>		
<b>Original Milestones</b>	This condition should be met by the third annual audit		
<b>Revised milestones</b>	<p><i>The milestones and action plan for this condition are the same as for Condition 2 – the milestone has therefore been revised in line with the revision of milestones for Condition 2 above.</i></p> <p>This condition should be met by the fifth annual audit</p>		
<b>Client action plan</b>	<p><b>Client Actions:</b></p> <p><u>Action 1:</u> In implementing defined actions to meet conditions of certification related to MSC principles 1 and 2, and meeting relevant Outcomes for these actions, the client will contribute to achieving effective sub-regional and regional management systems for the south Pacific albacore regional fishery, including the adoption of a formal target reference point that maintains the stock at a level consistent with <math>B_{MSY}</math> or similar precautionary management target, a harvest strategy responsive to the state of the stock and designed to achieve the management objectives, and HCR and tools consistent with the harvest strategy that reduce fishing mortality as the BRPs are approached and which account for uncertainty. By securing this effective stock management system this will ensure that the impact of government subsidies is not able to result in unsustainable levels of fishing under WCPFC.</p> <p><b>Outcomes &amp; Schedule:</b></p> <p><u>Outcome 1:</u> By December 2019 at WCPFC 16, robust sub-regional and regional management systems are in place. For details see Condition 2.</p>		
<b>Progress on Condition [Year 1]</b>	The response to this condition is the same as for Condition 2.		
<b>Progress on Condition [Year 2]</b>	The response to this condition is the same as for Condition 2.		
<b>Progress on Condition [Year 3]</b>	The response to this condition is the same as for Condition 2.		

<b>Status condition</b>	<b>of</b>	The response to this condition is the same as for Condition 2.
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#### 4.1.8 Condition 8 - Decision-Making Processes

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	3.2.2	<b>Decision-making processes respond to serious and other important issues identified in relevant research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation, in a transparent, timely and adaptive manner and take account of the wider implications of decisions.</b>	75
<b>Condition</b>	By working with the relevant Cook Islands management agencies, the client should demonstrate i) that decision-making processes at national level respond to serious and other important issues identified in relevant research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation, in a transparent, timely and adaptive manner and take account of the wider implications of decisions and ii) that information on fishery performance and management action at national level is available to stakeholders on request, and that explanations are provided for any actions or lack of action associated with findings and relevant recommendations emerging from research, monitoring, evaluation and review activity.		
<b>Milestones</b>	<p>By the first annual audit, demonstrate that there has been discussion with MMR regarding decision-making processes</p> <p>By the second annual audit, demonstrate that information is available to stakeholders on request</p> <p>By the third annual surveillance audit it should be demonstrated that Cook Islands decision-making processes are transparent, timely and adaptive and that information is available to stakeholders on request.</p>		
<b>Client action plan</b>	<p><b>Client Actions:</b></p> <p><u>Action 1:</u> By June 2015, the client will urge the Cook Islands Government, via including in the letter to MMR to be written and sent per the activity under condition 6, requesting that the national decision-making processes for management of the Cook Islands longline albacore fishery respond to serious and other important issues identified in relevant research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation, in a transparent, timely and adaptive manner and take account of the wider implications of decisions.</p> <p><b>Outcomes &amp; Schedule:</b></p> <p><u>Outcome 1:</u> The domestic consultative processes is in place by the third annual audit. Stakeholder consultations will be open to all interested parties.</p>		
<b>Progress on Condition [Year 1]</b>	As set out in relation to Condition 6, improved procedures for stakeholder participation in decision-making are in the process of being put in place, and the procedures followed in relation to the development of the quota management system provided multiple opportunities for stakeholders to obtain information as well as to comment.		
<b>Progress on Condition [Year 2]</b>	In 2015 the client sent a letter to MMR urging the Cook Islands Government to ensure that the national decision-making processes for management of the Cook Islands longline fishery respond to serious and other important issues identified in relevant research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation, in a transparent, timely and adaptive manner and take account of the wider implications of decisions. In mid-2016, the client emailed and met with MMR to remind them of this and all other conditions of certification, milestones, and client actions and outcomes.		

	<p>As per condition 6, the formal processes for stakeholder consultation are being put in place through the Draft Marine Resources Bill (version 2017) and new Marine Resources (Large Pelagic Longline Fishery and Quota Management System) Regulations (promulgated on 6th December 2016).</p> <p>To verify progress against this condition the audit team reached out specifically to those stakeholders that contributed to the initial assessment. Comments were received from Kelvin Passfield of the Telpukarea Society only. While progress appears to have been made, Mr Passfield remained concerned about the lack of responsiveness from the MMR in relation to information requests about the purse seine fishery as well as the longline fishery. For the longline fishery (which is what this condition relates to), an excel spreadsheet showing the percentage catches of different tuna species and other non-tuna species by weight and year was requested. In addition, the total number of sea turtles caught for 2009 to 2015 was also requested. Although some information on longline fishing for 2015 was made available in the MMR annual report, this was not in the format requested (XL spreadsheet). It also contained no mention of sea turtles. Furthermore, the Te Ipukarea Society is currently not listed as a stakeholder in the draft Marine Sector Policy document.</p> <p>The audit team took into consideration the stakeholders’ feedback on this issue and were of the opinion that the above comments are not sufficient to say that information on fishery performance and management action at national level is NOT available – after all, the MMR annual reports provide an overview of fishing operations with catch statistics by gear and species as well as information on other work areas of the Marine Resources Offshore Division including the Observer Program, Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) activities, and flagged vessels operating in areas beyond national jurisdiction. It is also noteworthy that information on interactions with sea turtles in the longline fishery is detailed in the annual Part I reports for the Cook Islands which is publicly available on the SPC website: <a href="http://www.spc.int/CoastalFisheries/Country/DigitalLibrary/CK">http://www.spc.int/CoastalFisheries/Country/DigitalLibrary/CK</a>. The audit team did , take note of the concerns raised by the Te Ipukarea Society. While the evidence is insufficient to state that progress against this condition is behind target, progress against this condition will be kept under review for the Year 3 surveillance audit.</p> <p>Note: following re-scoring of PI 3.2.2 this condition has been revised. For the revised scoring tables please see Appendix 1. The revised condition and Client Action Plan are shown in Appendix 2.</p>
<p><b>Progress on Condition [Year 3]</b></p>	<p>Given the fact that an effective sitting government was not in session until July 2018, this condition is behind target on the national level. Nonetheless, the Marine Resources Bill (2017) was promulgated in July 2018 and with that, the Marae Moana Act could also become enacted. This created the 50 nm Marine Protected Area around all islands in the Cook Islands EEZ. However, validation of the Rules of Procedure for a “Quota Management Advisory Committee” and the “Quota Management System Allocation Policy” has not yet progressed. As a consequence, a QM Advisory Committee has not yet convened. Complicating this situation is the fact that only 6 of the allocated 12 management staff position are filled at the MMR at the time of this audit.</p> <p>Nonetheless, on October 18, 2018 the MMR held a stakeholder consultation on their Monitoring and Control and Surveillance Plan Gap analysis, seeking level of compliance with CMM 2017-07.</p>
<p><b>Status of condition</b></p>	<p>None of the stakeholders who previously expressed concern about this issue had contacted Control Union in relation to this audit. It appears that information is now more available to stakeholders, and decision-making is more transparent, at least on paper, but the team concluded that they would prefer to see the new system under the recently promulgated Marine Resources Bill 2017 and Marae Moana Act in full operation for more than just 2 months, before closing the condition. For the moment, <u>the condition is behind target</u> and will need closing out at the Year 4 surveillance audit.</p>

#### 4.1.9 Condition 9 - Harvest strategy yellowfin

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	1.2.1	The harvest strategy is responsive to the state of the stock and the elements of the harvest strategy work together towards achieving management objectives reflected in the target and limit reference points	70
<b>Condition</b>	<p>The fishery should put in place a regional harvest strategy, incorporating limit and target reference points (management objectives), a harvest control rule and management actions, such that the strategy is responsive to the status of the stock and the elements of the strategy work together to maintain the stock at or around the target level.</p> <p>The key missing element of the harvest strategy at present is a well-defined harvest control rule with associated management actions. This issue is addressed specifically in Condition 10.</p>		
<b>Milestones</b>	<p><i>Aligned with workplan for CMM 14-06 as per pilot harmonisation (see Appendix 2)</i>  <i>Note: this workplan was revised in December 2016 but the milestones remain in line with the initial workplan.</i></p> <p>By the end of Year 5, the client should provide evidence that WCPFC has put in place the key missing elements of the harvest strategy.</p>		
<b>Client action plan</b>	<p><b>Client Actions:</b></p> <p><u>Action 1.</u> During 2017 and ongoing as necessary, encourage WCPFC, through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation to the Commission, to adopt a harvest strategy for WCPO yellowfin tuna that ensures that if a TRP were to be exceeded, that WCPFC would respond to the change in status of the stock to bring the stock back to within the TRP in a fully effective and timely way.</p> <p><u>Action 2.</u> From 2017 onwards, participate in meetings and joint activities of the WCPO Tuna MSC Alignment Group to pursue adoption of a WCPFC robust and precautionary harvest strategy for WCPO yellowfin tuna.</p> <p><b>Outcomes &amp; Schedule:</b></p> <p><u>Outcome 1.</u> By December 2019, at WCPFC16, WCPFC adopts a comprehensive harvest strategy, including a target reference point, and harvest control rule and associated management actions, for regional management of WCPO yellowfin tuna.</p> <p><u>Outcome 2.</u> By the end of certification, there is evidence that the harvest strategy is responsive to the state of the stock and the elements of the harvest strategy work together towards achieving management objectives reflected in the target and limit reference points.</p>		
<b>Progress on Condition [Year 1]</b>	N/a (yellowfin was added in February 2017)		
<b>Progress on Condition [Year 2]</b>	Since the Cook Islands Quota Management System only applies to albacore and bigeye tuna, the yellowfin fishery continues to follow the WCPFC CMM: WCPFC13 replaced CMM 2015-01 for tropical tuna with CMM 2016-01. This is a one-year interim measure; it is hoped that a multi-annual tropical tuna management measure will be developed by WCPFC14 at the end of 2017.		

	<p>As for albacore, the initial 14-06 workplan set out the key objectives for WCPFC13 which were to record management objectives and agree acceptable levels of risk. At the time of writing, none of these things were achieved, except to note that an acceptable level of risk could not be &gt;20 %. A revised workplan (WCPFC, 2017; Attachment N) was agreed which pushes the key decisions forward to end 2017 or further.</p> <p>Note: the WCPO Tuna MSC alignment group was disbanded in 2017. See Condition 1 for further detail and for the revised Client Action Plan.</p>
<b>Progress on Condition [Year 3]</b>	Other than the adoption of the interim TRP on SP albacore, no other agreements appear to have been reached at WCPFC15, in relation to yellowfin. However, as there is no Year 3 milestone for this condition, it is considered on target overall.
<b>Status of condition</b>	On target

#### 4.1.10 Condition 10 - Harvest control rules and tools yellowfin

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	1.2.2	<b>There are well defined and effective harvest control rules in place</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Condition</b>	A well-defined regional-level harvest control rule should be put in place, with associated management actions (in the form of a CMM or another form as appropriate) which together act effectively to reduce exploitation rates as the limit reference point is approached. The selection of the harvest control rule should consider the main uncertainties regarding the status of the stock or the impact of the fishery (or other uncertainties if considered important).		
<b>Milestones</b>	<p><i>Aligned with workplan for CMM 14-06 as per pilot harmonisation (see Appendix 2)</i>  <i>Note: this workplan was revised in December 2016 but the milestones remain in line with the initial workplan.</i></p> <p>By the second annual audit (mid-2017), WCPFC identifies an acceptable level of risk of breaching the existing limit reference point (LRP), and WCPFC identifies management objectives to evaluate candidate harvest control rules (HCRs).</p> <p>By the third annual audit (mid-2018), there is evidence that the Scientific Committee has been working on defining and evaluating options for yellowfin HCRs. WCPFC has reviewed advice from the Scientific Committee on options for HCRs for the WCPO yellowfin stock, and WCPFC continues to make progress in considering options for a formal HCR.</p> <p>By the fourth annual audit (mid-2019), WCPFC agrees a monitoring strategy and performance indicators by which to evaluate candidate HCRs. WCPFC has reviewed advice from SPC and the Scientific Committee on MSE of alternative HCRs on the WCPO yellowfin stock, and WCPFC continues to make progress in considering options for a formal HCR.</p> <p>By the end of certification, WCPFC has adopted a HCR and tools, and began implementation of the HCR and tools, for WCPO yellowfin, as well as monitoring to assess the efficacy of the HCR.</p>		
<b>Client action plan</b>	<p><b>Client Actions:</b></p> <p><u>Action 1:</u> During 2017 and ongoing as required, encourage WCPFC, through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation to the Commission, and through the client's continued participation in the WCPO Tuna MSC Alignment Group, to adopt a HCR for the stock with explicit pre-agreed actions to be taken to reduce the exploitation rate if the stock approaches or falls below reference points.</p> <p><b>Outcomes &amp; Schedule:</b></p> <p><u>Outcome 1.</u> By the annual surveillance audit in 2020 (i.e., at WCPFC16 in Dec. 2019), WCPFC adopts a well-defined and effective harvest control rule for regional management of WCPO yellowfin tuna, and establishes explicit pre-agreed actions to be taken to reduce the exploitation rate if the stock approaches or falls below reference points.</p>		
<b>Progress on Condition [Year 1]</b>	N/a (yellowfin was added in February 2017)		
<b>Progress on Condition [Year 2]</b>	As for albacore, the initial 14-06 workplan set out the key objectives for WCPFC13 which were to record management objectives and agree acceptable levels of risk. At the time of writing, none of these things were achieved, except to note that an acceptable level of risk could not be >20 %. A revised workplan (WCPFC, 2017; Attachment N) was agreed which pushes the key decisions forward end 2017 or further. The revised workplan again does not reach a point of a formal agreement of an HCR and tools.		

	Note: the WCPO Tuna MSC alignment group was disbanded in 2017. See Condition 1 for further detail and for the revised Client Action Plan.
<b>Progress on Condition [Year 3]</b>	Other than the adoption of the interim TRP on SP albacore, no other agreements appear to have been reached at WCPFC15, in relation to an acceptable level of risk of breaching the existing limit reference point (LRP), or management objectives and performance indicators to evaluate candidate harvest control rules (HCRs) for yellowfin. The condition is considered behind target for its Year 2 milestone. Note that a CAB-wide variation request was recently accepted by the MSC for this and other WCPFC fisheries (see Section 2.3). No suspension action is therefore taken.
<b>Status of condition</b>	<u>Behind target</u>

## 4.2 Recommendations

Three recommendations have been raised for this fishery: one was raised during the initial assessment in relation to marine litter; the second was raised at the Year 1 surveillance in relation to a shark finning incident and was closed out during Year 2. A third was raised during the Year 3 Surveillance and remains open.

### 4.2.1 Recommendation 1: Waste management

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>The audit team reviewed 2012 and 2013 observer reports and noted frequent infringements against MARPOL73/78 regulations due to the dumping at sea of plastics, metals, chemicals, and old fishing line. The exact frequency of these types of incidents is unknown and therefore the impact cannot be estimated. While there is no provision in the MSC standard to assess this type of activity against the scoring guideposts, any fishery proclaiming to provide the best environmental choice in seafood (through the MSC logo) should be discouraged from any form of dumping at sea. The team acknowledges that this is a widespread problem across global fisheries; however, it is recommended that incidents of dumping at sea are demonstrably reduced.</p>		
<b>Milestones</b>	n/a		
<b>Client action plan</b>	n/a		
<b>Progress on Recommendation [Year 1]</b>	<p>During the 1st certification year, the client group issued a summary of longline vessel rules to captains of all UoC vessels which includes a reminder to not discharge any non-degradable rubbish at sea. All plastic and other non-biodegradable waste should be stowed on the vessel until its return to port, where the waste can be disposed of using seaport facilities (see Appendix 5).</p> <p>However, a review of 2014/2015 observer reports at the surveillance audit indicated that this issue is still ongoing. In response to concerns raised by the audit team, the client group has now put in place a 'garbage management plan' for its longline vessels operating in Cook Islands and FSM waters. The management plan prohibits any discharging of inorganic waste and sets out procedures for garbage disposal, designation of responsible staff within the client group (at sea and onshore) and a system for reward and punishment. The plan is being implemented on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 2016. The management plan is shown in Appendix 6.</p>		
<b>Progress on Recommendation [Year 2]</b>	<p>A garbage management plan was adopted and implemented by the client fleet in October 2016. In addition to the management plan, training on its implementation is now also incorporated into the Crew Capacity-Building training programme which is run on an annual basis. The Client reported that since the start of implementation, 18 UoC vessels were inspected in port at the end of 23 trips to assess compliance with the management plan. During all the 23 trips, all the vessels had garbage onboard, indicating compliance. The seaports at the end of the trips were in Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia and China. During the surveillance, however, review of observer reports indicates that at-sea discarding of non-biodegradable waste is still an ongoing issue. By way of example, in a single observer report, 11 separate incidents were recorded.</p>		

<b>Progress on Recommendation [Year 3]</b>	<p>A client fleet trash management plan has been in place since October 2016. Trash collection audits are being done upon return to port both in Cook Islands, but from records available, mostly in FSM. There are audit “records” for both List A and List B client vessels in 2017 and up to June 2018. In addition, records of annual crew training which, under theme 7, is the garbage management plan, are available for 2017 and to June 2018. However, it is not immediately evident as to how effective the plan really is. During this surveillance, review of observer reports indicates that at-sea discarding of non-biodegradable waste is still an ongoing issue, as 2 out of 5 observer trips still had waste dumping incidents. Nevertheless, some progress is being made although this could be improved on. This recommendation will therefore remain open.</p> <p>Note: CMM 2017-04 (Conservation and Management Measure on Marine Pollution) comes into force as of January 2019. Not only are WCPFC CMMs encouraged to ratify, accept, approve or accede to MARPOL annexes or the London Protocol (if entitled), but the CCMs should ensure and encourage their fishing vessels to comply with the 12 provisions set out in the CMM.</p>
<b>Status of recommendation</b>	<u>Open</u>

#### 4.2.2 Recommendation 2: Shark sanctuary compliance

<b>Performance Indicator(s) &amp; Score(s)</b>	<b>Insert relevant PI number(s)</b>	<b>Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text</b>	<b>Score</b>
	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>The audit team noted some confusion within the MMR regarding the procedure to be followed in the case of contraventions against the Marine Resources (Shark Conservation) Regulations 2012 (i.e. for the Shark Sanctuary) and have made the following recommendation:</p> <p>The formal process for infractions of this kind should be documented and should be presented at the next (year 2) surveillance audit. The audit team will then also verify the outcome of the decision-making process regarding the shark finning incidents mentioned in the Year 1 surveillance report.</p>		
<b>Milestones</b>	N/a		
<b>Client action plan</b>	N/a		
<b>Progress on Recommendation [Year 1]</b>	N/a		
<b>Progress on Recommendation [Year 2]</b>	<p>The case of illegal shark fin retentions noted during the Year 1 surveillance audit were in fact determined to be isolated incidents but still punishable under current fishery laws. A formal decision-making process for infractions of this kind has now been documented. It was determined that the incidents represented contraventions of the Cook Islands Marine Resources (Shark Conservation) Regulations of 2012. During the Year 2 surveillance audit the team was able to verify the successful outcome of the decision-making process regarding these incidents. Full details of the settlement policy and structure was sent to the FFA and the WCPFC to show transparency on how the Cook Islands prosecutes non-compliance of fisheries management regulations, especially concerning the issue of shark finning.</p>		

<b>Status of recommendation</b>	<u>This recommendation is closed.</u>
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#### 4.2.3 Recommendation 3: Bait sourcing

<b>Performance Indicator(s) &amp; Score(s)</b>	<b>Insert relevant PI number(s)</b>	<b>Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text</b>	<b>Score</b>
	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Recommendation</b>	The fishery uses Indian oil sardine ( <i>Sardinella longiceps</i> ), sourced from China. By far the largest fishery is in India, which is the most likely source of the bait for this fishery although this is an assumption made by the team. It is therefore recommended that the client company reviews its bait sourcing policy to ensure the necessary information is collected so that all bait can be traced to its source; be it at stock level, country of capture or ideally, in the case of the Indian oil sardine, at Indian state level.		
<b>Milestones</b>	N/a		
<b>Client action plan</b>	N/a		
<b>Progress on Recommendation [Year 1]</b>	N/a		
<b>Progress on Recommendation [Year 2]</b>	N/a		
<b>Progress on Recommendation [Year 3]</b>	N/a – opened during Year 3		
<b>Status of recommendation</b>	<u>Open</u>		

## 5 Conclusion

The audit team confirms that this fishery continues to conform to the MSC Principles and Criteria for sustainable fishing. Although progress against three out of the five Principle 1 conditions is currently behind target, a CAB-wide variation request was recently approved by MSC, requiring the alignment of this fishery's condition milestones with those of overlapping fisheries in the MSC programme. One of the outcomes of the variation request is that no suspension action will be undertaken for fisheries deemed behind target for Principle 1 conditions raised against version 1.3 of the MSC Standard. Furthermore, all fisheries previously assessed against version 1.3 will be rescored against version 2.0 at the next available opportunity. For this fishery, this will be the Year 4 surveillance and reassessment.

For Principle 2, the client group demonstrated considerable improvements in the recording of interactions with ETP species, particularly sharks. All conditions on P2 have now been closed out, although the Client Group's actions regarding ETP species will still be reviewed on an annual basis.

For Principle 3, recent changes in government and in staffing at MMR has meant none of the conditions could be closed out. Although the MMR has so far demonstrated continuing progress against the conditions, two out of the three Principle 3 conditions are considered behind target and should be closed out at the Year 4 surveillance audit.

There are currently two open recommendations for this fishery. Although improvements have been made regarding the dumping of non-biodegradable waste at sea, further improvements can be made. One new recommendation was raised with respect to bait, so that improved information on bait sources is collected by the Client Group.

Traceability in this fishery was reviewed and was found to be in line with the general terms stated at the time of certification.

The surveillance level remains at 6.

The audit team recommends that this fishery should remain certified and that product remains eligible to enter further chains of custody.

## 6 Evaluation Results

### 6.1 Principle Level Scores

The final Principle scores are provided in Table 11.

**Table 11. Final Principle scores (UoAs 1, 3, 5: South Pacific albacore / UoAs 2, 4, 6: WCPO yellowfin)**

Principle	UoA1	UoA2	UoA3	UoA4	UoA5	UoA6
Principle 1 – Target Species	81.3	83.1	81.3	83.1	81.3	83.1
Principle 2 – Ecosystem	82.7	83.0	83.0	83.0	83.0	83.0
Principle 3 – Management System	80.8	80.8	80.8	80.8	80.8	80.8

## 6.2 Summary of PI Level Scores

Note: updated scores are shown in red

Principle	Component	Weighting	PI nb.	Performance Indicator	UoA1	UoA2	UoA3	UoA4	UoA5	UoA6
1	Outcome	0.5	1.1.1	Stock status	100	90	100	90	100	90
			1.1.2	Reference points	75	90	75	90	75	90
			1.1.3	Stock rebuilding	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Management	0.5	1.2.1	Harvest Strategy	70	70	70	70	70	70
			1.2.2	Harvest control rules and tools	60	60	60	60	60	60
			1.2.3	Information and monitoring	80	80	80	80	80	80
			1.2.4	Assessment of stock status	90	95	9	95	90	95
2	Retained species	0.2	2.1.1	Outcome	80	85	85	85	85	85
			2.1.2	Management	80	80	80	80	80	80
			2.1.3	Information	80	80	80	80	80	80
	Bycatch species	0.2	2.2.1	Outcome	80	80	80	80	80	80
			2.2.2	Management	80	80	80	80	80	80
			2.2.3	Information	80	80	80	80	80	80
	ETP species	0.2	2.3.1	Outcome	80	80	80	80	80	80
			2.3.2	Management	80	80	80	80	80	80
			2.3.3	Information	80	80	80	80	80	80
	Habitats	0.2	2.4.1	Outcome	100	100	100	100	100	100
			2.4.2	Management	80	80	80	80	80	80
			2.4.3	Information	95	95	95	95	95	95

Principle	Component	Weighting	PI nb.	Performance Indicator	UoA1	UoA2	UoA3	UoA4	UoA5	UoA6
3	Ecosystem	0.2	2.5.1	Outcome	80	80	80	80	80	80
			2.5.2	Management	80	80	80	80	80	80
			2.5.3	Information	85	85	85	85	85	85
	Governance and Policy	0.5	3.1.1	Legal and customary framework	85	85	85	85	85	85
			3.1.2	Consultation, roles and responsibilities	75	75	75	75	75	75
			3.1.3	Long term objectives	90	90	90	90	90	90
			3.1.4	Incentives for sustainability	60	60	60	60	60	60
	Fishery-specific management system	0.5	3.2.1	Fishery specific objectives	90	90	90	90	90	90
			3.2.2	Decision making processes	75	75	75	75	75	75
			3.2.3	Compliance and enforcement	85	85	85	85	85	85
			3.2.4	Research plan	90	90	90	90	90	90
3.2.5			Management performance evaluation	80	80	80	80	80	80	

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix 1. UoC Vessels

### Appendix 1.1 List A-1: UoA vessels with MSC CoC certification (MSC-C- 55648) from 21st February 2017

Vessel Name	FFA VID	IRCS	Flag State	Registration number	Eligible from:	Eligible to:
HUA NAN YU 711	36073	BZXD22	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-100051	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
HUA NAN YU 712	36074	BZXD23	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-100050	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
HUA NAN YU 716	36238	BZXD24	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI) (2016) FT-100034	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
HUA NAN YU 717	36239	BZXD25	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI) (2016) FT-100033	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
HUA NAN YU 718	36246	BZXD26	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI) (2016) FT-100032	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
HUA NAN YU 719	36247	BZXD27	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI) (2016) FT-100030	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
HUA NAN YU 721	36259	BZXD28	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI) (2016) FT-100031	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
HUA NAN YU 722	36260	BZXD29	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI) (2016) FT-100029	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
HUA NAN YU 723	36261	BZXD32	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI) (2016) FT-100028	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
HUA NAN YU 731	36435	BZXD33	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200009	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
HUA NAN YU 732	36436	BZXD34	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200011	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
HUA NAN YU 736	36437	BZXD35	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200010	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
HUA NAN YU 737	36481	BZXD36	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200020	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
HUA NAN YU 738	36480	BZXD37	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200021	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
HUA NAN YU 739	36479	BZXD38	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200022	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
SHEN LIAN CHENG 760	36212	BZXC32	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT100047	23/05/2016	08/06/2020
SHEN LIAN CHENG 761	36208	BZXC33	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT100046	23/05/2016	08/06/2020
SHEN LIAN CHENG 881	36498	BZXD92	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200023	08/06/2014	08/06/2020

Vessel Name	FFA VID	IRCS	Flag State	Registration number	Eligible from:	Eligible to:
SHEN LIAN CHENG 882	36499	BZXD93	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200024	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
SHEN LIAN CHENG 883	36512	BZXD94	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200025	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
SHEN LIAN CHENG 884	36513	BZXD95	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200030	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
SHEN LIAN CHENG 885	36514	BZXD96	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200031	08/06/2014	08/06/2020

**Appendix 1.2 List A-2: UoA vessels with MSC CoC certification (MSC-C- 55648) from 5th June 2018**

Vessel Name	FFA VID	IRCS	Flag State	Registration number	Eligible from:	Eligible to:
SHEN GANG FA 15	36493	BZXD52	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200026	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
SHEN GANG FA 16	36494	BZXD53	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200027	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
SHEN GANG FA 17	36495	BZXD54	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200028	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
SHEN GANG FA 18	36496	BZXD55	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200029	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
SHEN GANG FA 19	36506	BZXD56	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200034	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
SHEN GANG FA 715	36507	BZXD62	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200035	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
SHEN GANG FA 716	36502	BZXD63	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200036	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
SHEN GANG FA 718	36504	BZXD65	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200038	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
SHEN GANG FA 719	36505	BZXD66	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200039	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
SHEN GANG FA 720	36685	BZXD69	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2015)FT-200027	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
GUANG YUAN YU 338	36598	BZXY47	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)FT-200009	08/06/2014	08/06/2020
GUANG YUAN YU 339	36599	BZXY48	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)FT-200010	08/06/2014	08/06/2020

**Appendix 1.3 List B: UoA vessels without MSC CoC certification**

Vessel Name	FFA VID	IRCS	Flag State	Registration number	Eligible from:	Eligible to:
CHONG MYONG 703	34743	E5U2019	Cooks	1091	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
CHONG MYONG 709	36077	E5U2352	Cooks	1441	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
ESTHER	34742	E5U2018	Cooks	1090	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
GRACE	35719	E5U2209	Cooks	1293	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
GRACE 1	35720	E5U2210	Cooks	1294	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
HONG YANG 3	35988	BBLY2	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)(2014)FT-100009	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
HONG YANG 8	36235	BBIW8	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)(2016)FT-200044	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
HONG YANG 88	36307	BBIO8	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)(2016)FT-200045	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
HONG YANG 9	36236	BBIW9	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)(2016)FT-200046	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
LU RONG YUAN YU 888	36456	BBIV8	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI) (2013) FT-200036	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
LU RONG YUAN YU 889	36457	BBIV9	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013) FT-200035	22/12/2016	08/06/2020
LU RONG YUAN YU 211	36771	BCLN8	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)2016FT-200164	10/04/2017	08/06/2020
LU RONG YUAN YU 212	36628	BBLM6	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)(2014)FT200134	01/03/2016	08/06/2020
HONG YANG 2	35987	BBLY1	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)(2014)FT100008	01/03/2016	08/06/2020
VIKING SPIRIT	34836	E5WY	Cook Islands	CI 01/02	13/03/2018	08/06/2020
LADY ANN II	32945	E5U3018	Cook Islands	2118	13/03/2018	08/06/2020
CFA22	36214	V6P22	FSM	VR0120	13/03/2018	08/06/2020
ZHONG YANG 16	36355	BZXD72	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2017)FT-200052	13/03/2018	08/06/2020
ZHONG YANG 29	36360	BZXD77	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2017)FT-200051	13/03/2018	08/06/2020

Vessel Name	FFA VID	IRCS	Flag State	Registration number	Eligible from:	Eligible to:
ZHONG YANG 12	36719	BZW8A	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2016)FT-200005	13/03/2018	08/06/2020
ZHONG YANG 13	36720	BZW9A	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2016)FT-200006	13/03/2018	08/06/2020
ZHONG YANG 22	36721	BZW1B	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2016)FT-200007	13/03/2018	08/06/2020
ZHONG YANG 23	36722	BZW2B	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2016)FT-200008	13/03/2018	08/06/2020

## Appendix 2. Re-scoring tables

Note: new text is shown in red

### Evaluation table - PI 2.3.1

PI 2.3.1		The fishery meets national and international requirements for the protection of ETP species The fishery does not pose a risk of serious or irreversible harm to ETP species and does not hinder recovery of ETP species									
Scoring Issue		SG 60	SG 80	SG 100							
a	Guided post	Known effects of the fishery are likely to be within limits of national and international requirements for protection of ETP species.	The effects of the fishery are known and are highly likely to be within limits of national and international requirements for protection of ETP species.	There is a high degree of certainty that the effects of the fishery are within limits of national and international requirements for protection of ETP species.							
	Met?	Y	Y	N							
	Justification	<p>SG60:</p> <p>Seabirds: only two specimens were recorded by observers during LTFV trips in 2013 and 2012. This information, in addition to historical information held by the MMR based on observer data, interviews with vessel operators and the risk assessment conducted by Filippi et al. (2010) suggests that known effects of the fishery are likely to be within international requirements for the protection of ETP bird species. SG60 is therefore met for seabirds.</p> <p>Turtles: based on observer data, interactions with sea turtles are also relatively rare (4 specimens encountered in 2 years by observers) and the impacts are likely to be significantly less than those caused by traditional practices in the Cook Islands which includes their consumption. Known effects of the fishery are therefore likely to be within limits of international requirements for the protection of sea turtles. SG60 is therefore met for sea turtles.</p> <p>Sharks: within the Cook Islands EEZ all shark and ray species must be discarded in accordance with the 2012 Shark Sanctuary regulations. Key discarded shark species are blue shark, oceanic whitetip shark, thresher sharks (not identified to species level), longfin and shortfin mako shark, and silky shark. As of 2013, discards are recorded in logsheets as well as during observer trips. Comparison of both datasets revealed discrepancies, with logsheets likely underestimating shark discards and underrepresenting some species due to identification issues. Observer records, however, present an indication of likely shark discards. The number of sharks observed in 2013 (when the Shark Sanctuary was in force) and raised to cover the entire fishing effort of the entire Cook Islands longline fishery (and not just the vessels include in the unit of certification) is shown in the following table:</p> <p>Information on annual discards of shark species</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Species</th> <th>Number of individuals observed (at 9.8 % observer coverage)</th> <th>Estimate of the number of individuals captured by extrapolating observed trips to all trips</th> <th>Most recent estimate of individuals captured at the stock level</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Species	Number of individuals observed (at 9.8 % observer coverage)	Estimate of the number of individuals captured by extrapolating observed trips to all trips	Most recent estimate of individuals captured at the stock level			
Species	Number of individuals observed (at 9.8 % observer coverage)	Estimate of the number of individuals captured by extrapolating observed trips to all trips	Most recent estimate of individuals captured at the stock level								

	Blue shark	61	622	90,000 – 500,000 ind. (Rice and Harley, 2011)
	Oceanic white-tip	37	378	53,700 – 205,800 ind. (Rice and Harley, 2012)
	Mako (shortfin + longfin)	17	174	50,000 – 250,000 ind. (Clarke, 2011)
	Thresher	53	541	65,000 – 750,000 ind. (Clarke, 2011)
	Silky	42	429	238,500 – 633,800 ind. (Rice and Harley, 2013b)
	<p>From the above table it is apparent that the number of sharks caught by the UoC is a very small portion of all those taken at the stock level. It is therefore unlikely to have a stock-level effect. SG60 is therefore met for sharks.</p> <p>Cetaceans: 2 interactions were recorded in the observer reports for 2012 and 2013, involving one bottlenose dolphin and one false killer whale. Both species are considered as data deficient by IUCN and abundance estimates are highly uncertain). Based on the observer data, however, interactions with cetaceans are likely to be rare and are in most cases likely to be related to non-lethal depredation events. Known effects of the fishery are therefore likely to be within limits of international requirements for the protection of cetaceans. SG60 is therefore met for cetaceans.</p> <p>SG80</p> <p><del>In order to meet ‘the effects of the fishery are known’ under SG80, interactions of this fishery with the aforementioned species should be estimated with an improved degree of certainty.</del></p> <p><del>Interactions with ETP species are rarely recorded by LTFV crew and observer coverage is considered too low to preclude the possibility of highly threatened seabird populations being impacted by the fishery. The same is true for sea turtles, for which at least the loggerhead and olive ridley RMUs overlap entirely with the Cook Islands EEZ and are considered to be at high risk from bycatch in longlines). Some turtle populations may be sufficiently depleted that apparently small levels of bycatch may have an impact at the population level. For sharks, there have been considerable improvements in the provision of discard data in logsheets from 2013; however comparison with observer records indicates problems with underreporting and misidentification remain. Although interactions with cetaceans are likely to be rare, here also, improved reporting would enable a better estimate of this fishery’s impacts on the species concerned. Although the effects of the fishery are highly likely to be within the limits of national and international protection requirements, the assessment team felt that the effects of the fishery are not known, <i>sensu strictu</i>. SG80 is therefore not met.</del></p> <p>In its first year of certification, the UoC fishery commenced a training programme, the objectives of which were developed in collaboration with MMR staff during a workshop held in August 2014. The purpose of the workshop was to augment the capacity of Cook Islands government and longline fishing company staff to lead workshops for captains of longline vessels that fish in the Cook Islands Exclusive Economic Zone. A refresher train-the-trainer workshop was again conducted in April 2016 in Zhoushan, China to train LTFV staff who train fishing base managers to instruct captains of pelagic longline tuna vessels that are based out of the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Cook Islands. In addition to the LTFV trainers, three longline vessel captains and their crew attended the workshop. The aim of the workshops is to provide longline captains with an improved understanding of:</p> <p>(i) Cook Islands rules for longline vessel operators  (ii) how to properly complete government logbook forms</p>			

- (iii) how to use a guide to identify catch to the species level, to augment the rigor of logbook records
- (iv) prescribed methods to handle and release sea turtles, sharks, rays, cetaceans and seabirds to maximize the probability of their survival after release, and
- (v) LTFV Venture company policy restricting gear and fishing methods and prohibiting the retention of sharks, including shark fins.

On a recurring basis, two kinds of training are now taking place: the Crew Capacity-Building Training and the NOAA Dolphin Safe Training Program Training. The training covers the following:

- Domestic longline regulations;
- Company policy banning the use of gear designs to target sharks and banning the retention of sharks and rays, including shark fins;
- Best practice methods to handle and release at-risk species, including sharks, rays, marine mammals, sea turtles and seabirds;
- Use of prescribed handling and release equipment to safely release at-risk species;
- Completing logsheets, including training in species identification to improve logsheet data quality;
- Implementation of garbage management plans; and
- NOAA Dolphin Safe Training.

Since 2016, the surveillance team noted significant improvements in the reporting of ETP interactions, particularly shark discards, in the logbooks as demonstrated by the following table.

Species	2016		2017	
	Logbook	Observer	Logbook	Observer
BLUE SHARK	2628	85	2531	110
HAMMERHEAD SHARKS	7	0	9	
MAKO SHARKS	41	6	14	3
OCEANIC WHITETIP SHARK	840	4	647	4
PELAGIC THRESHER SHARK	7	0		
PORBEAGLE SHARK	39	0	5	
SILKY SHARK	339	21	63	10
THRESHER SHARKS	29	0	42	11

		<p>Although the level of reported discards is higher than estimated during the initial assessment (see blue shark and oceanic whitetip), for blue sharks (which account for the majority of catches) the UoA still only catches a fraction of the total catch estimates for the population (ca. 25000 to 110000 individuals between 2012 and 2014, based on Takeuchi et al. (2016)). For sea turtles and seabirds, interaction rates continue to be very sporadic in the observer data and population-level impacts are therefore highly likely to be low. The team considered that the improved logbook data, combined with the 5 – 10% continued observer coverage of the UoA fleet, were sufficient so that the effects of the fishery are known and are highly likely to be within limits of national and international requirements for protection of ETP species. SG80 is met. SG100 is not met however, as the level of observer coverage can be improved on.</p>		
b	Guidepost	Known direct effects are unlikely to create unacceptable impacts to ETP species.	Direct effects are highly unlikely to create unacceptable impacts to ETP species.	There is a high degree of confidence that there are no significant detrimental direct effects of the fishery on ETP species.
	Met?	Y	Y	N
	Justification	The direct effects of the fishery have been considered in scoring issue a above and are highly unlikely to create unacceptable impacts on the ETP species discussed. SG80 is met. However, the quality (including quantity) of data available on ETP interactions and the status of affected taxa is considered insufficient to provide a high degree of confidence in this statement. SG100 is therefore not met.		
c	Guidepost		Indirect effects have been considered and are thought to be unlikely to create unacceptable impacts.	There is a high degree of confidence that there are no significant detrimental indirect effects of the fishery on ETP species.
	Met?		Y	N
	Justification	Observer data indicate that on most occasions ETP species are released alive but with uncertainty in the probability of post-release survival. While survival rates of sharks are difficult to estimate and while it is clear that some practices can be improved on (see PI 2.3.2), it is highly unlikely that this fishery creates unacceptable impacts on the species concerned. SG80 is therefore met. However, as previously stated, because the effects of fishery are not accurately quantified, there is no high degree of confidence in this statement. SG100 is therefore not met.		
References	Observer data; (Takeuchi et al., 2016)			
OVERALL PERFORMANCE INDICATOR SCORE:				80
CONDITION NUMBER (if relevant):				N/a

Evaluation table - PI 2.3.2

<b>PI 2.3.2</b>		<b>The fishery has in place precautionary management strategies designed to:</b> <b>Meet national and international requirements;</b> <b>Ensure the fishery does not pose a risk of serious harm to ETP species;</b> <b>Ensure the fishery does not hinder recovery of ETP species; and</b> <b>Minimise mortality of ETP species.</b>		
Scoring Issue		SG 60	SG 80	SG 100
a	Guidepost	There are measures in place that minimise mortality of ETP species and are expected to be highly likely to achieve national and international requirements for the protection of ETP species.	There is a strategy in place for managing the fishery’s impact on ETP species, including measures to minimise mortality, which is designed to be highly likely to achieve national and international requirements for the protection of ETP species.	There is a comprehensive strategy in place for managing the fishery’s impact on ETP species, including measures to minimise mortality, which is designed to achieve above national and international requirements for the protection of ETP species.
	Met?	Y	Y	N
	Justification	<p>Seabirds: In accordance with the International Plan of Action on Seabirds (IPOA-Seabirds), the Cook Islands have prepared a National Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds (NPOA-Seabirds), implemented through the Cook Islands Large Pelagic Longline Fishery Plan, which requires vessels to record any encounters with seabirds (live or dead) and report this to the MMR. CMM-2007-04 issued by the WCPFC on the implementation of the FAO International Plan of Action on Seabirds (IPOA-Seabirds) applies to fisheries operating south of 30 degrees South and north of 23 degrees North and does not apply to the Cook Islands EEZ. Following a risk assessment conducted by Filippi et al. (2010) and updated best practice advice from the Agreement for the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), recommendations have been made to produce a more precautionary CMM, applying to additional risk areas from 25°S – 30°S and 20°N-40°N. The southern hemisphere 25°S latitudinal line passes just inside the EEZ of the Cook Islands, with 0.06 % of the EEZ overlapping with the proposal to extend CMM to 25°S. As such, it is likely that some amendments to the NPOA-Seabirds will be required. However, for the fishery under assessment, which takes place in the Northern waters of the Cook Islands, these revisions to the CMM are unlikely to have an effect. Based on this information, the assessment team concluded that CMM and the NPOA constitute a strategy which is designed to be highly likely to achieve international requirements for the protection of bird species. SG80 is therefore met for seabirds. The Cook Islands’ NPOA however does not go above and beyond the CMM requirements on the basis that EEZ is situated in a low-risk zone. As such, SG100 is not met.</p> <p>Turtles: At regional level, the WCPFC has issued CMM-2008-03 and covers numerous measures including mitigation methods to reduce the capture of sea turtles and to increase post-release survival chances as well as reporting requirements and a provision for CCMs to carry out research on mitigation methods. The CMM has been adopted by the Cook Islands through its NPOA-Sea turtles, implementing the FAO Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations as well as the Regional Action Plan for Sea Turtle By-Catch Mitigation implemented by FFA member countries on 1 July, 2008. The NPOA sets out a program of actions that aims to improve knowledge of fishing practices and interactions over time through collection and monitoring of fishery data, research and trials of mitigation measures, and establishes current “best practice” mitigation methods for implementation. The CMM and NPOA have been adopted for the albacore longline fishery through the Cook Islands longline Fishery Plan which also details that any</p>		

		<p>interactions with sea turtles should be recorded and reported to the MMR. The CMM with the NPOA constitutes a strategy which is highly likely to achieve international requirements for the protection of sea turtles. SG80 is therefore met. SG100 requires a comprehensive strategy which aims to go further than the international protection requirements for sea turtles. The audit felt that this was not the case for the fishery under assessment; SG100 is therefore not met.</p> <p>Sharks: for the fishery under assessment, there are four management levels for sharks: 1) at WCPFC level: CMM-2010-07 on sharks; CMM-2011-04 on oceanic white-tips and CMM-2013-08 on silky sharks; 2) at national level via the overarching Shark Sanctuary Regulations; 3) at national level via the NPOA-sharks and 4) at company level through the LTFV policy on sharks. In combination, these measures aim at zero capture and retention of any shark or ray species, with maximisation of the survival of any shark that does get caught. The team considers this to be comprehensive strategy which goes above and beyond national and international requirements; SG100 is therefore met for sharks.</p> <p>For cetaceans, interactions are generally caused by depredation and are thought to be rare for the fishery under assessment. While cetaceans are not specifically addressed in any CMMs for WCPO longline fisheries, they are generally covered under the Cook Islands' Marine Resources (Longline Fishery) Regulations 2008 which states that "Fishers will be required to avoid the capture, and release unharmed, to the extent practicable, non-target species that are not to be retained." On the basis that cetaceans are unlikely to be a problem for the fishery under assessment, the team considered this requirement to constitute a partial strategy and enough for SG80 to be met. Should the fishery achieve certification, the level of interactions with cetaceans will be monitored throughout the surveillance process and appropriate action will be taken should the status quo not be maintained. For this scoring issue SG80 is therefore met.</p>		
b	Guidepost	The measures are considered likely to work, based on plausible argument (e.g., general experience, theory or comparison with similar fisheries/species).	There is an objective basis for confidence that the strategy will work, based on information directly about the fishery and/or the species involved.	The strategy is mainly based on information directly about the fishery and/or species involved, and a quantitative analysis supports high confidence that the strategy will work.
	Met?	Y	Y	N
	Justification	<p>Seabirds: based on the risk-based analysis carried out by Filippi et al. (2010) there is an objective basis for confidence that the management strategy will work. SG80 is therefore met for seabirds.</p> <p>Sea turtles: the CMM requires the implementation of the FAO Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations, which include the use of wide circle hooks; using fish rather than squid for bait; and setting hooks deeper than turtle abundant depths (40–100 m). These guidelines present best-practice of how to reduce interactions between sea turtles and fishing gear and reduce the proportion of caught turtles that are killed as a result of interactions with marine capture fisheries. All measures mentioned have been shown to reduce sea turtle interactions in longline fisheries significantly without compromising catch rates of target species (FAO, 2009). There is therefore an objective basis for confidence that the management strategy will work. SG80 is met for sea turtles.</p> <p>Sharks: the strategy aims at zero capture and retention of any shark or ray species, with maximisation of the survival of any shark that does get caught. As previously stated, this is a comprehensive strategy which goes above and beyond national and international requirements. There is therefore an objective basis for confidence that the strategy will work and SG80 is met for sharks.</p>		

		<p>Cetaceans: the fact that cetaceans are unlikely to be a problem for pelagic longline fisheries and the low level of reported interactions with this fishery provides an objective basis for confidence that the strategy will work. SG80 is therefore met. However, as previously stated, should this fishery be certified, it will be important that interactions are monitored and appropriate action is taken as required during the surveillance programme.</p> <p>No quantitative analysis has been conducted for this fishery for any of the ETP groups concerned which could support high confidence that the management strategies will work. SG100 is therefore not met.</p>		
c	Guided post		There is evidence that the strategy is being implemented successfully.	There is clear evidence that the strategy is being implemented successfully.
	Met?		Y	N
	Justification	<p>Seabirds and cetaceans: the available evidence (anecdotal and observer reports) does not suggest that either seabirds or cetaceans are an issue in this fishery. Where possible, the animals are released alive. The team considered this to be clear evidence that the respective strategies were being implemented successfully. SG100 is therefore met.</p> <p>Sharks: Analysis of the 2013 observer reports indicates that no sharks were retained in the fishery under assessment since the establishment of the Shark Sanctuary, as opposed to the 2012 reports when significant numbers were being retained. At-sea inspection reports also did not reveal any infractions against the Shark Sanctuary. The team considered that the strategy is sufficiently being implemented for SG80 to be met; however as previously mentioned, there remain problems with the reporting of sharks in logbooks which are most likely due to identification issues – SG100 is therefore not met.</p> <p>Turtles: <del>A site visit carried out by Momo Kochen (formerly of Fishing and Living) aboard LTFV vessels in Pago Pago found that although some components of the strategy are being implemented successfully (e.g. use of circle hooks), turtles are most often cut loose and not properly de-hooked; identification is not carried out to species level, and incidents are most often not reported to the MMR. In one instance an observer made mention of a turtle (possibly dead upon haulback) being consumed by the crew. This scoring issue is therefore not met.</del> <b>Observer reports, as well interviews with MMR staff, indicate that the client fishery continues to abide by Cook Islands and by extension WCPFC regulations. Interactions with sea turtles have been at best sporadic over the last 4 years according to observer data. On this basis, the surveillance team was satisfied that Cook Islands regulations on fishery interactions with sea turtles are respected and adhered to by LTFV crew and that the fishery does not pose a risk of serious harm to sea turtles, mortality of sea turtles is minimised, and the fishery does not hinder recovery of vulnerable sea turtle populations. SG80 is met.</b></p>		
d	Guided post			There is evidence that the strategy is achieving its objective.
	Met?			N
	Justification	Considering the outcome of scoring issue c, SG100 is not met for turtles.		
References		Observer data		
OVERALL PERFORMANCE INDICATOR SCORE:				80

CONDITION NUMBER (if relevant):	N/a
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### Evaluation table - PI 2.3.3

PI 2.3.3		Relevant information is collected to support the management of fishery impacts on ETP species, including: Information for the development of the management strategy; Information to assess the effectiveness of the management strategy; and Information to determine the outcome status of ETP species.		
Scoring Issue		SG 60	SG 80	SG 100
a	Guidepost	Information is sufficient to qualitatively estimate the fishery related mortality of ETP species.	Sufficient information is available to allow fishery related mortality and the impact of fishing to be quantitatively estimated for ETP species.	Information is sufficient to quantitatively estimate outcome status of ETP species with a high degree of certainty.
	Met?	Y	Y	N
	Justification	For all ETP species concerned, information gathered through observer reports is sufficient to enable a qualitative evaluation of fishery-related mortality – SG60 is met. The observer data provide some quantitative estimate of the fishery’s interactions with ETP species, albeit with a high degree of uncertainty: the relatively low level of observer coverage (<20%) and particularly the problems with reporting of interactions with sea turtles and sharks by LTFV crew means quantitative estimates for this fishery are likely to be highly uncertain. Particularly for species as silky sharks which were significantly underrepresented in the logbook data. As such, the team considered that SG80 is met, but not SG100.		
b	Guidepost	Information is adequate to broadly understand the impact of the fishery on ETP species.	Information is sufficient to determine whether the fishery may be a threat to protection and recovery of the ETP species.	Accurate and verifiable information is available on the magnitude of all impacts, mortalities and injuries and the consequences for the status of ETP species.
	Met?	Y	Y	N
	Justification	As above, the information is adequate to broadly understand the impact of the fishery; SG60 is met. However, interactions with ETP species are rarely recorded by LTFV crew and observer coverage is considered too low to preclude the possibility of highly threatened seabird populations being impacted by the fishery. The same is true for sea turtles, for which at least the loggerhead and olive ridley RMUs overlap entirely with the Cook Islands EEZ and are considered to be at high risk from bycatch in longlines. SG80 is not met.  See 2.3.1 - The team considered that the improved logbook data, combined with the continued observer coverage of the UoA fleet, were sufficient to determine whether the fishery may be a threat to protection and recovery of the ETP species. SG80 is met.		

c	Guidpost	Information is adequate to support measures to manage the impacts on ETP species.	Information is sufficient to measure trends and support a full strategy to manage impacts on ETP species.	Information is adequate to support a comprehensive strategy to manage impacts, minimize mortality and injury of ETP species, and evaluate with a high degree of certainty whether a strategy is achieving its objectives.
	Met?	Y	Y	N
	Justification	For all ETP species concerned, information gathered for this fishery and regionally is adequate to support the relevant CMMs, NPOAs and, in the case of sharks, Shark Sanctuary – SG60 is met. On the basis that full management strategies are currently implemented for the ETP species concerned (see scoring issue a under 2.3.2 (ETP species management)) the team considered that information to date has been sufficient to support those strategies. SG80 is therefore met. In the absence of a comprehensive strategy, however, SG100 is not met.		
References	Observer data CMMs, NPOAs and Shark Sanctuary Regulations			
OVERALL PERFORMANCE INDICATOR SCORE:				80
CONDITION NUMBER (if relevant):				N/a

## Appendix 3. CAB-wide Principle 1 Variation Request and MSC Response

### Marine Stewardship Council - Variation Request

**Problem statement:**

The MSC requires overlapping fisheries to harmonize assessment outcomes, but not conditions timelines. There are currently 54 HMS<sup>1</sup> fisheries (counting each stock per fishery in the case of multiple stocks in a single fishery, separately) in the MSC programme, 43 with outstanding conditions in relation to Reference Points, Harvest Control Rules and Harvest Strategies in Principle 1. While conditions have been harmonised (as per Annex PB of the FCRv2.0), the associated timelines have not. This lack of coherence amongst RFMO<sup>2</sup> HMS fisheries and CABs has resulted in inconsistencies between in-assessment and certified fisheries and undermines the influence the MSC programme may have on mobilizing RFMOs toward developing harvest strategies for HMS stocks. To address this problem, the variation request below proposes a “hard deadline” approach to Principle 1 conditions timelines for highly migratory species stocks subject to harmonisation in the MSC program:

1. The hard deadline approach would make it transparent to all parties, including clients, what the expectations are for fulfilling these conditions at the RFMO level, and thus removes the inconsistency issue of new entrants having longer timeframes than current fisheries in the program.
2. The hard deadline approach creates incentives for MSC client fisheries to work together, instead of at cross-purposes, to encourage RFMOs to keep to the timelines as established in workplans which reflect their stock management priorities.

<b>Date submitted to MSC</b>	11 December, 2018
<b>Name of CAB</b>	All CABs accredited to undertake MSC fishery assessments
<b>Fishery Name/CoC Certificate Number</b>	See Appendix 1
<b>Lead Auditor/Programme Manager</b>	Chrissie Sieben (CU Pesca), Amanda Stern-Pirlot (MRAG Americas), Sian Morgan (SCS), Geraldine Criquet (SAI Global), Polly Burns (Lloyds Register-Acouira), Anna Kiseleva/Sandhya Chaudhury (DNV), Macarena García (BV), Louise Le Roux (TUN), Carolina Medina Foucher (OIA), Julia Nebolsina (Marine Certification)
<b>Scheme requirement(s) for which variation requested</b>	1. Fisheries scored against v1.3:  <i>Implementation timeframes: Existing fisheries (in assessment or certified) shall apply the new standard requirements (...) at their first reassessment commencing after 1st October 2017. (FCR V2.0 p. 9)</i>

<sup>1</sup> HMS: highly migratory species. In the context of this variation request, we refer to the tuna and swordfish stocks listed in Appendix 2.

<sup>2</sup> RFMO: Regional Fisheries Management Organisation. In the context of this variation request, we refer to the organizations involvement in the management of HSM stocks in the MSC program: WCPFC, IATTC, ICCAT and IOTC.

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	<p>(Note: the 'new standard requirements' referred to in this clause are the FCRv2.0, though the Fisheries Certification Process v2.1 can also be used.)</p> <p>FCR V.2.0 7.23.13.1.b.i. <i>If the progress against the measurable outcomes, expected results or (interim) milestones specified when setting the condition is judged to be behind target, the CAB shall specify the remedial action, and any revised milestones, that are required to bring process back on track within 12 months to achieve the original condition by the original deadline.</i></p> <p>FCRv2.0 7.23.13.2: <i>In the event that the CAB determines that progress against a condition is not back 'on target' within 12 months of falling 'behind target', the CAB shall:</i></p> <p><i>a. Consider progress as inadequate.</i></p> <p><i>b. Apply the requirements of GCR 7.4 (suspension or withdrawal).</i></p> <p>2. All fisheries listed in Appendix 1:</p> <p>FCRv2.0 7.11.1.3 (and subclauses): <i>The CAB shall draft conditions to result in improved performance to at least the 80 level within a period set by the CAB but no longer than the term of the certification unless: a. There are exceptional circumstances, and the CAB determines that achieving a performance level of 80 may take longer than the period of certification. The CAB shall interpret exceptional circumstances in 7.11.1.3.a to refer to situations in which, even with perfect implementation, achieving the 80 level of performance may take longer than the certification period.</i></p> <p>FCRv2.0 7.24.2 (and subclauses): <i>When conducting a re-assessment of a certified fishery, the CAB shall (...) evaluate progress against certification conditions. Unless exceptional circumstances apply (7.11.1.3) or paragraph (b) applies, the fishery shall have met all conditions and milestones. (...) In the event that there are unmet conditions, the CAB shall apply 7.23.13.1 and 7.23.13.2 (except 7.23.13.2.b.) in determining the adequacy of progress against those conditions and milestones. If the CAB concludes that the client has made inadequate progress, it shall not grant a new fishery certificate.</i></p>
<p><b>Is this variation sought in order to fulfil IPI requirements (FCR 7.4.14)?</b></p>	<p>No.</p>

### **1. Proposed variation**

In order to achieve the result needed as described in the problem statement above, this variation request has two parts:

#### 1. For fisheries scored against v1.3:

Thirty-six of the 54 fisheries listed in Appendix 1 are currently scored against Annex CB of the MSC Certification Requirements v1.3 resulting in conditions against Principle 1 performance indicators (PIs) that are no longer applicable under the FCRv2.0 (e.g. PI 1.1.2 on Reference Points). To facilitate harmonisation between RFMO HMS fisheries, it is proposed the Principle 1 components of these fisheries are rescored at the next available opportunity (which may be ahead of reassessment) to bring them in line with other tuna fisheries assessed against the FCRv2.0. This variation would mean:

- No suspension action would be undertaken for fisheries that are behind target on conditions raised against CRv1.3 Principle 1 performance indicators.
- Any new conditions raised as a result of the Principle 1 rescoring would be harmonised with other RFMO HMS fisheries and be brought in line with the most recent RFMO workplan and associated hard deadline as per Appendix 2 where applicable (see below).
- Even Appendix 1 fisheries with no conditions in P1 that are currently scored against v1.3 would be rescored against 2.0 under this variation.
- Principle 1 rescoring as described would take place as part of normal surveillance activities; there is no expectation that a more elaborate process (such as an expedited assessment) would be needed.

#### 2. For fisheries listed in Appendix 1 with conditions under Principle 1 subject to harmonization (indicated in Appendix 1 with green highlight):

For these fisheries, the specific proposed condition closure dates by stock and matched to current fisheries in the program are given in Appendix 2. These are not based on the “term of certification” as required by FCR 7.11.1.3. Rather they are based on the respective RFMO workplans for each stock with respect to development of harvest control rules and reference points. This variation will result in some fisheries entering reassessment with open Principle 1 conditions, albeit with an aligned deadline respective to the stock in question by which these conditions will be achieved. It will also result in some certified fisheries having condition closure deadlines ahead of their current certificate expiration dates.

Note, as the deadlines are given as a calendar year only, there may be cases where the respective annual surveillance audit would due before the RFMO meeting during which the relevant HCR is due to be adopted. In such cases, we expect the flexibility afforded by MSC regarding surveillance audit timing would be sufficient to enable CABs to delay these audits until after such RFMO

meetings/decisions. However, this may not always be possible, in which cases CABs may request variations on a case-by-case basis to enable the RFMO decision to take place before the respective MSC surveillance audit.

## 2. Rationale/Justification

There are currently 54 HMS fisheries (counting each stock per fishery in the case of multiple stocks in a single fishery, separately) in the MSC programme, 43 with outstanding conditions in relation to Reference Points, Harvest Control Rules and Harvest Strategies in Principle 1. While conditions have been harmonised (as per Annex PB of the FCRv2.0), the associated timelines have not. This lack of coherence amongst RFMO HMS fisheries and CABs has resulted in inconsistencies between in-assessment and certified fisheries and undermines the influence the MSC programme may have on mobilizing RFMOs toward developing harvest strategies for HMS stocks.

This problem has arisen in part because of shifting MSC requirements and standards for Principle 1 and for harmonization at the same time as many tuna fisheries have been entering the MSC program and becoming certified on staggered timelines. The proposed variations in Section 1 therefore all contribute to a one-off Principle 1 alignment between RFMO HMS fisheries, to which all CABs and all certified, in-assessment and applicant RFMO HMS fisheries will be subject for the stocks in Appendix 2:

- Fisheries currently scored against CRv1.3 will be rescored against FCRv2.0 for Principle 1 at the next available opportunity and resulting conditions will be harmonized with other relevant RFMO HMS fisheries. It is noted that this rescoring would have to take place at reassessment anyway.
- Principle 1 conditions that relate to HCRs and HSs and their associated timelines will be harmonized between all relevant RFMO HMS fisheries. A hard deadline for achievement of the conditions will be set in line with the most recent RFMO workplan as per Appendix 2. It is believed this approach will remove any ambiguity in the condition timelines and enable CABs to measure and assess progress in a meaningful manner.
- To facilitate harmonization efforts between CABs, surveillance schedules of the relevant RFMO HMS fisheries will be aligned (to the extent that is practical) so that annual progress can be assessed collectively by CABs.
- This variation request does not need to extend to stocks in the program not currently subject to harmonization (i.e. it does not have to be 'future proof') because:
  - a. the FCP v2.1 explicitly allows for 'exceptional circumstances' when establishing condition timelines at the point of certification that may be longer than one certification period to apply in these cases; and
  - b. new guidance in the FCP (GBP 1.3) clearly states a preference for harmonization of condition timelines.

Therefore this mechanism can be carried forward when new timeline harmonization needs arise without the need to vary from MSC requirements.

Regarding the sustainability status of the fisheries concerned, it is noted that clients will still be required to fulfill all actions required by client action plans and continue to actively work toward having RFMOs adopting appropriate reference points and associated harvest control rules for tuna stocks. This variation will only serve to improve the collective ability of MSC fisheries to work with RFMOs that have a clear commitment through their workplans to establish HCRs and reference points in a reasonable way. It will also create consistency and fairness in the application of the MSC requirements with respect to fulfilment of conditions and consequences for falling behind, thereby improving accountability of all concerned.

As per the overview in Appendix 1 none of the relevant RFMO HSM stocks are considered overfished or with overfishing occurring. The only stock currently in the MSC program with a condition on PI 1.1.1 regarding stock status is Atlantic yellowfin tuna, which has been steadily rebuilding and is at 95% of Bmsy as of the most recent stock assessment.

The hard deadline approach proposed in this variation request would make it transparent to all parties, including clients, what the expectations are for fulfilling these conditions at the RFMO level, and thus removes the inconsistency issue of new entrants having longer timeframes than current fisheries in the program.

### **3. Implications for assessment (required for fisheries assessment variations only)**

Harmonisation is one of the MSC's main priorities in ensuring the credibility of the standard. The approach to harmonisation in RFMO HMS fisheries up until now has not been efficient for any of the parties involved and has undermined MSC program requirements. This approach will remedy that, reducing the number of variations requested by CABs, whilst ensuring that all fisheries and clients are treated consistently and fairly.

The alignment with RFMO plans will encourage the MSC's Theory of Change by influencing RFMO actions working together. Appendix 1 provides an overview of the stocks concerned and their current performance in relation to stock status. None of the currently certified stocks are overfished nor is overfishing occurring (noting Atlantic yellowfin at 95% of Bmsy). Overall, the acceptance of this variation request will have no negative impact on the sustainability of the fisheries and will instead ensure that conditions related to harvest control rules and harvest strategies are addressed in a uniform and timely manner, and that RFMO fishery clients have an incentive to work together toward achievement of conditions according to reasonable fixed deadlines.

#### **4. Have the stakeholders of this fishery assessment been informed of this request? (required for fisheries assessment variations only)**

Yes, some key stakeholders have been approached, including the MSC STAC, and representatives from Pew, WWF, and ISSF. The purpose of these interactions was to inform stakeholders of this initiative, the process and its implications, and to seek initial impressions. Stakeholders have been broadly supportive of this initiative, with some reflection on whether an impact assessment would be needed. It is anticipated that MSC will draw on stakeholder sentiment during the formal process of responding to this request.

### **5. Further Comments**

Other attempts to address the harmonisation for HMS harmonisation have been made including RFMO harmonisation meetings and so far they have not achieved the desired outcome. This collaborative approach has been designed and approved by all fishery accredited CABs (including those currently not involved with HMS fisheries) and we believe the outcome will be successful.

**Appendix 1 – Overview of RFMO HMS fisheries in the MSC programme with those subject to the proposed Appendix 2 deadlines highlighted in green.**

Fishery name	RFMO	Relevant stocks	CAB	Certificate expiry dates	Rescoring against 2.0 needed?	overfishing?	overfished?	1.1.1 score
Pan Pacific yellowfin, bigeye and albacore longline fishery	IATTC	EPO-BET	CU Pesca	In assessment	No	In assessment	In assessment	In assessment
Northeastern Tropical Pacific Purse Seine SKJ and YFT	IATTC	EPO-SKJ	SCS	06-Sep-22	Yes	No	No	90
Panama tropical Pacific yellowfin and skipjack purse seine tuna fishery	IATTC	EPO-SKJ	Acoura/LR	In assessment	No	In assessment	In assessment	In assessment
Panama tropical Pacific yellowfin and skipjack purse seine tuna fishery	IATTC	EPO-YFT	Acoura/LR	In assessment	No	In assessment	In assessment	In assessment
French Polynesia albacore and yellowfin longline fishery	IATTC	EPO-YFT	CU Pesca	18-Jun-23	No	No	No	90
Pan Pacific yellowfin, bigeye and albacore longline fishery	IATTC	EPO-YFT	CU Pesca	In assessment	No	In assessment	In assessment	In assessment
Northeastern Tropical Pacific Purse Seine SKJ and YFT	IATTC	EPO-YFT	SCS	06-Sep-22	Yes	No	No	90
US North Atlantic swordfish, yellowfin and albacore	ICCAT	AO-ALB-N	MRAG	In assessment	Yes	No	No	100
North Atlantic albacore artisanal fishery	ICCAT	AO-ALB-N	BV	06-Jun-21	No	No	No	90
North West Atlantic Canada Harpoon swordfish	ICCAT	AO-SWO-N	Acoura/LR	11-Dec-22	Yes	No	No	90
North West Atlantic Canada Longline swordfish	ICCAT	AO-SWO-N	Acoura/LR	11-Dec-22	Yes	No	No	90
US North Atlantic swordfish, yellowfin and albacore	ICCAT	AO-SWO-N	MRAG	06-Mar-23	Yes	No	No	90
ACTEMSA-LEAL SANTOS pole and line West Atlantic skipjack fishery	ICCAT	AO-SKJ-W	BV	in assessment	No	No	No	100
Sant Yago TF Unassociated purse seine Atlantic yellowfin tuna fishery	ICCAT	AO-YFT	BV	in assessment	No	No	Yes (around 95% of Bmsy but clear evidence of rebuilding)	70
US North Atlantic swordfish, yellowfin and albacore	ICCAT	AO-YFT	MRAG	In assessment	Yes	No	Yes (around 95% of Bmsy but clear evidence of rebuilding)	70
Echegaray Indian Ocean Purse Seine Skipjack Tuna	IOTC	IO-SKJ	Acoura/LR	In assessment	No	No	No	In assessment
Maldives Pole and Line Tuna Skipjack	IOTC	IO-SKJ	DNV GL	28-Nov-22	No	No	No	100
American Samoa EEZ Albacore and Yellowfin Longline Fishery	WCPFC	PO-ALB-S	CU Pesca	23-Nov-22	No	No	No	100
AAFA and WFOA South Pacific albacore tuna	WCPFC/IATTC	PO-ALB-S	MRAG	In assessment	No	No	No	100
French Polynesia albacore and yellowfin longline fishery	WCPFC	PO-ALB-S	CU Pesca	18-Jun-23	No	No	No	100
Pan Pacific yellowfin, bigeye and albacore longline fishery	WCPFC	PO-ALB-S	CU Pesca	In assessment	No	No	No	In assessment

SZLC, CSFC & FZLC Cook Islands EEZ South Pacific albacore & yellowfin longline	WCPFC	PO-ALB-S	CU Pesca	08-Jun-20	Yes	No	No	100
Walker Seafood Australian albacore, yellowfin tuna, and swordfish longline	WCPFC	PO-ALB-S	CU Pesca	26-Aug-20	Yes	No	No	100
PT Citraraja Ampat, Sorong pole and line Skipjack and Yellowfin Tuna	WCPFC	WPO-SKJ	DNV GL	In assessment	No	In assessment	In assessment	In assessment
Solomon Islands skipjack and yellowfin tuna	WCPFC	WPO-SKJ	MRAG	11-Jul-21	Yes	No	No	100
PT Citraraja Ampat, Sorong pole and line Skipjack and Yellowfin Tuna	WCPFC	WPO-YFT	DNV GL	In assessment	No	In assessment	In assessment	In assessment
Solomon Islands skipjack and yellowfin tuna	WCPFC	WPO-YFT	MRAG	11-Jul-21	Yes	No	No	90
Pan Pacific yellowfin, bigeye and albacore longline fishery	WCPFC	WPO-BET	CU Pesca	In assessment	No	In assessment	In assessment	In assessment
SZLC CSFC & FZLC FSM EEZ Longline Yellowfin and Bigeye Tuna	WCPFC	WPO-BET	CU Pesca	In assessment	No	In assessment	In assessment	In assessment
Japanese skipjack and albacore pole and line	WCPFC	WPO-SKJ	Acoura/LR	16-Oct-21	yes	No	No	100
New Zealand Talley's skipjack	WCPFC	WPO-SKJ	Acoura/LR	16-Aug-22	No	No	No	100
Ishihara Marine Products albacore and skipjack pole and line fishery	WCPFC	WPO-SKJ	CU Pesca	In assessment	No	In assessment	In assessment	In assessment
Tropical Pacific yellowfin and skipjack free-school purse seine fishery	WCPFC	WPO-SKJ	CU Pesca	In assessment	No	In assessment	In assessment	In assessment
TriMarine Western and Central Pacific Skipjack and Yellowfin Tuna	WCPFC	WPO-SKJ	SCS	02-Jun-21	Yes	No	No	100
WPSTA purse seine free school yellowfin and skipjack	WCPFC	WPO-SKJ	SCS	20-Jun-23	No	No	No	100
American Samoa EEZ Albacore and Yellowfin Longline Fishery	WCPFC	WPO-YFT	CU Pesca	23-Nov-22	No	No	No	90
French Polynesia albacore and yellowfin longline fishery	WCPFC	WPO-YFT	CU Pesca	18-Jun-23	No	No	No	90
Pan Pacific yellowfin, bigeye and albacore longline fishery	WCPFC	WPO-YFT	CU Pesca	In assessment	No	No	No	90
SZLC CSFC & FZLC FSM EEZ Longline Yellowfin and Bigeye Tuna	WCPFC	WPO-YFT	CU Pesca	In assessment	No	No	No	90
SZLC, CSFC & FZLC Cook Islands EEZ South Pacific albacore & yellowfin longline	WCPFC	WPO-YFT	CU Pesca	08-Jun-20	Yes	No	No	90
Tropical Pacific yellowfin and skipjack free-school purse seine fishery	WCPFC	WPO-YFT	CU Pesca	In assessment	No	No	No	90
Walker Seafood Australian albacore, yellowfin tuna, and swordfish longline	WCPFC	WPO-YFT	CU Pesca	26-Aug-20	Yes	No	No	90
TriMarine Western and Central Pacific Skipjack and Yellowfin Tuna	WCPFC	WPO-YFT	SCS	02-Jun-21	Yes	No	No	90
WPSTA purse seine free school yellowfin and skipjack	WCPFC	WPO-YFT	SCS	20-Jun-23	No	No	No	90
Japanese skipjack and albacore pole and line	WCPFC	PO-ALB-N	Acoura/LR	16-Oct-21	yes	No	No	100

Fiji albacore and yellowfin longline	WCPFC	PO-ALB-S	Acoura/LR	22-Jan-23	No	No	No	100
New Zealand Albacore Troll Fishery	WCPFC	PO-ALB-S	Acoura/LR	12-Feb-22	No	No	No	100
PNA skipjack and yellowfin tuna	WCPFC	WPO-SKJ	Acoura/LR	21-Mar-23	No	No	No	100
Fiji albacore and yellowfin longline	WCPFC	WPO-YFT	Acoura/LR	22-Jan-23	No	No	No	90
PNA skipjack and yellowfin tuna	WCPFC	WPO-YFT	Acoura/LR	21-Mar-23	No	No	No	90
Ishihara Marine Products albacore and skipjack pole and line fishery	WCPFC/IATTC	PO-ALB-N	CU Pesca	In assessment	No	In assessment	In assessment	In assessment
Pan Pacific yellowfin, bigeye and albacore longline fishery	WCPFC/IATTC	PO-ALB-N	CU Pesca	In assessment	No	In assessment	In assessment	In assessment
AAFA and WFOA North Pacific albacore tuna	WCPFC/IATTC	PO-ALB-N	MRAG	20-Jul-23	No	No	No	100
CHMSF British Columbia albacore tuna North Pacific	WCPFC/IATTC	PO-ALB-N	SAIG	09-Jun-20	Yes	No	No	100

**Appendix 2 – Overview of RFMO workplan deadlines for HMS stocks (note: for certified stocks only for which a RFMO workplan is in place to address RPs and HCRs)**

RFMO	Stock	RFMO workplan completion date	Notes/current status of RFMO workplan (on target, behind target, etc)	proposed condition end date	Reference
ICCAT	AO-ALB-N	2018	On target. ICCAT Rec 17-04 in force since 11 June 2018 established RFP and HCR for this stock	2018 (already re-scored during the 2nd Surveillance audit. HCR adopted through Rec 17-04)	Rec 17-04 by ICCAT on a HCR for the North Atlantic Albacore Supplementing the Multiannual Conservation and Management Program, Rec 16-06 ( <a href="https://www.iccat.int/en/RecRes.asp">https://www.iccat.int/en/RecRes.asp</a> )
ICCAT	AO-SKJ-W	2020	The SCRS workplan establishes that MSE will be implemented by 2020. However, the multispecies nature of the tropical tunas fishery is posing a challenge. No interim or agreed RFP so far and next SKJ stock assessment will take place in 2019 (and YFT in 2020). It is very likely they do not meet their deadline	2022 (HCR adopted)	SCRS Science Strategic Plan for 2015-2020
ICCAT	AO-YFT	2020	The SCRS workplan establishes that MSE will be implemented by 2020. However, the multispecies nature of the tropical tunas fishery is posing a challenge. No interim or agreed RFP so far and next YFT stock assessment will take place in 2020. It is very likely they do not meet their deadline.	2022 (HCR adopted)	Rec 15-07 by ICCAT on the Development of HCRs and of MSE ( <a href="https://www.iccat.int/en/RecRes.asp">https://www.iccat.int/en/RecRes.asp</a> ) Rec 16-01 by ICCAT on a Multiannual Conservation and Management Program for Tropical Tunas SCRS Science Strategic Plan for 2015-2020
IATTC/WCPFC	PO-ALB-N		On target. MSE Workshops and activities scheduled have been held and conducted. There is a clear commitment to adopt HCRs and target ref point. Although the workplan is on target, there is no set date for completion of the MSE work and adoption on HCR and ref point, likely due to the health of the stock relative to others in this RFMO and hence lower priority. ISC 2018 report of the ALWG states that the first round of the MSE results will be presented in 2019. A science workshop on the MSE research work progress is scheduled for Jan 2019 and will be followed by another MSE workshop for managers, scientists and stakeholders. The progress of and outputs from the MSE work will be presented at the ISC plenary meeting in July 2019, where it will be decided how to proceed, the workplan will likely be refined. CABs therefore propose 2023 as the condition deadline based on the most recently recertified fishery for this stock (AAFA/WFOA Albacore).	2023 (HCR adopted)	ISC 2018 report of the ALWG <a href="http://isc.fra.go.jp/reports/alb/alb_2018_1.html">http://isc.fra.go.jp/reports/alb/alb_2018_1.html</a>
WCPFC/IATTC	PO-ALB-S	2021	On target (agreed RFP by Dec 2018)	2021 (HCR adopted)	2017 workplan ( <a href="https://www.wcpfc.int/doc/placeholder-harvest-strategy-key-documents">https://www.wcpfc.int/doc/placeholder-harvest-strategy-key-documents</a> )
WCPFC	WPO-SKJ	2021	On target (interim RFP was agreed in Dec 2015)	2021 (HS in place)	2017 workplan ( <a href="https://www.wcpfc.int/doc/placeholder-harvest-strategy-key-documents">https://www.wcpfc.int/doc/placeholder-harvest-strategy-key-documents</a> )
WCPFC	WPO-YFT	2021	On target (agreed RFP by Dec 2019)	2021 (HCR adopted)	2017 workplan ( <a href="https://www.wcpfc.int/doc/placeholder-harvest-strategy-key-documents">https://www.wcpfc.int/doc/placeholder-harvest-strategy-key-documents</a> )



Chrissie Sieben  
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**Sent by email**

Date: 14/02/2019

Dear Chrissie Sieben,

I write with reference to your submission on 11/12/2018 of a request for variation to the MSC Certification Requirement (CR) to allow:

For fisheries scored against v1.3

- All tuna fisheries currently on v1.3 will be upgraded to v2.0 at the next surveillance audit
- CABs shall follow the process requirements in Appendix B that have been prepared specifically for P1 upgrades
- If the stock has already been fully assessed against FCR v2.0 at the time of rescoring, a reduced upgrade process applies that does not require peer review and additional reporting requirements; fisheries for which this is applicable are identified in Appendix A
- No suspension action will be undertaken for fisheries that are behind target on P1 conditions raised against v1.3
- Any new conditions raised as a result of the Principle 1 rescoring will be harmonised with other tuna fisheries and aligned with the stock-specific condition deadlines set out in Appendix A

For fisheries already scored against v2.0

- Principle 1 conditions and timelines will be harmonised for all tuna fisheries on the same stock
- A shared deadline for achievement of conditions, based on the most recent RFMO workplan, will be set as per the calendar years specified in Appendix A

For all fisheries

- To facilitate harmonisation efforts between CABs, surveillance schedules of the relevant tuna fisheries will be aligned (to the extent that is practical) so that annual progress can be assessed collectively by CABs

This may vary against one or more of the following requirements, depending on the fishery circumstances:

1. Fisheries scored against v1.3:

Implementation timeframes: Existing fisheries (in assessment or certified) shall apply the new standard requirements (...) at their first reassessment commencing after 1st October 2017. (FCR V2.0 p. 9)

FCR V.2.0 7.23.13.1.b.i. If the progress against the measurable outcomes, expected results or (interim) milestones specified when setting the condition is judged to be behind target, the CAB shall specify the remedial action, and any revised milestones, that are required to bring process back on track within 12 months to achieve the original condition by the original deadline.

FCRv2.0 7.23.13.2: In the event that the CAB determines that progress against a condition is not back 'on target' within 12 months of falling 'behind target', the CAB shall:

- a. Consider progress as inadequate.

b. Apply the requirements of GCR 7.4 (suspension or withdrawal).

For fisheries with conditions under Principle 1 subject to harmonization:

FCRv2.0 7.11.1.3 (and subclauses): The CAB shall draft conditions to result in improved performance to at least the 80 level within a period set by the CAB but no longer than the term of the certification unless: a. There are exceptional circumstances, and the CAB determines that achieving a performance level of 80 may take longer than the period of certification. The CAB shall interpret exceptional circumstances in 7.11.1.3.a to refer to situations in which, even with perfect implementation, achieving the 80 level of performance may take longer than the certification period.

FCRv2.0 7.24.2 (and subclauses): When conducting a re-assessment of a certified fishery, the CAB shall (...) evaluate progress against certification conditions. Unless exceptional circumstances apply (7.11.1.3) or paragraph (b) applies, the fishery shall have met all conditions and milestones. (...) In the event that there are unmet conditions, the CAB shall apply 7.23.13.1 and 7.23.13.2 (except 7.23.13.2.b.) in determining the adequacy of progress against those conditions and milestones. If the CAB concludes that the client has made inadequate progress, it shall not grant a new fishery certificate.

These are integral to ensuring all MSC accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies operate in a consistent and transparent manner. The MSC intends that these requirements be met across all fisheries and CoC certificate holders, except in exceptional, well-justified circumstances, as part of the MSC programme.

**MSC notes the factors presented supporting your request, including:**

- This variation will contribute to an alignment of P1 condition timelines between certified HMS fisheries.
- This will in theory incentivise all parties fishing on a particular HMS stock to work towards a common deadline for meeting shared P1 conditions.
- Fisheries currently scored against v1.3 will be rescored against v2.0 for Principle 1 at the next available opportunity
- Conditions on PI 1.2.2 (HCRs) and PI 1.2.1 (harvest strategy), and their associated timelines, will be harmonized between all UoAs that share the same P1 stock
- Timelines for achieving the conditions will be set in line with RFMO workplans for developing HCRs and harvest strategies (ranging between 2021 and 2023)
- This variation request covers only certified and harmonised fisheries; for new or in assessment fisheries, CABs instead propose to use existing mechanisms to achieve harmonization

**Given the rationale provided, the MSC is willing to grant a variation to the CR in this case subject to the following conditions:**

- Where applicable, rescoring against v2.0 is to be undertaken at the next surveillance audit and shall follow the process requirements set out in Appendix B
- Relevant P1 conditions shall be closed by the proposed dates given in Appendix A as per FCP v2.1 7.28.16.1.b.i and 7.28.16.2 and GCR v2.2 7.4.2.b
- All new or in assessment fisheries for which harmonisation is required must be aligned with the applicable timelines given in Appendix A, as per the guidance in the FCP v2.1
- CABs shall make efforts to ensure the language of the conditions and milestones is consistent between harmonised fisheries
- CABs should make good faith efforts to coordinate surveillance with overlapping fisheries
- Reassessments shall be undertaken on usual timelines

If you have any questions regarding this response, please do not hesitate to contact the relevant Fisheries Assessment Manager for this fishery.

Marine Stewardship Council  
cc: Accreditation Services International