

*Annex 10***REPORT OF THE BYCATCH WORKING GROUP WORKSHOP**

International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species
in the North Pacific Ocean

14 July 2010
Victoria, B.C., Canada

1.0 Welcome and introduction

Gary Sakagawa, ISC Chair, welcomed participants from Japan, Korea, Mexico, Chinese Taipei, USA and WCPFC to the Bycatch Working Group (BCWG) meeting. The objectives were to review the BCWG terms of reference (TOR), elect a new chairperson and discuss plans for the future.

The Chair reviewed current members of the BCWG and indicated that others wishing to join the BCWG would have to be appointed by respective ISC member leaders. It was noted that not all ISC members have elected to appointed representatives to the BCWG.

Current BCWG lead member scientists:

Japan – K. Yokawa

Chinese-Taipei – H.-W. Huang

Mexico – L. Gonzalez and F. Marquez

Korea – J.T. Yoo

USA – S. Kohin and C. Boggs

Participants introduced themselves and were thanked for attending.

2.0 Appointment of rapporteurs

Sarah Shoffler was appointed rapporteuring duties.

3.0 Adoption of agenda

The agenda was reviewed and new item 4. “Review of new developments in bycatch issues and approach in tuna RFMOs” was added.

4.0 Review new developments in bycatch issues and approach in tuna RFMOs and the Kobe II bycatch workshop

K. Yokawa reviewed the accomplishments and activities of bycatch working groups of several tuna RFMOs: WCPFC Ecosystem and Bycatch Working Group, the ICCAT Subcommittee of Ecosystem, and IOTC Ecosystem Working Group. He also reported on results of the just-concluded Kobe-II Bycatch Workshop which was held in Brisbane, Australia.

Discussion

In response to a question, the WCPFC-SC chair clarified that the WCPFC is phasing in an observer program for the large purse-seine fishery to reach 100% coverage and 20% coverage for other fisheries.

It was mentioned that almost all RFMOs review seabird and/or sea turtle mitigation measures. Most RFMOs have bycatch or bycatch and ecosystem working groups. These groups have neither sea turtle nor sea bird assessment experts as members. Population status of sea birds and sea turtles is generally “assessed” by external parties. And getting the data and information on these species from these outside groups, largely NGOs, can be difficult.

It was noted that RFMOs collect different data sets and conduct different analyses of bycatch issues depending on their TORs. Some RFMOs are starting to collect data and to conduct shark assessments.

IATTC bycatch efforts were discussed: it collects data and focuses on mitigation, especially for sea turtles. An observer program is managed for 100% coverage of large purse-seiners and which has provided complete bycatch data from that segment of the fishery. To date, the IATTC has not routinely conducted shark assessments, but this is to change when the Antigua Convention comes into force.

5.0 Review terms of reference

The group reviewed the terms of reference (TOR) produced during ISC4 (Appendix 5 of ISC4) and recent actions of the BCWG. The TOR is as follows:

“The goal of the Bycatch Working Group (BWG) is to assemble data on and, where possible, assess the status of populations of animals considered to be by-catch species caught by fisheries capturing tuna and tuna-like species in the northern Pacific Ocean. Important objectives will be to assess the interaction between the fisheries and bycatch animals, and as well mitigation measures to reduce bycatch. The initial focus of the BWG will be sea turtles, sea birds, and sharks. Other species will be considered as issues arise and are presented to the BWG by ISC plenary or its working groups. A holistic approach which considers the entire life history of the animal should be taken.

The work of the BWG shall be conducted by collaboration of scientists from member countries, bycatch working groups of international bodies, and other scientists with appropriate credentials and experience in accordance with ISC rules and procedures. The BWG conducts stock assessments on by-catch species where possible, and in support of this research will collect statistics throughout the range of these species. Such data will include catch, effort, size distribution and any other relevant fishery data as well as biological and ecological information concerning the by-catch species.”

The ISC Chair iterated that the BCWG has been working with this TOR and has faced similar issues as other RFMOs; it has focused on seabirds while information has come largely from outside organizations (NGOs). The BCWG lacked data for analyses and technical expertise for stock assessments and its contributions focused on reviewing work, data or efforts of other organizations. In the past, the BCWG recommended reducing its TOR because it could not handle mitigation studies, assessment, and monitoring of HMS interactions for all three taxa (sea birds, sea turtles, and sharks).

The BCWG presented these issues to ISC7 Plenary in 2007 and asked for guidance regarding whether the BCWG should target only HMS fisheries in the North Pacific Ocean or if it should target all fisheries that affect the BCWG species of interest in order to take a holistic approach. ISC7 determined the BCWG should retain its current TOR and use holistic approach to conduct activities where a concrete contribution can be made rather than review the work conducted in other forums.

In addition, the BCWG had been stymied by a lack of access to observer data. Current ISC data streams do not provide the traditional observer data that other organizations use to address bycatch issues. Therefore ISC BCWG is left reviewing information that is presented in other forums, which is counter to the recommendations of ISC7. The ISC Chair asked if there were any suggested changes to the TOR so that the BCWG could act within the framework of ISC7's determination. The ISC Chair also reiterated ISC7's concern that ISC should maintain the BCWG so that it can converse with other RFMOs on the issues.

Concern about duplication of bycatch work done by other RFMOs was expressed. It was suggested that it would be better to think about how ISC can make a contribution different from other RFMOs.

The difference between the TOR of the planned ISC shark task force and the BCWG was discussed. The shark task force is a temporary group which was tasked with determining which shark assessments ISC should conduct or contribute to, if any. There is a possibility that ISC could remove sharks from the BCWG TOR and form a shark working group to assess sharks.

The group reviewed the current TOR item by item and what the BCWG can address:

Assess interactions of species of ISC concern with HMS fisheries. The group concluded that there are too many species for the group to monitor and be effective. The group iterated that this task of assessing interactions is already being done by other RFMOs.

Assess mitigation measures. The group iterated that there is a need to evaluate the efficacy of mitigation measures and some BCWG members expressed an interest in working on this task. It was pointed out that the task is within the purview of the RFMOs who require implementation of the mitigation measures and who are also best positioned to evaluate them and many are doing that. The ISC, therefore, may not be very effective in this arena, though ISC could make suggestions to the RFMOs.

Conduct stock assessments. ISC does not have the expertise to conduct population census on sea birds and turtles; however, the ISC does have expertise to conduct assessments on

sharks, although there was some concern whether the BCWG was the right group to do this work within ISC. This needs to be evaluated.

The ISC chair suggested that the TOR be revised to eventually do away with requirements outside the range of ISC expertise. In that way, frequent debates about the TOR and capabilities of the BCWG can be avoided.

After mitigation measures are implemented by RFMOs, their effects on the bycatch species' population status and the economic aspects of fisheries are not rigorously evaluated. Whether ISC could assess the effect of mitigation measures on fisheries was considered. It was confirmed that the Kobe II bycatch workshop did not address whether or where this issue should be addressed. The BCWG determined that this issue requires economic expertise which the ISC does not have.

The group discussed four options to present to plenary:

1. In order to reduce the burden on BCWG and prevent duplicating work of other RFMOs, BCWG will change objectives of terms of reference (TOR) to: (1) concentrate on assessments of certain bycatch species of interest, for example sharks and opah, and (2) focus on evaluation of selected mitigation measures.
2. Status quo, but advise Plenary that BCWG cannot be effective in assessing all bycatch nor in evaluating mitigation measures; the latter should be left to other RFMOs. However, BCWG can accomplish stated objectives for sharks in terms of assessments.
3. Dissolve the BCWG and create a new working group for sharks with TOR to conduct shark stock assessments and monitor stock condition in order to best leverage limited ISC resources and address emerging concerns.
4. Revise the BCWG TOR to (1) assess the condition of shark stocks and (2) review mitigation measures for all bycatch species on the fisheries.

The group agreed that options 3 and 4 were the preferred options.

6.0 Review and approve bycatch/encounter table

In 2009, the STATWG in 2009 developed a table entitled, "Annual encounters (in numbers of animals) with sharks, seabirds and sea turtles in commercial fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species caught in the North Pacific Ocean (north of the equator) by the _____ (name) _____ fisheries" in order to "provide information to help determine the magnitude of bycatch issues in the North Pacific Ocean so that ISC can determine if further investigation is warranted." Reporting this information is required by the ISC Operations Manual. ISC9 tasked the BCWG with reviewing and approving the table when it next met. The BCWG noted that silky and oceanic white tip sharks, species of interest to ISC were not included in the table.

Discussion

It was mentioned that the BCWG has in the past indicated that the lack of bycatch data has limited its work which is common to the other RFMO bycatch working groups. In order to

collect such data, WCPFC has started a new observer program. The group indicated that reliable data can only be collected through an observer program.

The group discussed that the data would support the BCWG's TOR. But what data can be collected for BCWG by ISC members should be determined. It was suggested the data could possibly be obtained from the WCPFC.

The group agreed to defer a decision on the table until the TOR of the BCWG as well as its continued existence were determined by Plenary. When the decision on BCWG is made, the issue of collecting bycatch data remains.

7.0 Election of new chair

Because the ISC plenary will need to determine the future of the BCWG, the suggestion was made to table election of chairperson. The BCWG agreed that if plenary decides to maintain the BCWG, it should convene as soon as convenient after that decision in order to elect a chairperson and to establish a workplan. If plenary abolishes BCWG, there will be no need to elect a BCWG chairperson.

8.0 Adoption of report and Adjournment

The report was adopted at 5:15 and the BCWG adjourned.

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Appendix 2

Agenda

International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific
Ocean

Bycatch Working Group Workshop
14 July 2010
Victoria, B.C. Canada

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Welcome and introduction
2. Appointment of rapporteurs
3. Adoption of agenda
4. Review new developments bycatch issues and approach in tuna RFMOs
(specifically Kobe bycatch workshop)
5. Review terms of reference
6. Review and approve bycatch/encounter table
7. Elect new chair
8. Adoption of report
9. Adjournment