



OPRT

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Sankaido Bldg. (9th Floor)
1-9-13 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan 107-0052
Tel: 03-3568-6388; Fax: 03-3568-6389
Website: <http://www.oprt.or.jp>

FOR CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF TUNAS

WCPFC

The OPRT reiterates its urging the WCPFC, in accordance with the precautionary principle, to refrain from taking actions based on the results of new assessments, which could lead to irreparable damage to the WCPO bigeye stock.

The 15th Regular Session of the WCPFC (WCP-FC15) will be held from December 9 to 15, 2018 in Honolulu.

The following core points need to be duly considered in the course of deliberations to be conducted in the forthcoming WCPFC15 with the view to conserving and utilizing the tuna stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) including the bigeye and yellowfin stocks:

1. The new stock assessment is too premature to be employed in developing CMMs. A truly precautionary approach needs to be applied.

We consider that science must be respected in developing conservation and management measures for fish stocks including the WCPO bigeye stock. However, since August last year we have been deeply concerned about the results of stock assessments for the WCPO bigeye conducted at SC13 that contains high levels of uncertainties. And, our concern has not been alleviated by examining the outcome from SC14 held in August this year.

The level of uncertainties for the 2018 stock assessment associated with the growth curve and regional division is considered basically unchanged from the 2017 assessment. It is assumed that such uncertainties cannot be resolved immediately.

In addition, SC14 also noted that, regardless of the choice of uncertainty grid, the assessment results show that the stock has been continuously declining for about 60 years since the late 1950's, except for the recent small increase (paragraph 169 of Summary Report (SR) of SC14). This has amplified our concern.

We therefore, reiterate our urging the Commission, in accordance with the precautionary principle, to refrain from taking actions based on the results of new assessments, which could lead to irreparable damage to the WCPO bigeye stock.

More specifically, the work to reduce uncertainties

of new stock assessments associated with, inter alia, growth curve and regional division should be expedited as a matter of priority. And, until the uncertainties included in these new assessments are adequately resolved we should continue to rely on the previous full assessment that was conducted in 2014 at SC10 and fine-tuned with updated information in the consecutive years up to 2016 by the SC and resultant management recommendations from SC in developing a CMM.

This approach is consistent with the provision of Article 5 (c) of the WCPFC Convention that inter alia, prescribes the application of the Precautionary Approach in establishing and implementing conservation and management measures for WCPFC tuna stocks.

[Major paragraphs from Summary Reports (SR) of SC related to the comments above]

i) In the 2017 assessment SC itself admitted that high level of uncertainties exist in that assessment chiefly because of the introduction of the new growth curve and changed regional division (See: Paragraphs 232, 233 and 242: SR of SC13).

ii) (However,) SC14 also notes that questions remain regarding the "updated new growth" model (paragraph 160: SR of SC14).

iii) Paragraphs 183 and 184 of SR of SC14 that describe research recommendations consist of a multiple number of subparagraphs that suggest a wide range of work is necessary to cope with the high level of uncertainties included in the assessments conducted in 2017 and 2018.

2. FAD settings should be adequately managed through strengthened restrictions to allow productivity of bigeye and yellowfin stocks to recover.

It is considered that restrictions set forth and implemented for purse seine setting associated with Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) by WCPFC to date have not been adequate to maintain the productivity of the bigeye and yellowfin stocks and probably to prevent deterioration of, in particular, bigeye stock.

We consider it necessary that management of purse seine settings associated with FADs should be strengthened in an effective manner for the following reasons:

Firstly, FAD settings are considered attributable to the deterioration of bigeye stocks though large amount of juvenile bigeye catches. This recognition has been shared by scientific bodies of other RFMOs; and

Secondly, SC has repeatedly suggested that the Commission consider measures to reduce fishing mortality from fisheries that take juveniles, with the goal to increase bigeye fishery yields and reduce any further impacts on the spawning biomass for the stock in the tropical regions. SC has also made a recommendation from the same perspective for the WCPO yellowfin stock.

Measures to be established reflecting this perspective will contribute to the increase in Y/R (Yield per Recruit) for bigeye and yellowfin stocks, and the promotion of conservation and rational use of these stocks.

[Relevant paragraphs]

[Scientific Committee (SC) of WCPFC]

i) SC 14 (therefore) recommends that WCPFC15 could continue to consider measures to reduce fishing mortality from fisheries that take juveniles, with the goal to increase bigeye fishery yields and reduce any further impacts on the spawning biomass for this stock in the tropical regions (Paragraph 179: Summary Report (SR) of SC14 of WCPFC)

ii) WCPFC could consider measures to reduce fishing mortality from fisheries that take juveniles, with the goal to increase to maximum fishery yields and reduce any further impacts on the spawning potential for this (the WCPO yellowfin) stock in the tropical regions (Paragraph 38 (255): SR of SC10 (Management advice including this is still most recent)).

[Standing Committee on Research and Statistics of ICCAT]

“The Commission (ICCAT) should be aware that increased harvests on small fishes by FADs and other fisheries as well as the development of new fisheries could have had negative consequences for the productivity of bigeye tuna fisheries (e.g. reduced yield at MSY and increased SSB required to produce MSY) and, therefore, should the Commission wish to increase long-term sustainable yield, the Committee continues to recommend that effective measures be found to reduce fishing mortality of small bigeye tunas.” [2018 ICCAT SCRS Report P48 last paragraph]

“The Commission should be aware that increased harvests on small yellowfin and bigeye tuna could have negative consequences. Should the Commission wish to increase long term sustainable yield, the Committee continues to recommend that effective measures be found to reduce fishing mortality of small yellowfin and bigeye tuna.” [2018 ICCAT SCRS REPORT P27]

3. Contributions from CCMs with major longline fleets should be duly recognized.

In the future deliberations to develop conservation and management measures and other related issues, the following fact should also be duly considered in related deliberations: of the 5 CCMs (China, Japan, Korea, Chinese Taipei and USA: all except USA have OPRT member associations) that have major longline fisheries were subject to the reduction schedule for bigeye catches by longline fisheries from 2014-2017 (Appendix F of CMMs 2013-01, 2014-01, 2015-01 and 2016-01). The relevant longline fisheries industries have expended utmost efforts to reduce their catches in accordance with the catch reduction schedule regardless of whether the additional measures described for purse seine fisheries in the afore-mentioned CMMs are actually implemented or not. These endeavors by those longline industries are expecting the implementation of further effective restrictions on purse seiners' FAD

settings which should lead to the reduction in fishing mortality of bigeye tuna by purse seine fisheries to realize the recovery of the WCPO bigeye stock.

4. Work to develop a Harvest Strategy (HS) for the WCPO skipjack should, duly consider the promotion of conservation and management of the WCPO bigeye and yellowfin stocks

As described in points number 1 and 2 above, because purse seine operations associated with FADs have significant impacts on the WCPO bigeye and yellowfin stocks, it would be inappropriate if work to develop a HS for the WCPO skipjack within the WCPFC does not give due consideration to possible implications on the WCPO bigeye stock and related fisheries.

In this regard, careful deliberations should be conducted by utilizing Management Strategy Evaluations for skipjack, bigeye and yellowfin in the WCPO.

ICCAT Annual Meeting

No Agreements were reached on management measures for the Atlantic bigeye despite warning from its scientific body (SCRS) – The status quo catch cannot be sustained.

The 21st Special Meeting of International Commission on the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) was held from November 10 to 20, 2018 in Dubrovnik, Croatia.

No agreements were reached to renew any of the major elements of conservation and management measure for tropical tuna stocks in the Atlantic including bigeye and yellowfin TACs, quota allocation among members and cooperative non-members, or effectively strengthened restriction on purse seine settings associated with Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) for 2019 and after. Despite warnings and recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) based on its recent full assessment for the bigeye stock, ICCAT failed to incorporate those into renewed management measures to cover 2019 and after, in a responsive manner.

[Measures covering 2016-2018 and the background]

The current measures that were adopted in 2015 (15-01) and were revised in 2016 (16-01) cover 2016-2018. At this year's meeting the Commission was expected to renew those measures for 2019 and after based on the new full stock assessment for bigeye stock conducted this year and management recommendations to the Commission made by the SCRS.

The previous full assessment for bigeye stock was carried out in 2015 and demonstrated that the stock had been overfished and overfishing was taking place mainly due to the catch of juvenile fish whose level was substantially higher than the scientists had assumed. The SCRS, in 2015, recommended that the TAC (85,000 t) should be reduced and effective measures be taken to reduce fishing mortality of small fish

which is mostly derived from fishing operations associated with FADs.

In response to these inputs from SCRS, the Commission adopted measures including the reduction in the TAC (to 65,000 t) and modification of time-area closure for FAD settings (the moratorium).

[This year’s full assessment and recommendations made by SCRS]

The new assessment conducted this year indicated that the stock has been further deteriorated and that the current level of total removal from the stock could not be sustained.

In particular, SCRS pointed out the total catches in 2016 and 2017 (approximately 78,000 t) exceeded the TAC by 20%, alarming that because this TAC does not affect all countries that can catch bigeye tuna, in theory the total catch removed from the stock could exceed the TAC.

SCRS also concluded that the moratorium has not been effective in reducing the mortality of juvenile bigeye tuna, and that any reduction in yellowfin tuna mortality was minimal, largely due to the redistribution of effort into areas adjacent to the moratorium area and the increase in the number of fishing vessels. The SCRS recommended that the Commission should urgently ensure that catches are appropriately reduced to end overfishing and allow the stock to recover following the relevant provision adopted in 2011. Furthermore, the SCRS noted that the necessary reduction of fishing mortality could not be achieved with current and previous FAD time area closures and/or changes to fleet allocation alone.

Furthermore, the SCRS warned that the Commission should be aware that increased harvests of small fishes by FADs and other fisheries as well as the development of new fisheries could have had negative consequences for the productivity of bigeye tuna fisheries (e.g. reduced yield at MSY and increased SSB required to produce MSY). Therefore, it recommended that should the Commission wish to increase long-term sustainable yield, effective measures need to be found to reduce fishing mortality of small bigeye tunas.

[Outline of the deliberations at the 2018 ICCAT Meeting]

Although a sense of crisis was shared among members under these circumstances, no agreements were reached with respect to measures that would lead to a reduction in the total catch of bigeye tuna. Some members such as Brazil that are not subject to national quota under the TAC in 16-01 and have increased their catch of bigeye in recent years strongly opposed any reduction in their future catch arguing the rights of developing coastal states. Strengthened measures for realizing effective restrictions on fishing activities associated with FADs in order to reduce fishing mortality of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tunas also met with strong opposition from the European Union and some African members with purse seine fleets.

After all, on the last day of the Meeting, it was decided that the provisions of 16-01 would be extended into 2019 with some adjustments.

It is assumed that deterioration will continue for the bigeye stock. Next year a full stock assessment for

the yellowfin stock will be conducted by the SCRS. It is obvious that ICCAT bears the responsibility for the conservation of tuna and tuna-like species in the Atlantic and that there is an urgent need for ICCAT to develop, adopt and implement measures to realize recovery of the bigeye tuna as well as to increase in the productivity of the stock, taking into account conservation of yellowfin tuna.

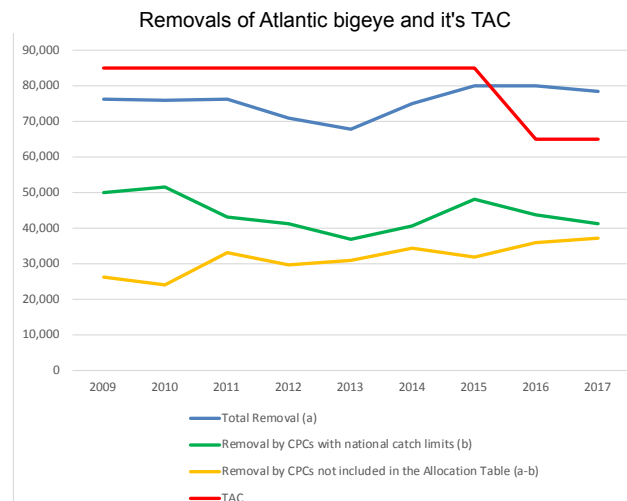
[Way forward]

Good advice is seldom welcome.

The more time the Commission takes to adopt and implement measures that rectify the current situation, the harsher the restrictions imposed on all the relevant countries will be.

Lastly, we would like to reiterate the last part of the first article of the previous OPRT Newsletter International “No. 65 October, 2018”..

If the productivity and the status of the Atlantic bigeye stock had been maintained at the level commensurate with the level that allowing the previous TAC of 85,000t had been applied before 2016 by means of implementation of management measures effective enough to maintain or reduce fishing mortality of small fish as recommended by the SCRS, the total catches of approximately 78,000 t (<85,000 t) for 2016 and 2017 might have been considered not to hamper the sustainability of the stock. Moreover, if the selectivity of the relevant fisheries had been properly maintained, the stock would have been able to provide room to accommodate the aspirations of developing CPCs to further develop their fisheries (as far as they do not cause excessive mortality for small fish) within the total catch up to the level of 85,000 t (TAC).



OPRT Campaign

"October 10 is the Day of Tuna" Campaign

The Organization for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fisheries (OPRT) carried out the Wild Sashimi Tuna Campaign under the theme: "Let's try and enjoy traditional and popular dishes in the world using sashimi tuna". This campaign was conducted in cooperation with the Japan Fish Retailers Union (Zensui-Shoren) in relation to "October-10 Day of Tuna". A total of 25,000 copies of leaflets, 800 copies of posters and flags or banners were distributed for sales promotion for wild frozen tuna through 214 fresh fish retailers with the aim at making the day better known among consumers and to impress them about the attraction of sashimi tunas. In the leaflet, pictures of a variety of dishes using sashimi tuna coordinated with vegetables, which are popular in the world and traditional in regional/national cuisines are featured. In addition, among those who fill out the questionnaire (forms are available and collected at the retail stores participating in this campaign) 200 people will win 3 sakus (rectangular shaped portions of tuna meat ready to be sliced into sashimi pieces) of frozen wild bigeye tuna (gross weight: 700 g or more) by draw.

Fresh fish retail stores make appeal about attraction of wild tuna.

During the period of the campaign, OPRT and Zensui-shoren jointly visited a number of the fresh fish retail stores participating in the campaign.

"Uoyoshi shoten (魚義商店)", a fresh fish store in Kita-Koiwa (北小岩), Tokyo, is a long-established store handling fresh fish for more than 70 years. According to Mr. Kazuo



Watanabe, owner of the store, out of approximately 20 varieties of fish sashimi he offers for consumer's choice, no fish is more popular and sells better than tuna. He exclusively handles wild southern bluefin tuna and offers "Oh-toro (大トロ: most fatty portion of tuna belly)", "Chu-toro (中トロ: fatty-portion of tuna belly)", "Akami (赤身: red meat)" and "Butsu (ぶつ: bite-sized lumps)".

He stressed that wild southern bluefin tuna have the richest taste and good texture compared to other tuna species. Recently, Chu-toro and Akami portions have become more popular than Oh-toro portions. As a part of his endeavor to promote sashimi tuna, he offers a one-serving amount of Butsu including some "Oh-toro" lumps for JPY 500 (US \$4.5), in order that



more people may come to acknowledge the attraction of southern bluefin tuna meat at a reasonable price.

"Komiya-Sengyoten (こみや鮮魚店)" located in Nakano (中野), Tokyo sells seafood

chiefly by responding to telephone order from customers. Recently, the number of customers who view the website of this shop and come a long way is increasing.

Mr. Takayuki Komiya, owner of the shop mentioned "Sashimi tuna is the most popular among the fish we handle. We deal with wild southern bluefin and wild bluefin tuna (both are frozen and thawed at the store). Business becomes more vigorous during the period of this campaign. The leaflets prepared for past campaigns were useful to provide information, in a concise manner, on large-scale tuna longline fishery and the distribution of their tuna products to the table to customers, including young people.

During the campaign period, I expect some customers will revisit my shop in order to drop the filled-in form to apply for a draw."



"Uotatsu (魚辰)" located in Oyamadai (尾山台), Tokyo, is also a long-established fresh fish retailer founded 80 years ago. Among fish they offer, sashimi tuna over-

whelmingly sells well. They offer a wide choice for sashimi tuna including bluefin tuna, southern bluefin tuna and bigeye tuna. In addition, Kushi-yaki (串焼き: brochettes (lumps of bigeye tuna roasted on a bamboo skewer)) and Kama-yaki (カマ焼き (roasted jaw of bigeye tuna)) are offered. They are handling both frozen (and thawed at the store) tuna and fresh tuna.

Mr. Isam Ohtake, is the ex-owner and the 2nd generation of the founding family of Uotatsu, said "During the campaign period, we offer sashimi tuna of one-stage higher quality at attractive prices compared to those usually sold. Among our patrons, the winners of the draw in the previous year told us they were happy to win wild-tuna sashimi of satisfactory quality."

At 2:30 p.m. on October 7, Mr. Ishikawa, owner of Ikedayu (池田屋) located in Sangen-jyaya (三軒茶屋), Tokyo started a sale with a demonstration of cutting a whole bigeye tuna. Firstly, he cut a gilled and gutted whole tuna of 52kg into chunks in front of his customers (more than 20 people at the beginning) and afterwards customers were able to purchase a chunk(s) of her/his choice. Such sales with cutting a whole fish are carried out every Sunday afternoon. Sashimi tuna are sold in his store in the shape of sakus as well as slices of sashimi on the regular basis.



Since the wholesale market at Tsukiji had ceased on October 6, for the relocation to the Toyosu market that would commence operation as a wholesale market on October 11, Mr. Ishikawa stressed during his cutting performance that the tuna being cut into chunks was handled on the last day of Tsukiji market' operation.

The tuna was cut into chunks ranging from 350 to 500g per piece and they were almost sold out in a short time.