

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

15TH MEETING

La Jolla, California (USA)

10-14 Jun 2024

DOCUMENT SAC-15-INF-S

Subject to Change as more Information Becomes Available to the International Science Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC)

CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR NORTH PACIFIC ALBACORE TUNA V02.

March 2024

The Albacore Working Group (ALBWG) of the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC) was tasked by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC; WCPFC-NC18-WP-03) and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC; IATTC-100) with developing criteria for the identification of exceptional circumstances that would result in suspending or modifying the application of the adopted harvest strategy, and potentially may require updated Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) simulation work. Exceptional circumstances define situations outside the range of scenarios over which robustness of the harvest strategies was evaluated in the MSE analysis, and for which a different management action than specified by the adopted harvest strategy may have to be taken. This guidance document provides an outline of the process for identifying exceptional circumstances for north Pacific albacore tuna (NPALB). The criteria presented in this document were developed based on criteria developed by other Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), such as the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), for other tuna stocks. The document, however, does not provide all necessary actions to apply should an exceptional circumstance be identified for this stock, nor does it cover all possible exceptional circumstances.

To identify exceptional circumstances for NPALB, the ALBWG will continue to conduct benchmark stock assessments for the stock every 3 years with updated data sources and research as well as, examine new evidence about the current stock status and environmental conditions.

The following general elements will be considered when examining signals of possible exceptional circumstances for NPALB:

Stock and Fleet Dynamics: Evidence from stock assessment estimates that the stock is in a state not previously simulated in the MSE (e.g., current or projected SSB estimates produced in a new stock assessment are outside the range of uncertainty tested in the most recent MSE, or new evidence about the biology of the stock is presented). As well as evidence that the fleet structure or fishing operations have changed substantially.

Application: Data collection required to produce the stock assessment is no longer available and/or appropriate to apply the adopted harvest strategy.

Implementation: The implementation of the management action is substantially different from what is prescribed by the HCRs. For example, the total removals or effort by the fishery differ substantially (i.e. more than what was specified by the implementation error used in the MSE) from what is prescribed by the HCRs.

Based on the general elements above, several indicators for NPALB were identified by the ALBWG and are summarized in the following table:

Element	Indicator	Range	Evaluation Schedule
Stock and Fleet Dynamics	Depletion stock biomass (SSB/SSB _{current, F=0})	In any year estimates fall outside the range of uncertainty simulated by the operating models (OMs) used in the most recent MSE (accepted by the ALBWG in 2021)	Benchmark stock assessment every 3 years
	Fishing intensity (F% _{SPR}) where SPR is the spawning potential ratio		
	Changes in fleet dynamics	Any substantial differences from the structure and parameterization used in the OMs of the most recent MSE (accepted by the ALBWG in 2021)	As new evidence and research is presented and accepted by the ALBWG
	Biological parameters		
Application	Stock assessment	Stock assessment is not producible or estimates are unreliable	Benchmark stock assessment every 3 years
Implementation	Fishing intensity (F% _{SPR})	The fishing intensity is substantially different from what is prescribed by the HCR, given the uncertainty range that was simulated by the most recent MSE (accepted by the ALBWG in 2021)	Benchmark stock assessment every 3 years

	Realized catch or effort	If a TAC/TAE is implemented and the realized catch or effort exceeds the TAC/TAE by greater than 20%	Benchmark stock assessment every 3 years
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Should evaluation of the above criteria identify any exceptional circumstances, the ALBWG will assess the severity and potential impacts on the performance of harvest strategies, including the HCRs, and provide advice on the action required, including the need for a change in harvest strategy (e.g., reference points, HCRs), additional research, and/or updates to the MSE framework for NPALB.

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