

Marine Stewardship Council - Variation Request

Date submitted to MSC	<i>3th September 2018</i>
Name of CAB	SAI Global
Fishery Name/CoC Certificate Number	Canada Highly Migratory Species Foundation (CHMSF) British Columbia albacore tuna North Pacific/F-SAI-002
Lead Auditor/Programme Manager	Ivan Mateo/Julie McDonald
Scheme requirement(s) for which variation requested	<p><i>MSC FCR v.2.0</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>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:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>b. Apply the requirements of GCR 7.4 (suspension or withdrawal).</i> • <i>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.</i>
Is this variation sought in order to fulfil IPI requirements (FCR 7.4.14)?	No

1. Proposed variation

In order to harmonise with the overlapping recently re-certified (July 2018) AAFA and WFOA North Pacific albacore tuna fishery, SAI Global would like:

- Not to suspend the fishery certificate; and
- Harmonise the revised milestones with the milestones set for AAFA and WFOA North Pacific albacore tuna fishery by setting revised milestones for conditions on reference points and harvest control rules beyond the 5 years of the fishery certificate owing to exceptional circumstances.

2. Rationale/Justification

The CHMFS North Pacific albacore tuna fishery was certified in March 2010 and re-certified in May 2015. There were two conditions raised on the first assessment (PI 1.1.2 Reference points, 1.2.2 Harvest control rules) that were carried over and remained open at the re-assessment of the fishery. Thus, the audit team has evaluated progress against the 2 conditions during the last two annual surveillances.

During the 2017 surveillance audit, SAIG audit team determined that the progress of the fishery on conditions on reference points and HCR was behind target, the audit team set revised milestones in accordance with FCR 7.23.13.1.b.i.

However, following a preliminary review of the fishery and having considered the outcomes of the recently re-certified of AAFA and WFOA North Pacific albacore tuna (using MSC FCR v.2.0), SAIG

considers it is highly likely that at the upcoming surveillance audit this fishery will be behind target on Condition 1 and 2 for the second consecutive year.

Because North Pacific albacore tuna fisheries were assessed under different MSC versions of the Standard (1.3 vs 2.0) and at different timeline, there are some discrepancies on the outcome of status of conditions.

On the AAFA & WFOA North Pacific albacore Tuna, MRAG audit team also concluded on their 4th surveillance report (2017) that the Year 4 milestones for the same conditions were behind target. However, given that this fishery was re-assessed under MSC FCR v2.0, the condition on HCR was carried over to re-assessment and new milestones has been set to have well-defined HCRs in place at the end of the fishery certification period.

SAIG would like to set revised milestones for the 2 open conditions by aligning them with AAFA and WFOA North Pacific albacore tuna new milestones.

The team is following the guidelines of MSC 2.0 specifically on 'Exceptional circumstances' for P1 conditions within fisheries managed by Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMO)

<http://msc-info.accreditation-services.com/questions/exceptional-circumstances-for-p1-conditions-within-fisheries-managed-by-regional-fisheries-management-organisations-rfmo/>

MSC states that:

Within RFMO managed fisheries, 'exceptional circumstances' can apply in specific cases where ongoing research projects are required to finalise management objectives related to Principle 1. In many cases for RFMO managed fisheries, the action plans and milestones generated for conditions in P1 are linked with the ongoing development of harvest strategies and 'well-defined' harvest control rules.

RFMOs operate under a multi-national governance structure, where participating member countries are required to pass management measures usually based on consensus. Given the difficulties in reaching unanimous agreement among participating member countries, and the timing of RFMO meetings (usually only one annual meeting where binding decisions can be made), the development and implementation of management initiatives and research projects can occur across timelines that exceed the 5 year MSC certification.

The SAIG acknowledges that CHMSF did all the actions required by the client action plan for years 1 and 2. For the last 2 years since reassessment of the fishery, the CHMSF has continued to actively work toward having the IATTC and WCPFC adopt appropriate target and limit reference points (or measures or surrogates with similar intent or outcome) and harvest control rules for the North Pacific albacore tuna stock. CHMSF also continued to work with the Government of Canada and provided to the team evidence of the work and collaboration with Canadian and regional managers, attended and participated in international and regional meetings and forums, where appropriate, to continue to support the adopting of appropriate target and limit reference points. For example as advisers to the DFO Tuna Advisory Board (TAB), the CHMSF has worked actively with DFO in the ALB MSE process. Specifically, CHMSF and TAB Advisors contributed to the identification of management objectives. The management objectives were presented at the second ISC MSE Workshop in Yokohama, Japan, May 24-25, 2016. The Audit Team acknowledges all the previous significant efforts by CHMSF in cooperation with the management authority, and understand that further adoption and implementation is a tedious process that needs to be decided with other RFMOs.

Status of the North Pacific albacore tuna stock

Based on the findings of the 2017 North Pacific albacore tuna stock assessment, the ALBWG concluded that: 1) the North Pacific albacore stock is likely not overfished, and 2) overfishing is likely not occurring (ISC, 2017a).

The latest assessment shows that the estimated female SSB has never fallen below the LRP since 1993, albeit with large uncertainty in the terminal year (2015) estimates. The 2015 SSB was estimated to be 80,618 t and was 2.47 times greater than the LRP threshold of 34,374 t.

SAI Global confirms that it is not aware at this time of any factor (related either to fishery status, or performance against conditions) that could result in the fishery no longer being in compliance with the MSC Fisheries Standard. As pointed out above, the client has fulfilled all the required actions of the client action plan, the North Pacific albacore tuna stock is not overfished, overfishing is not occurring and the estimated female SSB has never fallen below the LRP since 1993.

These requests do not alter the conformity of the CHMSF North Pacific Albacore Tuna with the relevant MSC standard. The sustainability of the fishery is unaffected by this change.

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

A positive response to this VR will allow SAIG to conform with PB3.2.2 and PB3.3.2.b by ensuring that conclusions are consistent between the overlapping CHMSF North Pacific albacore tuna fishery and AAFA and WFOA North Pacific albacore tuna fishery, with respect to evaluation, scoring and conditions.

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

SAIG informed the client but not the other stakeholders. Stakeholders will be notified once the MSC's response to the VR will be provided.

5. Further Comments

N/A