

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) reviewed the proposed management regime for North Pacific albacore that was submitted to the U.S. delegation to the Northern Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). The HMSAS received information on the status of Biological Reference Points (BRPs) and Harvest Control Rules (HCRs) included in the Northern Committee presentation. The HMSAS notes that there is a WCPFC limit reference point in place for albacore that would halt fishing if the stock fell into the range of the 10 lowest levels of abundance. A range of BRPs have been evaluated by the International Scientific Committee (ISC) and presented to the Northern Committee of the WCPFC for their consideration. The Northern committee is currently evaluating these BRPs. The National Marine Fisheries Service informed the HMSAS that the U.S. preference is to adopt a B20 target reference point, but that Canada is proposing a more conservative target reference point.

The HMSAS is supportive of establishment of a target reference point for albacore that maintains albacore at a sustainable harvest level. It was noted by HMSAS members that establishment of a target BRP is a condition of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification that U.S. vessels fish under and must be met to continue certification. The HMSAS is concerned that most of the effort toward establishing a BRP has been through WCPFC process and that the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) has yet to establish a BRP and may establish a target different than WCFMC. We think the Council should comment on the need to insure uniform management among all fisheries.

The HMSAS finds the process is moving forward and that the Council may want to comment on specific BRPs under consideration. Also, it would be helpful to communicate the need for coordination and uniformity between the Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs).

The HMSAS also received information on the increasing harvest of Chinese albacore catches. It was reported that this fish is entering the international market and causing a major market distortion. We were informed that the U.S. and Canada are requesting additional information on the magnitude of the Chinese catch. The HMSAS hopes the Council adds its voice to the call for improved reporting of the quantity and distribution of albacore and other HMS species in the North and South Pacific.