



Marine Stewardship Council fisheries assessments

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New Zealand Albacore Tuna Troll



2nd Surveillance Report

Conformity Assessment Body (CAB)	LRQA (Seafood) Limited
Assessment team	Jo Akroyd & Kevin McLoughlin
Fishery client	Tuna Management Association of New Zealand
Assessment type	Second Surveillance
Date	March 2025



Assessment Data Sheet

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1. Glossary

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CCM	WCPFC Commission Members, Cooperating Non-Members and Participating Territories are termed CCMs
CMM	WCPFC Conservation and Management Measure
CoC	Chain of Custody
CPUE	Catch per Unit Effort
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
ETP	Endangered, Threatened and Protected
F _{MSY}	Fishing mortality at MSY
FNZ	(MPI) Fisheries New Zealand
HCR	Harvest Control Rule
IATTC	Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission
ISSF	International Seafood Sustainability Foundation
IUU	Illegal, unreported and unregulated
IWG	Inter-sessional Working Group
LRP	Limit Reference Point
MCS	Monitoring, Control and Surveillance
MPI	Ministry for Primary Industries
MSC	Marine Stewardship Council
MSY	Maximum Sustainable Yield
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NZATTF	New Zealand Albacore Troll Tuna Fishery
PRI	Point of Recruitment Impairment
RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organisations
SB	Spawning Biomass
SC	Science Committee (of the WCPFC)
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SP ALB	South Pacific albacore
SPC	Pacific Community (formerly the Secretariat of the Pacific Community)
SPC-OFPP	SPC Oceanic Fisheries Programme
TAC	Total Allowable Catch
TCC	Technical and Compliance Committee (of the WCPFC)
TMA	Tuna Management Association
TRP	Target Reference Point
UoA	Unit of Assessment
UoC	Unit of Certification
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System
WCPFC	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
WCPFC-SC	WCPFC Scientific Committee
WCPO	Western Central Pacific Ocean

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2. Executive summary

The first MSC assessment and certification of the New Zealand Albacore Tuna Troll Fishery (NZATTF) was in 2011. The certificate is held by the Tuna Management Association (TMA) of New Zealand. There is one Unit of Certification (UoC) which is the same as the Unit of Assessment (UoA). The species is albacore tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*) and the stock is south Pacific albacore (SP ALB). The certified fish are caught only in New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

The fishery has been re-certified twice since its initial certification, the latest being in August 2022. Following re-certification, 2 conditions were set for the fishery. Harvest strategy and control rule conditions for PI 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 for the UoA were carried over from the previous certification. No conditions are in place for Principles 2 or 3. This UoA is part of the MSCs early adoption of Section SE process (Tool D). Tool D is a modification to the MSC FCP v3.0 and the default assessment tree structure for the assessment of stocks managed by RFMOs. Section SE relates to the scoring and associated conditions of only PI 1.2.1 (scoring issues a and b) and PI 1.2.2 (all scoring issues). The Tool D assessment followed modified reporting requirements as per the MSC Toolbox (v1.1) and a unique reporting template. Application of Tool D was announced for this and other fisheries on 12th April 2023 and completed 5th March 2024. In accordance with the requirements of the Tool D process (D1.2.38) the results of the process must be included in the next reporting phase for the fishery, hence are reported upon at this audit. The final report for the early application of Section SE are available on the MSC website (https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/new-zealand-albacore-tuna-troll/@_@assessments).

For SP ALB (as well as WCPO YFT and WCPO BET) the conditions and milestones were harmonised and updated in accordance with Section SE Tool D process. The progress against the first of these milestones is due to be examined in 2025. The client should be aware of the activities identified in the Section SE Client Action Plan in preparation for meeting the upcoming milestones. In addition, harmonisation discussions to consider updated information SP ALB took place in May / June 2024. There were no changes in the scoring for SP ALB as a result of the 2024 harmonisation.

An updated stock assessment for south Pacific albacore was provided to the WCPFC Scientific Committee (SC) in 2024 but had not been considered by the Commission at the time of writing of this report. The findings of this 2024 assessment are discussed in the report but at this stage do not suggest the need to revisit the scoring of the stock status performance indicator.

The Commission was scheduled to review and adopt a management procedure for south Pacific albacore at its annual meeting in 2024. Indications from the draft report of the outcomes of the 2024 Commission meeting (WCPFC21) are that this was not achieved, and that CCMs will cooperate to develop a management procedure and implementing measure for south Pacific albacore during 2025, with a view to adopt both a management procedure and its implementing measure at WCPFC22. The implications of this change in the work plan timeline on the status of the current conditions, as well as the updated stock assessment, will be discussed by CABs at 2025 harmonisation discussions planned for May 2025, and therefore are not included in this surveillance report.

There are no Principle 2 or Principle 3 conditions for the client fishery and no changes since re-certification which require re-scoring of this component.

This report constitutes the second annual surveillance of the fishery since the latest re-certification. The audit site visit was held offsite on 7th February 2025. The assessment team consisted of Jo Akroyd (team leader, Principle 3) and Kevin McLoughlin (Principle 1 and Principle 2). Stakeholders were welcome to submit written comments ahead of the site visit and / or to request a meeting with the assessment team during the site visit.

LRQA determines that:

- There were no material changes to the circumstances and practices affecting the original complying assessment of the fishery.

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- This fishery continues to meet the MSC Standard.
- Progress on the updated Principle 1 condition is **on target**.

The client fishery and the New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries have continued to support WCPFC progress on meeting harvest strategy conditions.

LRQA confirms that this fishery continues to conform to the MSC Principles and Criteria for sustainable fishing. Further, LRQA recommends that this fishery should remain certified, and that product remains eligible to enter further chains of custody.

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3. Audit details

3.1. Surveillance information

Table 1: Surveillance information

1	Fishery name	
	New Zealand Albacore Tuna Troll	
2	Unit(s) of Assessment (UoA)	
	UoA 1	
	UoA 1	Description
	Species	Albacore tuna (<i>Thunnus alalunga</i>)
	Stock	South Pacific albacore
	Fishing gear type(s) and, if relevant, vessel type(s)	Troll
	Client group	Tuna Management Association of New Zealand
	Other eligible fishers	The client (Tuna Management Association of NZ) is to make access to the certificate open to all NZ vessels permitted by the Ministry for Primary Industries to fish for albacore in the NZ waters using troll gear.
	Geographical area	New Zealand EEZ (ALB1)
3	Date certified	Date of expiry
	16 th May 2011	12 th August 2027
4	Audit type and number	
	2 nd Surveillance Audit post re-assessment	
5	Surveillance level	
	Level 4	
6	Surveillance team leader	
	<p>Jo Akroyd- Team Lead and Principle 3 Specialist Jo has over 30 years' experience in marine fisheries policy, research, management and governance. She has extensive international and Pacific experience and has worked at senior levels in both the public and private sectors in these roles. Jo was with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in New Zealand for 20 years. Starting as a fisheries scientist, she was promoted to senior chief fisheries scientist, then Assistant Director, Marine Research. She was awarded a Commemoration Medal in 1990 in recognition of her pioneering work in establishing New Zealand's fisheries quota management system. As well as carrying out general fisheries consultancy since 1994 she has undertaken all facets of MSC work as a lead assessor, expert team member and peer reviewer across a wide range of fisheries. Jo has completed the MSC v1.3, v2.0, v2.1 and v2.2 training modules including for enhanced fisheries, Risk based framework and traceability. She is a member of the MSC's Peer Review College, MSC projects include Team Leader and Fisheries Management expert for New Zealand fisheries, (hoki, hake, ling, southern blue whiting, albacore and skipjack), Fiji (albacore, yellowfin and bigeye tuna), Japan (scallops, skipjack and yellowfin), China (scallops, flounder and snow crab), Maldives (skipjack), Ross Sea (toothfish), West Papua (skipjack and yellowfin). She has conducted multi species pre-assessments in Japan, China, Viet Nam and New Zealand and provided independent Peer review reports for tuna, scallops and prawn fisheries in various countries.</p>	

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Jo Akroyd has completed many MSC assessment as TL and meets all Fishery TL Qualification and Competency Criteria under MSC FCP v2.3 Table PC1 and MSC GCR v2.5 Table 1.	
7	Surveillance team members
<p>Kevin McLoughlin- Principle 1 and 2 Specialist Kevin McLoughlin is a specialist fisheries consultant based in Australia with more than 30 years' experience across a wide range of domestic and international fisheries science issues. Kevin's experience in working on MSC assessments spans over 10 years.</p> <p>As a fisheries scientist with the Australian Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Kevin represented the Australian Government on many committees and groups such as fishery assessment groups, providing advice on a diverse range of fisheries and species (including tuna, shark, various finfish, scallop and prawn). Work in assessment groups involved assessment of target species, development of bycatch action plans and ecological risk assessments. Mr McLoughlin was responsible for the production of annual status reports for Australian government-managed fisheries for a number of years. Mr. McLoughlin was also Australia's delegate on scientific issues at the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission and was Chair of the IOTC Working Party on Bycatch for several years.</p> <p>Mr McLoughlin has worked predominantly on Principle 1 aspects of MSC assessments but has also undertaken Principle 2 and 3 work, as well as peer review, surveillance audits and pre-assessments for several fisheries. Kevin was a team member for the full assessment of the Fiji tuna longline fishery (P1 & P2); the New Zealand Albacore Fishery (P1 & P2); the New Zealand Skipjack Fishery (P1 & P2); the Parties to the Nauru Agreement Western and Central Pacific Skipjack and Yellowfin purse seine fishery (P1 & P2); the Tri Marine Western and Central Pacific Skipjack and Yellowfin Tuna Fishery (P2 & P3). He was also a member for the full assessment of Australia's blue grenadier fishery (P1); Australia's Northern Prawn Fishery (P1); Western Australia's Exmouth Gulf and Shark Bay prawn trawl fisheries (P1); and South Australia's Spencer Gulf prawn trawl fishery (P1).</p> <p>Kevin has undertaken MSC training requirements and has no Conflict of Interest in relation to this fishery. Full CV available upon request.</p>	
Local Context	English is spoken by the client and assessors.
Traceability	Jo Akroyd has completed the MSC traceability module in the last 4 years.
RBF	Jo Akroyd has completed the RBF training.
8	Audit time and location
Remote audit starting on the 7 th February 2025.	
9	Assessment and review activities
All relevant data, updates on the fishery, progress on the Client Action Plan and progress on the 2 open conditions.	

3.2. Version details

Table 2: Fisheries program documents versions

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Document/Assessment Tree	Version number/Type
MSC Fisheries Certification Process	Version 2.3
MSC Fisheries Standard	Version 2.01
Assessment tree	Default
MSC General Certification Requirements	Version 2.5
MSC Surveillance Reporting Template	Version 2.2

3.3. Update on the fishery

3.3.1. Changes in the management system

There have been no relevant changes in New Zealand’s management system impacting the client fishery since the previous surveillance audit in 2023. Electronic reporting was rolled out in stages across all of New Zealand’s remaining commercial fisheries during 2019. Relevant legislation can be found at [Fisheries \(Electronic Monitoring on Vessels\) Regulations 2017](#). All albacore troll vessels are now required to report fishing activities and catches in real-time via MPI’s electronic reporting system.

Regional management of tuna fisheries by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) continue to be structured and to operate in the same fashion as described in the Public Certification Report.

3.3.2. Changes in relevant regulations

There are no recent WCPFC measures which impact the status of this fishery’s certification.

3.3.3. Changes to personnel involved in science, management or industry

There have been no changes to key personnel relevant to the client fishery.

3.3.4. Changes to scientific base of information, including stock assessments

3.3.5. Principle 1

Early application of Section SE

With the publication of the announcement for early application of MSC FCP v3.0 Section SE for this and other fisheries on 12th April 2023, MSC Toolbox v1.1 D1.2.1 requirement for PI 1.2.1 (SI a & SI b) and PI 1.2.2 were undertaken and completed 5th March 2024. In accordance with the requirements of the Tool D process (D1.2.38) following completion the results of the process must be included in the next reporting phase for the fishery. Under

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these requirements this surveillance audit includes the Tool D results for south Pacific albacore. The final report for the early application of Section SE are available on the MSC website (https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/new-zealand-albacore-tuna-troll/@_@assessments).

Under Section SE, an unconditional pass for PI 1.2.1 Sla and Slb is the SG100 level of performance, and an unconditional pass for PI 1.2.2 Sla, Slb and Slc is the SG80 level of performance (SE3.3.2, MSC 2022). As a result of the adoption and completion of the Tool D requirements, a revised condition is in place for PIs 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 for south Pacific albacore. The outcomes of the application SE are discussed below

Albacore catch monitoring

Catch estimates for all tuna and billfish species fished in the WCPFC statistical area are compiled annually by SPC based on reports provided by CCMs. The distribution of catches from 1988 to 2023 is shown in Figure 1. The provisional SP ALB catch in 2023 (67,751 t) was around 26,000 t less than the 2017 record catch (93,835 t) (Figure 2), however, this estimate is expected to increase with the addition of catches from the Eastern Pacific Ocean, which have not yet been included.

The 2023 South Pacific troll albacore catch (1192 t) was the second lowest catch level since 1980 (744 t were reported in 1983), largely owing to a contraction in NZ's troll fleet operating in the region. The New Zealand troll fleet (94 vessels catching 864 t in 2023; 134 vessels catching 2377 t in 2022) and the United States troll fleet (10 vessels catching 328 t in 2023; 18 vessels catching 1400 t in 2022) accounted for all of the 2023 albacore troll catch, although minor contributions also come from the Canadian, the Cook Islands and French Polynesian fleets when their fleets are active in this fishery (Vidal et al., 2024).

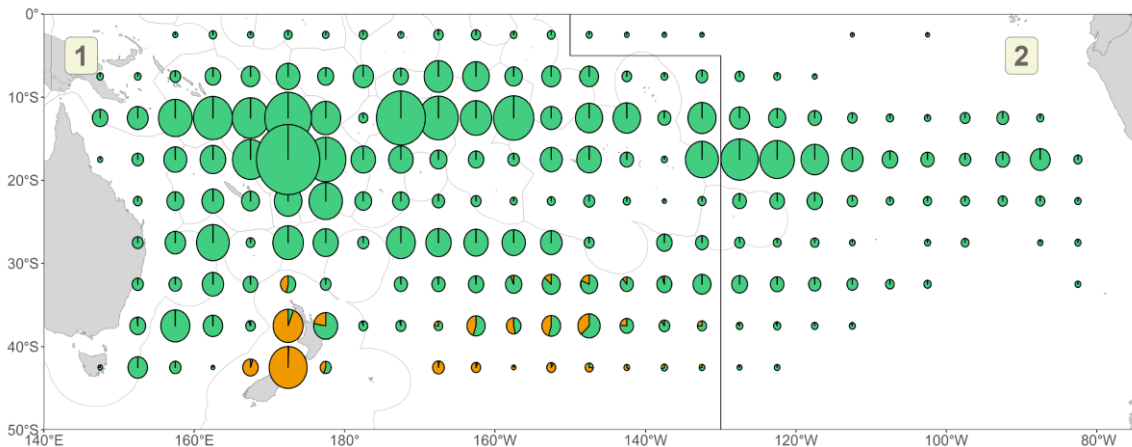


Figure 1. Catch distribution (1988-2023); longline (green), troll (orange), for SP ALB for the WCPO south of the Equator. Overlaid are the regions for the 2021 stock assessment. Source Vidal et al., 2024.

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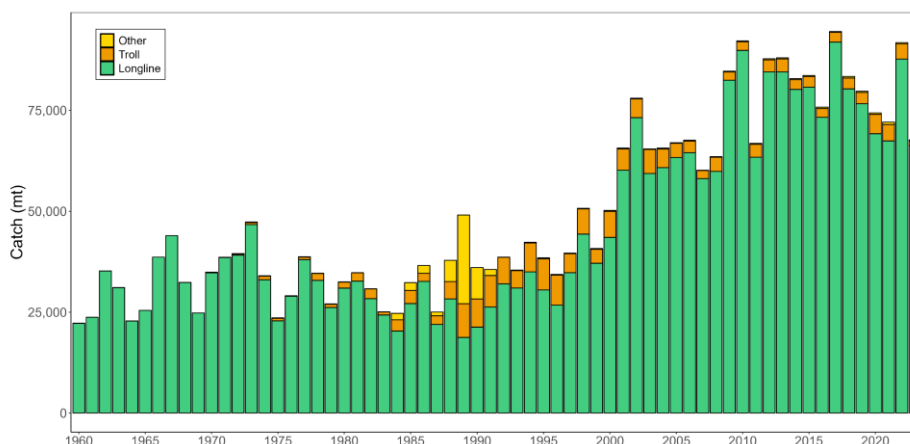


Figure 2. SP ALB catch (t) by gear ("Other" is primarily catch by the historic driftnet fishery). Source Vidal et al., 2024.

The number of vessels operating annually in the troll fishery in has varied recent years, with a high of 157 vessels in 2020-21 but falling to 103 vessels in 2022-23 and 78 vessels in 2023-24 (Table 3). Vessel sizes have ranged between 6–27 m, with the average vessel size being 15 m. The NZ EEZ troll fishery has accounted for between 77% and 97% of the total New Zealand EEZ albacore catch over the fishing years 2015-16 to 2023-24 (Table 4). The total EEZ albacore catch in 2022-23 was 892 t, with 823 t taken by the troll fleet. This is well below the 2020-21 total EEZ catch of 3222 t and the 2021-22 catch of 2291 t. In 2023-24 the total EEZ albacore catch was 1220 t with 96% all of it taken by troll. Recent catch distribution of New Zealand troll catch of albacore is shown in Figure 3. The abundance of albacore in New Zealand waters is variable from year to year, depending on climatic conditions.

Table 3. Numbers of albacore troll vessels by year. Source TMA 2025.

Fishing Year	Number of Vessels
2015-16	130
2016-17	98
2017-18	132
2018-19	130
2019-20	137
2020-21	157
2021-22	140
2022-23	103
2023-24	78

Table 4. EEZ albacore catch by all fishing methods and by troll. These data have been extracted using estimated catch data. Source TMA 2025.

Fishing Year	EEZ Albacore Catch (t)	EEZ Troll Catch (t)	Troll (%)
2015-16	2537	1952	77%
2016-17	2035	1763	87%
2017-18	2658	2579	97%
2018-19	2693	2328	86%

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2019-20	3082	2750	89%
2020-21	3222	3134	97%
2021-22	2291	2212	97%
2022-23	892	823	92%
2023-24	1220	1167	96%

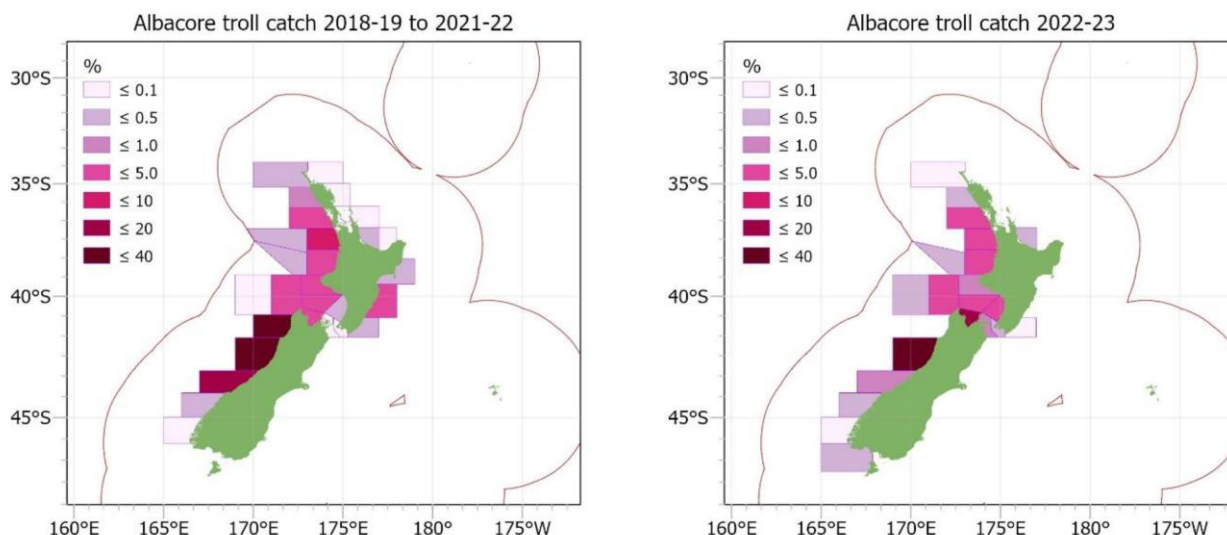


Figure 3. Distribution of troll catch of albacore (percent of total catch) for 2018-19 to 2021-22 troll seasons (left) and for 2022-23 season (right); Note: Positional data for troll are reported at a NZ statistical area resolution. Source MPI, 2024.

Fishers operating within the certified client fishery must comply with a range of fisheries regulations including Electronic Reporting (ER) and Geospatial Positional Reporting (GPR). A programme of annual, shore-based albacore troll catch sampling (MPI Project ALB2021-01) is ongoing in order to provide length frequency and length-weight information to SPC for use in southern albacore stock assessments. New Zealand's information is important in that it is the main source of data on juvenile size composition in the south Pacific Ocean. Catch sampling is conducted during the albacore troll season each year in the ports of Auckland and Greymouth, from December to April. During 2018–19, 5258 albacore were sampled from 52 landings and 36 vessels, and 683 fish were weighed. The number sampled in 2019–20 was 3857 from 39 landings and 36 vessels, with 401 fish weighed. In 2020–21, 4638 fish were sampled from 42 landings and 30 vessels, with 562 weights recorded (Griggs and Datta, 2022). Shore-based catch monitoring of the albacore troll fishery sampled landings that represented 10.2% of the catch by weight during the 2022-23 fishing season and 13.3% in 2023-24 (TMA 2025).

Stock Status

Stock assessment for SP ALB was undertaken in 2021 and was reported on in the first audit of the fishery in 2024. The 2021 assessment included, for the first time, the entire South Pacific, including the EPO area under the jurisdiction of IATTC (Castillo Jordan et al. 2021).

Based on the 2021 assessment, management advice provided by the SC included that:

- the addition of the EPO region into the current entire South Pacific assessment did not notably alter the main assessment outcomes, and similar trajectories and terminal depletion were estimated in both RFMO regions;

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- the spawning stock biomass has become more depleted across the model period (1960-2019), with a notable increase in depletion in the most recent years. The decline in the latest estimated $SB_{\text{latest}}/SB_{F=0}$ (year 2019; median 0.40; 10th and 90th percentiles 0.27 - 0.45) is notably more pessimistic than those of $SB_{\text{recent}}/SB_{F=0}$ (years 2016-2019; median 0.52; 10th and 90th percentiles 0.41 - 0.57) indicating that there has been a substantial decline in stock status estimated over the last three years;
- depletion is greatest in regions north of 25°S, specifically in assessment Regions 1 and 2 where most domestic Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) fleets operate, including Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Participating Territories that may have no high seas access. These are areas mostly unaffected by current management measure for South Pacific albacore (CMM 2015-02), which prescribe effort controls and reporting provisions south of 20°S;
- for the WCPFC-CA region, the 'recent' and 'latest' SB estimates are on average both below the interim TRP of 0.56. The SC recommended a recalibration of the interim TRP for review at WCPFC18 in accordance with the process agreed at WCPFC15.

An updated SP ALB stock assessment was provided to the SC in 2024 but has not yet been considered by the Commission. This assessment includes data to the end of 2022 and, as detailed in Teears et al. (2024), provides a simplified approach to that in previous assessments. The South Pacific-wide assessment provides stock status based upon an uncertainty ensemble comprising 100 models derived from prior distributions for average natural mortality and steepness (100 independent replicates from these priors) together with estimation error for individual models (Teears et al. 2024). Majuro and Kobe plot summarizing the results for each of the 100 models in the model ensemble are shown in Figure 4. The spawning biomass shows a sharp decline from the start of the model period until the mid-1970s after which it stabilises. Overall, the assessment finds that:

- the median depletion from the model ensemble with estimation uncertainty for the recent period (2019-2022; $SB_{2019-2022}/SB_{F=0}$) is 0.48 (80 percentile range 0.36–0.62, full range 0.23–0.77);
- the median recent fishing mortality is below the level for achieving MSY (median $F_{\text{recent}}/F_{\text{MSY}} = 0.18$, 80 percentile range 0.06–0.44, full range 0.03–1.00);
- the median recent spawning biomass from the model ensemble with estimation uncertainty is well above the spawning biomass to achieve MSY (median $SB_{\text{recent}}/SB_{\text{MSY}} = 3.02$, 80 percentile range 2.04–5.21, full range 1.20–8.96);
- all models in the uncertainty ensemble had $SB_{\text{recent}}/SB_{F=0} > 0.2$, the LRP WCPFC key tuna stocks;
- for each model in the ensemble, the ratio of the $SB_{\text{recent}}/SB_{F=0}$ to the interim TRP (iTRP) estimated for that model was calculated. Across the 100 models the median ratio of $SB_{\text{recent}}/SB_{F=0} : \text{iTRP}$ was 0.952, ranging from 0.899 to 1.016. Therefore, the recent stock status is close to the iTRP (estimated to be a median depletion of 0.50 across the model ensemble).

These results are broadly consistent with the previous 2021 stock assessment and suggest that the SP ALB stock across the South Pacific is not overfished (0% probability $SB_{\text{recent}}/SB_{F=0} < \text{LRP}$) nor undergoing overfishing (100% probability $F_{\text{recent}} < F_{\text{MSY}}$).

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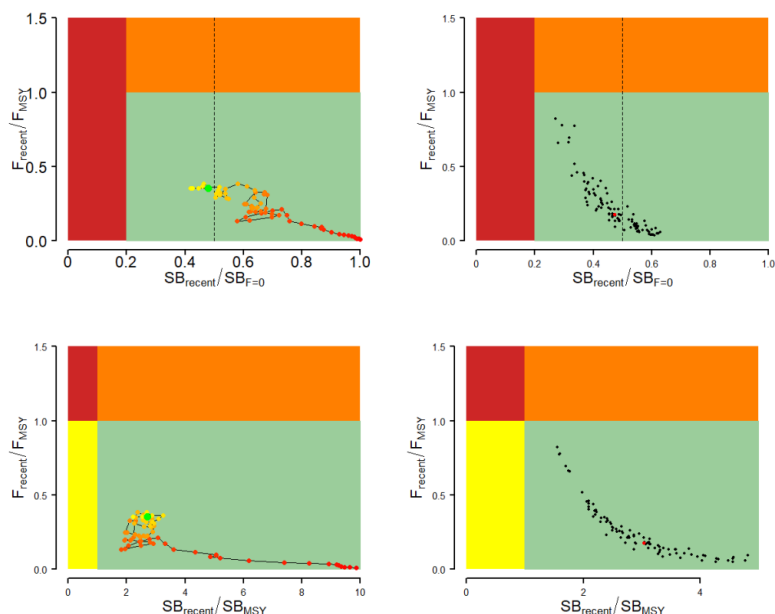


Figure 4. Majuro plots (top) and Kobe plots (bottom) summarising the results for the dynamic MSY and depletion analysis for the diagnostic case model (left) and each of the models in the model ensemble for the recent period (2019–2022; right) (Teears et al. 2024).

Harmonisation discussions to consider progress on the SP ALB harvest strategy took place in May 2024. No changes were made to scores for SP ALB as a result of these discussions.

Harvest Strategy Development

The first milestones under the Section SE process are due for evaluation in 2025. The summary report of WCPFC20 (WCPFC 2023), held in December 2023, provides detailed information on harvest strategy progress and development. Progress to 2022 is summarised in Table 5 and Table 6, with plans for coming years also shown in Table 6. Adoption of a management procedure for south Pacific albacore remained scheduled for 2024. However, WCPFC20 recognised the potential for this to be delayed until 2025 noting the possible modification of the operating model reference set following the 2024 stock assessment (WCPFC 2023). Indications from the draft report of the outcomes of the 2024 Commission meeting (WCPFC21) are that this was not achieved, and that CCMs will cooperate to develop a management procedure and implementing measure for south Pacific albacore during 2025, with a view to adopt both a management procedure and its implementing measure at WCPFC22. For bigeye and yellowfin tuna, adoption of a management procedure was moved from 2025 to 2026 to avoid the subsequent running of these management procedures in the same year their respective stock assessments are scheduled. In accordance with this change, several other changes to the plan were made in the years prior to 2026 for these two stocks (WCPFC 2023).

The major management actions currently in place for south Pacific albacore continue to be set out in CMM-2015-02. CMM 2015-02, includes a provision that the measure will be reviewed annually on the basis of advice from the SC. Proposals to update the CMM have been discussed at Commission meetings but no update has yet been adopted. The South Pacific Albacore Roadmap Working Group is tasked with developing aspects of the harvest strategy and reports to the Commission. The 2023 meeting looked at candidate target reference points as well as work needed to assist in developing the management procedure. WCPFC20 adopted a specific interim target reference point (iTRP), specified as four percent below the estimated average spawning potential depletion of the stock over the period 2017–2019 ($0.96 SB_{2017-2019}/SB_{F=0}$) (WCPFC 2023).

Table 5. Summary of progress towards implementing the harvest strategy elements for key WCPFC stocks and fisheries (Source: WCPFC 2023).

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Stock:	Skipjack	SP Albacore	Bigeye	Yellowfin
Gear:	Trop. purse seine	Southern longline	Tropical longline	
Management objectives	TRP adopted*	Noted	Noted	Noted
Management procedure	MP adopted*	Developing		
Performance indicators	Identified	Identified	Identified	Identified
Mixed fishery	Developing			
Monitoring strategy	Proposed [#]	Developing		

* CMM 2022-01 Conservation and Management Measure on a Management Procedure for WCPO Skipjack Tuna

[#] SC19-MI-WP-02 Monitoring the WCPO skipjack management procedure

Table 6. The WCPFC harvest strategy workplan for WCPO south Pacific albacore. Progress made in preceding years is shown in grey. Bold items are the six elements that are referred to in CMM 14-06/22-03 (a. Objectives, b. Reference Points, c. Acceptable Levels of Risk, d. Monitoring, e. Harvest Control Rules/Management Procedure and f. MSE). Items in brackets are related to harvest strategy development and so are part of the plan but are not one of these six elements (Source: WCPFC 2023).

Year	South Pacific Albacore
2022	<p>Develop management procedures (e) and Management strategy evaluation (f)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC agree the operating models for MSE. • SC provide advice on performance of candidate management procedures. • SC provides advice on relevant elements of the monitoring strategy.
2023	<p>Agree Target Reference Point (b). Commission agree a TRP for South Pacific albacore</p> <p>Develop management procedures (e) and Management strategy evaluation (f)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC agree the operating models for MSE. • SC provide advice on performance of candidate management procedures. • SC provides advice on relevant elements of the monitoring strategy(d).
2024	<p>Develop management procedures (e) and Management strategy evaluation (f)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC agree the operating models for MSE. • SC provide advice for review Target Reference Point • SC provide advice on performance of candidate management procedures. • SC provides advice on relevant elements of the monitoring strategy(d). • TCC consider the implications of candidate management procedures. <p>[Updated stock assessment considered by SC20]</p> <p>Commission review and adopt a management procedure. ¹</p>
2025	<p>SC provides advice on the monitoring strategy.</p>

¹ The Commission recognised that there are technical considerations that may delay this MP adoption by one year to 2025 with delays to subsequent decisions.

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Year	South Pacific Albacore
	<p>Commission reviews and adopts the monitoring strategy(d)</p> <p>[SPA-IWG plan: Adopted management procedure is <u>run</u> for the first time.]</p>
2026	[SPA-IWG plan: Adopted management procedure implemented for the first time.]

Principle 1 Conclusion

SP ALB has a condition and milestones on PI 1.2.1 and 1.2.2. The conditions and milestones are harmonised and updated in accordance with Section SE, Tool D process. Scoring of milestones for conditions associated with Tool D will commence at the annual harmonization meeting in 2025, evaluating the progress during 2024 and the December 2024 Commission meeting outcomes. As part of the required evidence in 2025 clients are reminded of the responsibility, as part of their action plans, for preparing and sending an individual letter and/or co-signing and sending a group letter to relevant bodies (e.g. national and subregional fisheries management authorities, as well as NGO Tuna Forum and/or individual NGOs with WCPFC observer status).

As shown in Table 6, the Commission was scheduled to review and adopt a management procedure for south Pacific albacore. Indications from the draft report of the outcomes of the 2024 Commission meeting (WCPFC21) are that this was not achieved, and that CCMs will cooperate to develop a management procedure and implementing measure for south Pacific albacore during 2025, with a view to adopt both a management procedure and its implementing measure at WCPFC22. The implications of this change in the work plan timeline on the status of the current conditions will be evaluated by CABs at 2025 harmonisation discussions planned for May 2025.

3.3.6. Principle 2

There has been no change which would affect certification of the fishery. The fishery has a very low rate of bycatch. Albacore continues to comprise approximately 99% of the catch in recent years. Skipjack tuna and southern bluefin tuna were next-most prominent species. As reported in the previous surveillance report for the fishery, there were two recorded interactions with seabirds in the 2020-21 fishing year, both of which were released alive. These were a Westland petrel (*Procellaria westlandica*) and an unidentified albatross (FNZ 2023).

Due to the very low environmental risk associated with this fishery, there has been very little on-board observer coverage in most years (Table 7). In 2019-20, 58 days of observer coverage were achieved. Only 9 days of coverage were achieved in 2020-21, 12 in 2021-22, but none in 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Table 7: Observer coverage in the albacore troll fishery over the most recent three fishing years. Source TMA 2025.

Fishing Year	Observed days	Vessel days	Number of vessels	Observer coverage
2019-20	58	5022	137	1.2%
2020-21	9	6222	157	0.1%
2021-22	12	5384	140	0.2%
2022-23	0	3140	103	0%

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2023-24	0	2056	78	0%
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To improve independent monitoring, the New Zealand Government has committed to installing cameras on up to 300 inshore commercial fishing vessels, covering around 85% of the total catch by volume of inshore fisheries (<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/fishing-aquaculture/commercial-fishing/fisheries-change-programme/on-board-cameras-for-commercial-fishing-vessels/>). The rollout will include client fishery vessels, some of which already have the camera system installed due to operation in other inshore fisheries. Their use in the client fishery is not yet a requirement.

3.3.7. Principle 3

There has been no change that affects the certification of the fishery.

The fishery operates by trolling in the New Zealand EEZ and within the Western and Central Pacific Ocean Convention Area. The albacore taken by the fishery are part of a single south Pacific stock. It is a highly migratory species (HMS) and therefore subject to both national and regional fisheries management organisation (RFMO) measures and policies. The key components of governance and fisheries management relevant to this troll fishery include the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and the New Zealand Government. WCPFC sets conservation and management measures and policies for the WCPFC Convention area.

The New Zealand government is responsible for management of fisheries within its EEZ. Legislation relating to New Zealand fisheries management is aligned with the WCPFC objectives, in that it broadly addresses sustainability and utilisation, and includes specific consideration of the aquatic environment and a precautionary approach. New Zealand is a signatory to the Convention (Article 8, WCPFC, 2000).

Albacore is a highly migratory stock that enters the NZ EEZ seasonally and predominantly runs down the West Coast of NZ. It is targeted by smaller coastal fishing vessels using the 'troll' method of fishing. These vessels operate under a statutory system of electronic reporting and geospatial location transmission. The MPI Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) Compliance directorate can monitor commercial sector reporting and vessels' movements relating to fishing activity. Fisheries Compliance conduct approximately 2,000 commercial inspections per annum of both commercial vessels and licenced fish receivers. These inspections focus on fishing gear and equipment, fish catch and fishing related reporting. This monitoring allows a good understanding of commercial fishing activity. Non-compliance detections for the albacore troll fishery are low.

3.3.8. Inseparable or practicably inseparable (IPI) stock status

There are no IPI stocks.

3.3.9. Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and catch data

Total allowable catches are not set for the fishery.

Table 8: Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and catch data

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TAC / Catch Data	Year	Amount
TAC	2022/23	No TAC is set
UoA share of TAC	2022/23	n/a
Total catch by UoC (most recent year)	2022/23	UoC troll catch 823 t (total NZ albacore catch 830 t)
Total catch by UoC (second most recent year)	2022/23	UoC troll catch 1174 t (total NZ albacore catch 1174 t)

3.4. Changes which impact traceability systems

Table 9: Changes affecting traceability and segregation

Are there any developments or changes within the fishery that affect traceability and the ability to segregate MSC from non-MSC products?
No

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3.5. Surveillance Audit Results

3.5.1. Principal level scores

Table 10. Principle level scores – south Pacific albacore

Principle	PCR score	Section SE Agreed Score	2024 Harmonised Score
Principle 1: Target stock	83.3	81.7	81.7

3.5.2. Summary of Performance Indicator level scores

Table 11. Principle performance indicator scores – south Pacific albacore

Principle 1 PI scores	1.1.1	1.1.2	1.2.1	1.2.2	1.2.3	1.2.4
PCR scores 2023	100	n/a	70	60	80	90
Section SE Agreed Scores	100	n/a	60	60	80	90
MSC Harmonised scores (May 2024)	100	n/a	60	60	80	90

3.5.3. Summary of conditions

Table 12. Conditions for SP ALB updated following the application of Tool D.

Condition number	Condition	Performance Indicator (PI)	Status	PI original score	PI revised score
1	WCPFC implements a harvest strategy that is responsive to the state of the stock, with elements (monitoring, stock assessment, harvest control rules and management actions) working together to achieve stock management objectives.	PI 1.2.1	Closed (Section SE process complete)	70	N/A (Section SE process complete)
2	WCPFC implements a harvest control rule that ensures that the exploitation rate is reduced as the PRI is approached and is expected to keep the stock fluctuating around the target level and robust to the main uncertainties. The tools used to implement the HCR should be effective in achieving the required exploitation levels.	PI 1.2.2	Closed (Section SE process complete)	60	N/A (Section SE process complete)

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<p>Section SE - 1</p>	<p>By May 2027 (and evaluated in the first available audit after) the client groups shall provide evidence to the assessment team that demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The harvest strategy is responsive to the state of the stock and is designed to achieve stock management objectives reflected in PI 1.1.1/PI 1.1.1A SG80, and • The performance of the harvest strategy has been evaluated and evidence exists to show that it is achieving the objectives reflected in PI 1.1.1/ PI 1.1.1A SG80, including being clearly able to maintain stocks at target levels and • Well-defined HCRs are in place that ensure the exploitation rate is reduced as the PRI is approached, and are expected to keep the stock fluctuating around a target level consistent with (or above) MSY, • HCRs are likely to be robust to the main uncertainties, and • Available evidence indicates that the tools in use are appropriate and effective in achieving the exploitation levels required under the HCRs. 	<p>PI 1.2.1 and 1.2.2</p>	<p>New (condition opened as part of section SE)</p>	<p>70 (1.2.1) 60 (1.2.2)</p>	<p>60 (1.2.1) 60 (1.2.2)</p>
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3.5.4. Re-scoring Performance Indicators

PI 1.2.1 – Harvest strategy (SP ALB) (Section SE outcome)

PI 1.2.1		There is a robust and precautionary harvest strategy in place		
Scoring Issue		SG 60	SG 80	SG 100
a	Harvest strategy design			
	Guide post	The harvest strategy is expected to achieve stock management objectives reflected in PI 1.1.1/PI 1.1.1A SG80.	The harvest strategy is responsive to the state of the stock and the elements of the harvest strategy work together towards achieving stock management objectives reflected in PI 1.1.1/PI 1.1.1A SG80.	The harvest strategy is responsive to the state of the stock and is designed to achieve stock management objectives reflected in PI 1.1.1/PI 1.1.1A SG80.
	Met?	Yes	No	No

Rationale:

The MSC defines a harvest strategy as “The combination of monitoring, stock assessment, harvest control rules and management actions, which may include an MP [Management Procedure] or an MP (implicit) and be tested by MSE [Management Strategy Evaluation]” (MSC-MSCI Vocabulary V.1.5). The key elements of the harvest strategy include the control rules and tools in place, the information base and monitoring of stock status, and the responsiveness of management actions to stock status (GSA2.4 MSC FS V3.0).

The control elements of the harvest strategy in place for this stock are currently implemented in CMM 2015-02. Under this binding agreement, WCPFC members and cooperating non-members must 1) make an annual report to WCPFC with the number and catch of fishing vessels actively fishing for SP ALB in the Convention Area south of 20°S, and 2) not let this number of vessels exceed 2005 levels or 2000-2004 average levels.

A limit reference point of 20% of the estimated recent average spawning biomass in the absence of fishing has been adopted. An interim target reference point was also set at 56%SB_{F=0} with the objective of increasing longline CPUE by 8% relative to 2013 levels. At the time of adoption, WCPFC indicated that the ability of the interim TRP to meet the interim objective would be reviewed every 3 years with each new stock assessment, and the interim TRP would be recalibrated to the objective if needed (WCPFC 2019b). Although the review has since found that the TRP should be recalibrated (SPC 2022c), a revised TRP has not yet been adopted by WCPFC. However, the stock management objectives reflected in PI 1.1.1 SG80 are that 1) the stock is highly likely above the point of recruitment impairment (PRI), and 2) the stock is at or fluctuating around a level consistent with maximum sustainable yield (MSY). Thus, it is important to note that both the LRP of 20%SB_{F=0} and interim TRP of 56%SB_{F=0} are above the MSY level of 15%SB_{F=0} analytically determined by the stock assessment (median across all models in the uncertainty grid; Castillo Jordán et al. 2021).

The stock is monitored through the annual catch and effort reports of member and cooperating non-member nations pursuant to CMM 2015-02 (as well as additional requirements for logbooks on the high seas under CMM 2013-05, soon to be superseded by CMM 2022-06). These nations are additionally required under CMM 2015-02 to cooperate and collaborate on research that reduces uncertainty about stock status; the information base also includes economic information and a wide range of biological studies from governments, universities, NGOs, and the science provider to WCPFC (i.e. SPC). A stock assessment conducted every 3 years using Multifan-CL provides probabilistic estimates of stock status, parameter values, and standard reference points for fishing mortality and biomass such as MSY and SB_{MSY}. The latest stock assessment was completed in 2021 (Castillo Jordán et al. 2021).



There is an annual effectiveness review of CMM 2015-02 which can include revision of the interim TRP as mentioned above. In addition, under CMM 2022-03, development of a harvest control rule based on stock status and formal target and limit reference points is ongoing and explicitly required before the stock declines to SB_{MSY} :

“Notwithstanding the workplan and indicative timeframes adopted under paragraph 13 of this CMM, the Commission shall adopt harvest control rules for skipjack, bigeye, yellowfin and South Pacific albacore tunas before the stocks decline below the levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield in accordance with the WCPFC Convention Article 5b.”

The harvest strategy elements above, including 1) adoption of an LRP and interim TRP both above the MSY level, 2) probabilistic stock assessment based on monitoring of catch and effort at the vessel level, 3) existing upper limits on effort, and 4) the binding requirement to adopt a formal harvest control rule, together with the fact that the latest estimate of stock biomass is 1.62-3.79 times the MSY level (80% empirical confidence interval; Castillo Jordán et al. 2021), provide a basis for expecting the harvest strategy to keep the stock above the PRI and fluctuating around the MSY level (i.e. achieve PI 1.1.1 SG80 objectives). This is further supported by the stock status having remained above the MSY and LRP levels to date (Castillo Jordan et al., 2021). **SG60 is met.**

MSC defines “responsive” at SG80 and SG100 (SA2.4.1a) to mean that the harvest strategy allows management to be adaptive to the development and implementation of the differing elements of the harvest strategy and action has been taken by management, when required. The latter half of this definition (action has been taken by management, when required) is identical to the definition of “in-place” for a generally understood harvest control rule (there is evidence or documentation that management actions have been taken where required; SE2.2.2c). As indicated in PI 1.2.2a, there is a generally understood HCR for South Pacific albacore tuna but it does not meet SG60 for PI 1.2.2a because it is not in place (see SI 1.2.2a) and the “available” HCR is scored for PI 1.2.2 instead. Although MSC Guidance GSA2.4 clarifies that a harvest strategy does not need a well-defined HCR for it to be responsive, the fact that the generally understood HCR is not in place implies that the latter half of the MSC “responsive” definition is not met. This is in line with MSC requirement SE2.1.2: “If ‘available’ harvest control rules are scored under PI 1.2.2, SI 1.2.1a shall only meet SG60.” Therefore, the harvest strategy is not responsive to the state of the stock and the harvest strategy elements do not work together to achieve PI 1.1.1 stock management objectives, and **SG80 is not met.**

Though not all SG80 requirements are met, the team finds it useful to score SG100 (see MSC interpretation <https://mscportal.force.com/interpret/s/article/Scoring-SG100-if-not-all-SG80-met-7-10-5-3-1527262010218>). MSC defines “designed” at SG100 (SA2.4.1b) to mean a harvest strategy that includes a management procedure (MP) that has been developed through management strategy evaluation (MSE). Efforts are underway to develop an operating model grid and candidate HCRs for a South Pacific albacore MSE framework. However, technical challenges have been encountered in the operating model (OM) grid, including uninformative and conflicting data (Scott et al. 2022c). Management challenges have also been encountered in candidate HCR design including how to address catch in the EPO outside the WCPFC Convention Area (SPC 2022g). Although WCPFC was scheduled to adopt an MP developed through MSE in 2022, these challenges have delayed the completion of the MSE and the Scientific Committee agreed that further work is needed prior to adoption of an MP (SC 2022). **SG100 is not met.**

b	Harvest strategy evaluation
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	Guide post	The harvest strategy is likely to work based on prior experience or plausible argument.	The harvest strategy has been tested and is expected to meet the objectives reflected in PI 1.1.1/ PI 1.1.1A SG80 or there is evidence that the harvest strategy is achieving its objectives reflected in PI 1.1.1/ PI 1.1.1A SG80.	The performance of the harvest strategy has been evaluated , and evidence exists to show that it is achieving the objectives reflected in PI 1.1.1/ PI 1.1.1A SG80, including being clearly able to maintain stocks at target levels.
	Met?	Yes	No	No

Rationale:

As stated in scoring issue 1.2.1a above, the harvest strategy elements including 1) adoption of an LRP above the MSY level and an interim TRP, 2) probabilistic stock assessment based on monitoring of catch and effort at the vessel level, 3) existing upper limits on effort, and 4) the binding requirement to adopt a formal harvest control rule together provide a basis for expecting the harvest strategy to keep the stock above the PRI and fluctuating around the MSY level (i.e. achieve PI 1.1.1 SG80 objectives). The harvest strategy is thus likely to work based on plausible argument. **SG60 is met.**

MSC defines “tested” at SG80 to mean the involvement of some sort of structured logical argument and analysis that supports the choice of strategy. This kind of evidence is provided by the sources cited below, including the stock assessment (Castillo Jordán et al. 2021), annual reviews of the effectiveness of CMM 2015-02 (WCPFC 2016, 2019a, 2022) , and updated evaluations of the interim TRP (SPC 2022c).

Although the harvest strategy is expected to meet PI 1.1.1 SG80 objectives on the basis above, MSC guidance states that:

“Teams should only assess that the harvest strategy is ‘tested and expected to achieve its objectives’, if there hasn’t been an update to stock status following the implementation of the harvest strategy. Once there is an update to stock status after the direct implementation of the HS used to score PI 1.2.1, the team should assess if the HS is achieving the objectives of PI 1.1.1/1.1.1A.” (GSA2.4.1)

Per this guidance, at SG80 we assess evidence regarding whether the harvest strategy as currently implemented is achieving its objectives reflected in PI 1.1.1 SG80. We assess this evidence in two parts below to follow the SG80 language: 1) whether the harvest strategy is achieving **its** objectives, and 2) whether those objectives reflect achievement of PI 1.1.1 SG80.

Regarding part 2, it is important to note that both the LRP and interim TRP are above the MSY spawning biomass level of 0.15 (relative to the level in the absence of fishing). The latest stock status is the historical minimum within the assessment period, but all estimates across the uncertainty grid are between the LRP and TRP and thus above the MSY level (range 0.25-0.46; Castillo Jordán et al. 2021). This reflects ongoing achievement of PI 1.1.1 SG80 under the harvest strategy objectives.

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Regarding part 1, the history of analyses related to the achievement of the harvest strategy objectives reflects a shift from economic to ecological concerns about stock status, and declining confidence in the ability of the harvest strategy to meet its objectives.

In the first review of CMM 2015-02, the Scientific Committee advised that *“there is a 19% chance that the south Pacific albacore stock will fall below the LRP by 2033 if 2014 fishing effort levels continue, and that overall decreases in vulnerable biomass (a proxy for longline CPUE) of 14% would also be likely to occur... Despite the fact that the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, SC11 reiterates the advice that longline fishing mortality and longline catch be reduced to avoid further decline in the vulnerable biomass so that economically viable catch rates can be maintained”* (WCPFC 2016).

The next stock assessment as well as the adoption of the interim TRP occurred in 2018. Based on simulations of alternative catch trajectories incorporating these updates, in the 2019 performance review SC advised that *“catch (and effort) reductions from the 2014-16 average (of 60,000 mt) are required under all scenarios”*, and recommended that WCPFC *“develop comprehensive binding South Pacific albacore management measures which will result in the stock reaching the TRP within the 20-year time horizon”* and *“consider establishing a CMM to further reduce total catch or effort in order to reverse the projected decline in the vulnerable biomass”* (WCPFC 2019a). The SC also noted that by 2035 under 2018 catch rates, the stock was expected to decline further below the interim TRP from 0.52 to 0.39 (relative to $SB_{F=0}$), with a 23% chance of breaching the LRP.

The most recent stock assessment (Castillo Jordán et al. 2021) estimated that the stock was already below that projected 2035 level in 2019 at 0.36, in both the WCPFC Convention Area and the IATTC Convention Area which was included for the first time. Further analysis was conducted by SPC to recalibrate the depletion level associated with the interim TRP objective (2013 vulnerable biomass level + 8%) given the new assessment, and again analyze alternative catch trajectories to evaluate achievement of the interim TRP (SPC 2022c). This analysis indicated that a catch reduction of either 50% (if applied in the WCPFC Convention Area only) or 40% (if applied across the South Pacific) was needed for long-term average spawning biomass to reach the recalibrated interim TRP of 0.68. This recalibrated TRP was not adopted by WCPFC, but the analysis also suggested that increasing biomass to the existing interim TRP of 0.56 over the long term would require a 20-30% catch reduction.

In the subsequent review of CMM 2015-02 (WCPFC 2021), *“SC17 expressed great concern with the projected status of South Pacific albacore if recent catch or effort levels are maintained. Projections indicated that the South Pacific albacore stock has a greater than 20% risk of falling below the LRP in 2021 under both catch and effort scenarios. These projections indicate an extended period where biomass is below the current interim TRP and in most cases the TRP is not achieved within the 30-year projection period.”* Figure 2 below shows these stock status projections under four scenarios (constant catch or effort at 2017-2019 average or 2020 levels; Castillo Jordán et al. 2021):

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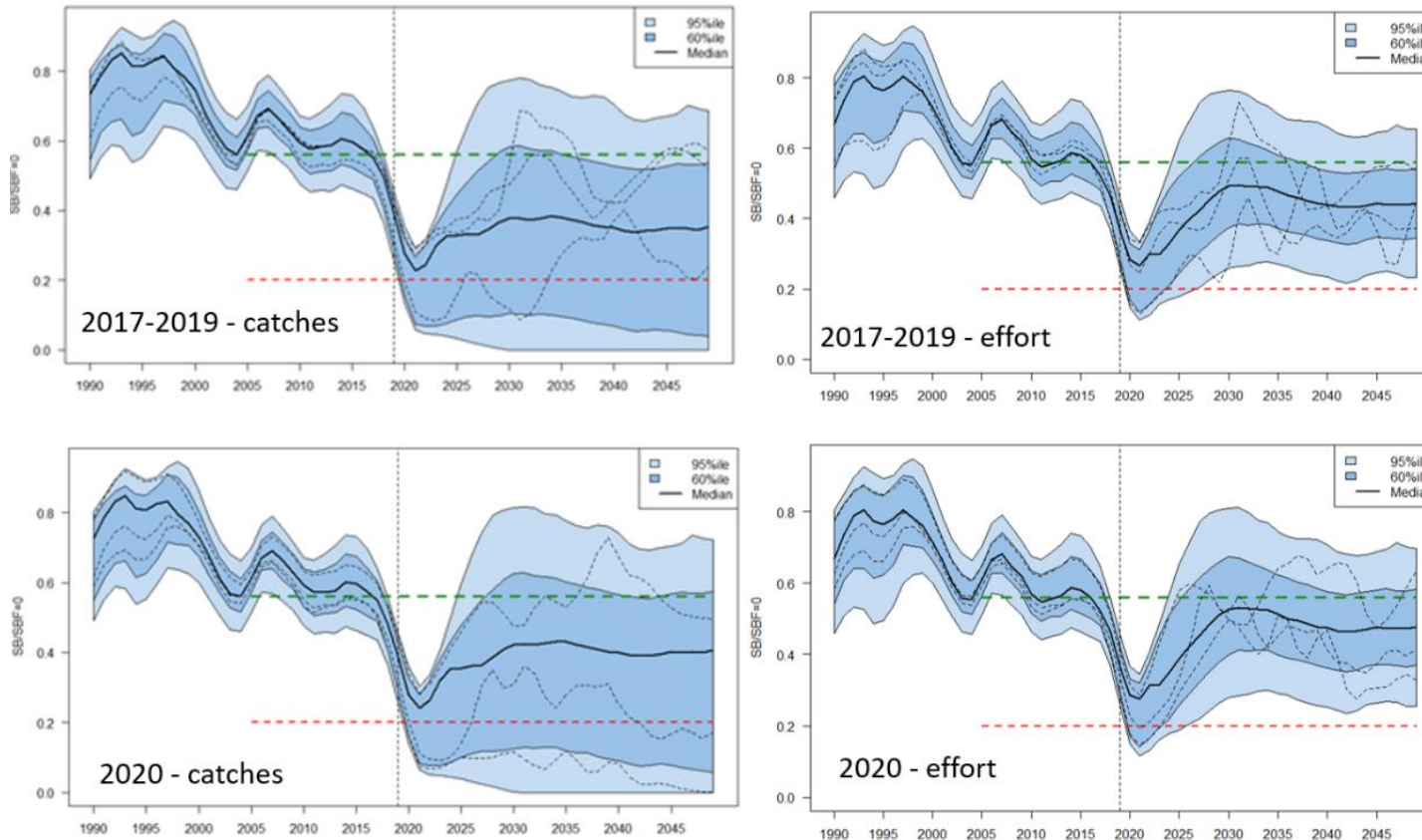


Figure 2. (Castillo Jordán et al. 2021). Projected relative depletion of spawning biomass over time. Projection scenarios hold either catch (left column) or effort (right column) constant, at either 2017-2019 average (top row) or 2020 (bottom row) levels. The black line, dark blue shading, and light blue shading indicate the median, middle 60% and middle 95% of estimates across the uncertainty grid respectively. The dotted black lines indicate three randomly chosen individual trajectories from the grid, while the vertical dotted black line represents the last year of the assessment (i.e., where past estimates end and projections begin). The dotted red and green lines indicate the LRP and current interim TRP respectively.

The analyses and advice from the SC and SPC above constitute testing of the harvest strategy currently in place. The results and statements made by SC and SPC indicate that the harvest strategy is not achieving its own objectives because substantial catch reductions are needed to prevent biomass from declining below those objectives. However, the limits in CMM 2015-02

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have not been reduced, and development and adoption of a harvest control rule has been postponed several times in the WCPFC work plan (partially due to technical challenges that may impact the reliability of model results, described in SI 1.2.1a above). Thus, based on the evidence from testing, although the stock remains above the MSY level and therefore PI 1.1.1 SG80 objectives are being achieved, the harvest strategy is not achieving **its** objectives reflected in PI 1.1.1 SG80. **SG80 is not met.**

Though not all SG80 requirements are met, the team finds it useful to score SG100 (see MSC interpretation <https://mscportal.force.com/interpret/s/article/Scoring-SG100-if-not-all-SG80-met-7-10-5-3-1527262010218>). MSC defines “evaluated” at SG100 as quantitative management strategy evaluation (MSE) appropriate to the fishery (GSE2.1.1). Furthermore, SG100 requires evaluation of the full interaction between different components of the harvest strategy including HCRs (GSE2.1.1) and evidence can only come from the adopted strategy (SE2.1.1). Although the present and likely future performance of the fishery under CMM 2015-02 has been quantitatively reviewed as described above, no well-defined HCR has been adopted that could be evaluated for performance according to the MSC definition. **SG100 is not met.**

Overall Performance Indicator scores added from Public Certification Report stage

Overall Performance Indicator score	60
Condition number	Section SE – 1

PI 1.2.2 – Harvest control rules and tools (SP ALB) (Section SE outcome)

PI 1.2.2	There are well defined and effective harvest control rules (HCRs) in place		
Scoring Issue	SG 60	SG 80	SG 100
a	HCRs design and application		
	Guide post	HCRs are expected to reduce the exploitation rate as the PRI is approached and are either generally understood and in place, or available.	Well-defined HCRs are in place that ensure the exploitation rate is reduced as the PRI is approached, and are expected to keep the stock fluctuating around a target level consistent with (or above) MSY, or for key LTL species at levels consistent with ecosystem needs.

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	Met?	Yes	No	No
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Rationale:

MSC Fisheries Standard v3.0 Section SE allows the scoring of two kinds of harvest control rules (HCRs) at SG60: HCRs that are ‘available’, and HCRs that are ‘generally understood and in place’.

Section SE recognizes HCRs as ‘available’ in cases where (SE2.2.3):

- a) Stock biomass has not previously been reduced below the MSY level or has been maintained at that level for a recent period of time that is at least longer than 2 generation times of the species, and is not predicted to be reduced below B_{MSY} within the next 5-years: **or**
- b) In UoAs where B_{MSY} estimates are not available, the stock has been maintained to date by the measures in use at levels that have not declined significantly over time, nor shown any evidence of recruitment impairment.

Based on results from the 2021 stock assessment (Castillo Jordán et al. 2021), spawning biomass was above the level that supports MSY in 2019 (median $SB_{latest}/SB_{MSY} = 2.33$) and has not previously been reduced below the MSY level since the latest estimate is the historical minimum within the assessment period. Projections were made across the uncertainty grid under alternative scenarios assuming the continuation of recent effort and catch levels. Although the distribution of stock projections shows a considerable risk of breaching the LRP within the next 5 years, the median projections (generally taken as the level at which the stock is predicted to be) are all above the LRP for 2025, 2035, and 2049. Since the LRP is 20% of spawning biomass in the absence of fishing ($0.2SB_{F=0}$) which is above the median estimate of SB_{MSY} ($0.15SB_{F=0}$), the stock is not predicted to be reduced below SB_{MSY} within the next 5 years. On this basis SE2.2.3a is met and an HCR can be considered ‘available’ for South Pacific albacore tuna in the WCPO.

For an available HCR to meet SG60, it must be ‘expected to reduce the exploitation rate as the point of recruitment impairment is approached’. Section SE states that this expectation is met when (SE2.2.4):

- a) HCRs are effectively used in some other UoAs, that are under the control of the same management body and of a similar size and scale as the UoA; **or**
- b) An agreement or framework is in place that requires the management body to adopt HCRs before the stock declines below B_{MSY} .

WCPFC adopted CMM 2014-06 and related workplans to develop and establish harvest strategies and harvest control rules for the key tuna stocks in the WCPFC Convention area, including yellowfin, bigeye, skipjack, and South Pacific albacore tunas. CMM 2014-06 and its revisions outlined the principles and elements for harvest strategies, including requirements for target and limit reference points and decision rules or harvest control rules, with a clear intention that harvest control rules be tested using simulation approaches (e.g., MSE) and be part of

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the implemented harvest strategies. CMM 2014-06 noted that under Article 5b of the WCPFC Convention, MSY is established as one of the principles for guiding science-based conservation and management of fish stocks under the purview of the Commission. This indicates an ongoing requirement to maintain stocks above the BMSY level. During WCPFC19 in December 2022, CMM 2014-06 was updated (now CMM 2022-03) to include the following text: para 14. *“Notwithstanding the workplan and indicative timeframes adopted under paragraph 13 of this CMM, the Commission shall adopt harvest control rules for skipjack, bigeye, yellowfin and South Pacific albacore tunas before the stock declines below the levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield in accordance with the WCPFC Convention Article 5b”*. Based on these changes and clarification, the Assessment Team considers the SE2.2.4b requirement, *“an agreement or framework is in place that requires the management body to adopt HCRs before the stock declines below B_{MSY} ”*, to be satisfied.

Since both SE2.2.3a and SE2.2.4b are met, HCRs are available and expected to reduce the exploitation rate as the PRI is approached. **SG60 is met by the available HCR.**

The existence of an available HCR does not preclude the possibility that there is also a generally understood HCR in place. Although both available and generally understood HCRs can only meet SG60, this is an important consideration because scoring issues 1.2.1a and 1.2.2c are also capped at SG60 if available HCRs rather than generally understood HCRs are scored in 1.2.2a (SE2.1.2 and GSE2.2). Section SE defines an HCR as ‘generally understood’ if it can be shown to have been applied in some way in the past but has not been explicitly defined or agreed (SE2.2.2a). Section SE also defines an HCR as ‘in place’ if it has been adopted by the management agency and/or there is evidence or documentation that management actions have been taken where required (SE2.2.2c).

The effort limits used to control South Pacific albacore harvest under CMM 2015-02 (2005 or 2001-2004 average levels south of 20°S) were first adopted a decade earlier in CMM 2005-02. CMM 2005-02 was in force for 5 years and required a review in 2006 on the basis of advice from the Scientific Committee. The review requirement was made annual in the next iteration of the measure (CMM 2010-05) and the explicit requirement to report effort against the limit was added. The expiration of CMM 2010-05 after another 5 years triggered the adoption of the nearly identical CMM 2015-02 which remains in force until superseded or rescinded by the Commission. The reviews have specifically incorporated the LRP and interim TRP into advice since the time they were adopted. The well-documented cycle of stock assessment, review and provision of advice by the SC, and adoption of new CMMs with effort limits, in the context of well-defined reference points, shows that a framework for revising limits based on stock status has been applied in some way in the past although it has not been explicitly defined or agreed. Thus, there is a generally understood HCR.

Since at least the adoption of CMM 2015-02, the SC review has consistently advised that catch and effort reductions are required, based on some combination of economic concerns, risk of breaching the LRP, and/or long-term failure to achieve the interim TRP (WCPFC 2016, 2019a, 2021). The 2021 scientific information and advice reflected a particularly urgent need for management action, as projections showed a risk of well over 20% that biomass was already below the LRP in 2021 under all 4 plausible definitions of status quo fishing levels (WCPFC 2021, Castillo Jordán et al. 2021; see also figures in SI 1.2.1b). Yet no changes were made to the existing harvest control measures at the Commission meeting that year or the next; as mentioned above, the effort limits have never been modified from their original form in CMM 2005-02. This shows that management action has not been taken where required, and the generally understood HCR is not in place and is not expected to reduce the exploitation rate as the PRI is approached.

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In summary SG60 is not met by the generally understood and in place HCR as it is not expected to reduce the exploitation rate as the PRI is approached, so we score the available HCR for this issue instead, **which does meet SG60**.

Section SE defines ‘well-defined’ HCRs as those “*that exist in some written form that has been agreed by the management agency, ideally with stakeholders, and that state what actions will be taken at what specific TRP levels*” (SE2.2.2b). Additionally, GSE2.2 states that the definition of ‘HCR’ in the MSC Vocabulary reflects the SG80 level of scoring issue 1.2.2a . The Vocabulary definition is “*a set of well-defined pre-agreed rules or actions used for determining a management action in response to changes in indicators of stock status with respect to reference points*”. The HCR for South Pacific albacore tuna is available rather than well-defined, in place, and pre-agreed. **SG80 is not met**.

Though not all SG80 requirements are met, the team finds it useful to score SG100 (see MSC interpretation <https://mscportal.force.com/interpret/s/article/Scoring-SG100-if-not-all-SG80-met-7-10-5-3-1527262010218>). Since the HCR is still available, it is not yet clear how the HCR once adopted and well-defined would take into account the ecological role of the stock. **SG100 is not met**.

The robustness of HCRs to uncertainty				
b	Guide post		The HCRs are likely to be robust to the main uncertainties.	The HCRs take account of a wide range of uncertainties including the ecological role of the stock, and there is evidence that the HCRs are robust to the main uncertainties.
	Met?		No	No

Rationale:

An HCR is considered “available” for this fishery, as stated in scoring issue (a). A significant portion of this stock extends into the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO), in the jurisdiction of IATTC rather than WCPFC. Although EPO catches currently account for a relatively small fraction of the total (generally <20%; SPC 2022c), one of the most important uncertainties is how the available WCPFC harvest control rule would deal with the potential for EPO catches to increase once put in place. MSC guidance GSE2.2 states that an HCR may not necessarily require the reduction of the “total” exploitation rate as the PRI is approached; it may instead require a reduction of exploitation on parts of the stock. Therefore, to be robust to the main uncertainty of EPO catch, the HCR could either reduce exploitation on the whole stock (presumably by WCPFC and IATTC jointly implementing the rule), or reduce exploitation within WCPFC jurisdiction enough to compensate for effects of EPO catch, as the PRI is approached.

Simulations have explored the performance of various catch limits against stock status objectives when applied to the entire South Pacific including the EPO vs. applied only within WCPFC jurisdiction (SPC 2022g). However, it is not yet clear which of these application scenarios will be put in place by the HCR because it is still only “available” rather than in place. As

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such, the HCR has not yet defined a responsive relationship between stock status and catch or effort, undergone management strategy evaluation, or come into force. Therefore, the current “available” HCR is not likely to be robust to any uncertainties including the main uncertainties. **SG80 is not met.**

Though not all SG80 requirements are met, the team finds it useful to score SG100 (see MSC interpretation <https://mscportal.force.com/interpret/s/article/Scoring-SG100-if-not-all-SG80-met-7-10-5-3-1527262010218>). Since the HCR is still available, it is not yet clear how the HCR once adopted and well-defined would take into account a wide range of uncertainties including the ecological role of the stock. Nor is there yet any **evidence** that the adopted and well-defined HCRs would be robust to the main uncertainties. **SG100 is not met.**

Evaluation of HCRs				
c	Guide post	There is some evidence that tools used or available to implement HCRs are appropriate and effective in controlling exploitation.	Available evidence indicates that the tools in use are appropriate and effective in achieving the exploitation levels required under the HCRs.	Evidence clearly shows that the tools in use are effective in achieving the exploitation levels required under the HCRs.
	Met?	Yes	No	No

Rationale:

As stated in scoring issue (a) the “available” rather than “generally understood” HCR is scored for this PI. Section SE requires that where HCRs are recognized as “available”, the rationale for scoring issue (c) at SG60 shall include (SE2.2.6):

Evidence that HCRs are being “effectively” used in other named UoAs that are managed by the same management body, and the basis on which they are regarded as “effective”, **or** A description of the formal agreement or legal framework that the management body has defined, and the indicators and trigger levels that will require the development of HCRs.

Regardless of whether HCRs are available, MSC also requires the team to use current levels of exploitation in the UoA, such as measured by the fishing mortality rate or harvest rate, as “evidence” for scoring issue (c).

MSC Guidance GSE2.2 clarifies that for scoring issue (c), the team should assess effectiveness of the HCR scored in issue (a) in terms of 1) the likelihood of achieving the desired exploitation rates and biomass levels and 2) the current status.

CMM 2022-03 is a formal agreement in the international legal framework of WCPFC CMMs that requires adoption of HCRs for the South Pacific albacore stock before the biomass stock status indicator declines below the trigger level of B_{MSY} . This satisfies the requirements of SE2.2.6b. This same agreement also satisfies SE2.2.4b under scoring issue (a), which requires the team to recognize the available HCR as “*expected to reduce the exploitation rate as the PRI is approached*”. MSC Guidance GSE2.2 for scoring issue (a) affirms that achieving this expectation

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at SG60 implies that “HCRs should be ‘likely’ to ensure that stocks will be maintained above the PRI”. Therefore, the team concludes that any available HCR “expected” to control exploitation as the PRI is approached under scoring issue (a) is by definition also “likely” to achieve desired exploitation rates and biomass levels under scoring issue (c).

Based on results from the 2020 stock assessment (Vincent et al 2020; WCPFC 2020), the median estimate of recent fishing mortality was well below the MSY level ($F_{2015-2018}/F_{MSY} = 0.26$; 10th to 90th percentile interval = 0.16 to 0.38), and the probability that recent fishing mortality was above F_{MSY} ($F_{2014-2017} > F_{MSY}$) was estimated to be 0%. This meets the requirement of SE2.2.7.

The evidence above suggests that the available HCR is likely to achieve the desired exploitation rates and biomass levels given the current status. Therefore, there is some evidence that tools available to implement HCRs are appropriate and effective in controlling exploitation. **SG60 is met.**

As stated in MSC FS v3.0 Guidance GSE2.2, it is not possible to score more than 60 for issue (c) when “available” HCRs are scored in issue (a) because the SG80 refers to the tools “in use” in the fishery in assessment, not the tools “in use or available”. **SG80 is not met.**

Though not all SG80 requirements are met, the team finds it useful to score SG100 (see MSC interpretation <https://mscportal.force.com/interpret/s/article/Scoring-SG100-if-not-all-SG80-met-7-10-5-3-1527262010218>). The HCR is only available at this point. As explained in detail in scoring issue (b), it is not yet clear what tools will be used once the HCR is adopted and well-defined to achieve objectives that apply to the whole stock including the EPO outside the WCPFC Convention Area. Therefore it is not yet clear how those tools will achieve the exploitation rates required under the HCR. **SG100 is not met.**

Overall Performance Indicator score	60
Condition number	Section SE – 1

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3.6. Conditions

3.6.1. Progress against conditions

Conditions 1 (PI 1.2.1) and 2 (PI 1.2.2) have been closed on the basis that they have been superseded by the new conditions from the MSC early adoption of Section SE (Tool D) process. The new condition from Tool D which replaces the two previous conditions is shown below.

Table 13: Condition SE-1 – New condition (early application of Section SE)

Performance Indicator	1.2.1 and 1.2.2
Score	1.2.1 – 60 1.2.2 – 60
Justification	<p>For full rationales see scoring rationales for PI 1.2.1 (Harvest strategy) and PI 1.2.2 (Harvest control rules and tools) see page 18 and 23 of the final SE report.</p> <p>PI 1.2.1 a - Although MSC Guidance GSA2.4 clarifies that a harvest strategy does not need a well-defined HCR for it to be responsive, the fact that the generally understood HCR is not in place implies that the latter half of the MSC “responsive” definition is not met. This is in line with MSC requirement SE2.1.2: “If ‘available’ harvest control rules are scored under PI 1.2.2, SI 1.2.1a shall only meet SG60.” Therefore, the harvest strategy is not responsive to the state of the stock and the harvest strategy elements do not work together to achieve PI 1.1.1 stock management objectives, and SG80 is not met.</p> <p>PI1.2.1 b - The analyses and advice from the SC and SPC above constitute testing of the harvest strategy currently in place. The results and statements made by SC and SPC indicate that the harvest strategy is not achieving its own objectives because substantial catch reductions are needed to prevent biomass from declining below those objectives. However, the limits in CMM 2015-02 have not been reduced, and development and adoption of a harvest control rule has been postponed several times in the WCPFC work plan (partially due to technical challenges that may impact the reliability of model results, described in SI 1.2.1a above). Thus, based on the evidence from testing, although the stock remains above the MSY level and therefore PI 1.1.1 SG80 objectives are being achieved, the harvest strategy is not achieving its objectives reflected in PI 1.1.1 SG80. SG80 is not met.</p> <p>PI1.2.2a - Section SE defines ‘well-defined’ HCRs as those “that exist in some written form that has been agreed by the management agency, ideally with stakeholders, and that state what actions will be taken at what specific TRP levels” (SE2.2.2b). Additionally, GSE2.2 states that the definition of ‘HCR’ in the MSC Vocabulary reflects the SG80 level of scoring issue 1.2.2a . The Vocabulary definition is “a set of well-defined pre-agreed rules or actions used for determining a management action in response to changes in indicators of stock status with respect to reference points”. The HCR for South Pacific albacore tuna is available rather than well-defined, in place, and pre-agreed. SG80 is not met.</p> <p>PI1.2.2 b - Simulations have explored the performance of various catch limits against stock status objectives when applied to the entire South Pacific including the EPO vs. applied only within</p>

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	<p>WCPFC jurisdiction (SPC 2022g). However, it is not yet clear which of these application scenarios will be put in place by the HCR because it is still only “available” rather than in place. As such, the HCR has not yet defined a responsive relationship between stock status and catch or effort, undergone management strategy evaluation, or come into force. Therefore, the current “available” HCR is not likely to be robust to any uncertainties including the main uncertainties. SG80 is not met.</p> <p>PI 1.2.2 c - As stated in MSC FS v3.0 Guidance GSE2.2, it is not possible to score more than 60 for issue (c) when “available” HCRs are scored in issue (a) because the SG80 refers to the tools “in use” in the fishery in assessment, not the tools “in use or available”. SG80 is not met.</p>
Condition	<p>By May 2027 (and evaluated in the first available audit after) the client groups shall provide evidence to the assessment team that demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The harvest strategy is responsive to the state of the stock and is designed to achieve stock management objectives reflected in PI 1.1.1/PI 1.1.1A SG80, and • The performance of the harvest strategy has been evaluated and evidence exists to show that it is achieving the objectives reflected in PI 1.1.1/ PI 1.1.1A SG80, including being clearly able to maintain stocks at target levels and • Well-defined HCRs are in place that ensure the exploitation rate is reduced as the PRI is approached, and are expected to keep the stock fluctuating around a target level consistent with (or above) MSY, • HCRs are likely to be robust to the main uncertainties, and • Available evidence indicates that the tools in use are appropriate and effective in achieving the exploitation levels required under the HCRs.
Condition start	On publication of the Section SE Final Report – March 2024
Condition deadline	May 2027
Milestones	<p>By May 2025 (and evaluated in the first available audit after) the client groups shall provide evidence to the assessment team that demonstrate:</p> <p>Milestone b1 - Operating models and candidate management procedures that include mechanisms for catch or effort constraints are identified,</p> <p>Milestone b2 - operating models and candidate management procedures that include mechanisms for catch or effort constraints are tested through management strategy evaluation simulations,</p> <p>Milestone d - preferred harvest strategy(ies) adhering to a management procedure approach with an agreed catch or effort constraint identified,</p> <p>Milestone e - mechanism for catch or effort constraints is agreed, and</p> <p>Milestone f1 - a management procedure approach is adopted, and</p> <p>By May 2026 (and evaluated in the first available audit after) the client groups shall:</p> <p>Milestone – provide evidence that the South Pacific Albacore Intersessional Working Group has met and there is evidence of progress towards implementation of the management procedure.</p> <p>By May 2027 (and evaluated in the first available audit after) the client groups shall provide evidence to the assessment team that demonstrate:</p> <p>Milestone f2 - demonstrate that a harvest strategy adhering to a management procedure approach, with and including catch or effort constraints or resource-sharing</p>

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	<p>mechanism that follows scientific advice, is implemented, and Milestone g - an effectiveness review schedule of the implemented harvest strategy is determined.</p>
<p>Progress on Year 0 (2024)</p>	<p>There is no milestone that the CABs are required to evaluate in 2024. However, while there is no need to score milestone in 2024, we remind the clients that by 2025, CABs will be looking for evidence towards this milestone: Operating models and candidate management procedures that include mechanisms for catch or effort constraints are identified.. Progress on the development of a management procedure was discussed at WCPFC21 held in late 2024. The outcomes of this meeting were not finalised at the time of preparation of this report. A CMM on a management procedure (WCPFC21-2024-DP11) was proposed for adoption at the meeting. Indications from the draft report of the outcomes of the Commission meeting are that this was not adopted and that CCMs will cooperate to develop a management procedure and implementing measure for south Pacific albacore during 2025, with a view to adopt both a management procedure and its implementing measure at WCPFC22. The implications of this change in the work plan timeline on the status of the current conditions will be evaluated by CABs at 2025 harmonisation discussions planned for May 2025.</p>

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3.7. Client Action Plan

The Client Action Plan (CAP) was updated following the Section SE process. The Section SE Joint CAP is provided below.

Table 14 defines activities, roles and responsibilities, and expected outputs of implementing activities designed to accomplish the timebound milestones. Table 14 also identifies the milestone(s) to which it is applicable, using milestone UIDs defined in Section 10.7.3. Note that all planned activities are relevant to all of the Section SE milestones that have not yet been met, and to all four stocks subject to Section SE.

The clients' intended outcomes from implementation of the CAP activities are to meet the HS and HCR conditions of Section SE certification as defined in the 4 stock-specific CPRDRs. These expected outcomes are not repeated in the joint CAP.

Table 15 provides examples of evidence of meeting each milestone that clients might provide to their CABs.

Table 14. Joint CAP: Activities, roles and responsibilities, and expected outputs for the joint Section SE CAP, and stock(s) and milestone(s) to which the activity applies for south Pacific Ocean albacore tuna.

Activity	Roles and responsibilities	Outputs	Milestone(s) UID(s)
1. Prior to the CAB annual harmonization meeting scheduled by the CABs to occur in May each year, and prior to each annual surveillance audit, clients will prepare a progress report on CAP implementation, summarizing client activities implemented over the previous year, presenting outputs, and identifying the status of each milestone as either being on or behind target. The client will include in their annual CAP implementation progress report evidence that demonstrates that each milestone is achieved by the specified deadlines.	Clients are responsible for preparing and submitting individual or joint annual CAP progress reports.	Individual or joint client annual progress report on implementation of the CAP for early application of Section SE Evidence that demonstrates that each milestone was achieved by the specified deadline (see Table 2 for examples of client evidence of completion of each milestone).	b1, b2, d, e, f1, f2, g

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Activity	Roles and responsibilities	Outputs	Milestone(s) UID(s)
<p>2. Annually, prior to the WCPFC Scientific Committee meeting, the client will send a letter and/or send a co-signed group letter, to all national and subregional (PNA) fisheries management authorities of their UoA that summarizes all harvest strategy and harvest control rule-related milestones that are required by MSC conditions of certification to be completed at the upcoming annual session of the WCPFC commission. The letter will also identify where deadlines of the current WCPFC Harvest Strategy Workplan are behind any joint CAB-adopted milestone deadlines. Client might copy their CAB, MSC Secretariat and other key stakeholders on the letter(s).</p>	<p>Client is responsible for preparing and sending individual letter and/or co-signing and sending a group letter to relevant national and subregional fisheries management authorities.</p>	<p>Individual and/or group letter(s)</p> <p>Copies of emails distributing the letter</p>	<p>b1, b2, d, e, f1, f2, g</p>
<p>3a Annually the client will meet remotely or in person with national and subregional (PNA) fisheries management authorities of their MSC fishery in order to discuss the joint CAB HS and HCR milestone deadlines summarized in the letter described in activity 1.</p> <p>3b. Clients will annually consider attending the WCPFC Scientific Committee meeting and/or the annual session of the WCPFC commission either as part of a government or observer delegation in order to provide the client with additional opportunities to discuss with UoA fisheries management authorities the joint CAB HS and HCR milestone deadlines. If attending WCPFC meetings, the client will coordinate with other clients of MSC WCPO tuna fisheries and CCMs with relevant MSC certified fisheries, MSC Secretariat and other key stakeholders to encourage CCMs to make statements in order to pursue getting the plenary discussions focused on relevant HS matters to achieve requisite progress to meet the HS and HCR timebound milestones.</p>	<p>Client is responsible for discussing the joint CAB HS and HCR milestone deadlines through meetings with relevant management authorities.</p>	<p>Minutes from meeting with national and/or subregional fisheries management authorities; and/or</p> <p>Participants list of WCPFC SC meeting; and/or</p> <p>Participants list of WCPFC annual session.</p>	<p>b1, b2, d, e, f1, f2, g</p>

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Activity	Roles and responsibilities	Outputs	Milestone(s) UID(s)
<p>4. Annually, prior to the WCPFC Scientific Committee meeting, the client will send a letter and/or send a co-signed group letter, to the NGO Tuna Forum, or to individual environmental NGOs with WCPFC observer status, requesting that the NGOs emphasize in their annual joint advocacy letter to WCPFC members the importance (for regional MSC tuna fisheries and for robust management) of meeting the harvest strategy and harvest control rule related milestones that are required by MSC conditions of certification to be completed at the annual session of the WCPFC commission.</p>	<p>Client is responsible for preparing and sending individual letter and/or co-signing and sending group letter.</p>	<p>Letter to NGO Tuna Forum and/or letter(s) to individual NGOs with WCPFC observer status.</p>	<p>b1, b2, d, e, f1, f2, g</p>
<p>5. Annually, prior to the SC and annual session of the commission, the client will advocate that CCM delegations to WCPFC issue public position statements as WCPFC Information Papers within the Management Issues Theme that call for advancing harvest strategies and harvest control rules to meet the CAB Section SE timebound milestones. The client will conduct this advocacy through remote or in-person oral communication, and/or through written communications such as through email or letters.</p>	<p>Client is responsible for conducting the planned advocacy with CCM delegations.</p>	<p>Minutes from meeting with national and/or subregional fisheries management authorities; and/or Written communications (e.g., email, letter(s)) to fisheries management authorities.</p>	<p>b1, b2, d, e, f1, f2, g</p>
<p>6. Annually, the client, or a collaborative group of clients, will have a representative participate in WCPFC harvest strategy-related processes that are open for the client’s participation.</p>	<p>Client is responsible for identifying relevant WCPFC processes, seeking authorization to attend, and attending.</p>	<p>Client correspondence (email or letter) with relevant CCM or WCPFC Secretariat inquiring about client participation in relevant WCPFC HS-related processes. Participant list from relevant WCPFC meeting(s).</p>	<p>b1, b2, d, e, f1, f2, g</p>

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Table 15. Joint CAP: Examples of evidence of meeting each milestone that clients might provide to their CABs. Refer to Table 13 to identify individual milestone deadlines.

UID	Milestone	Example of evidence
b1	Operating models and candidate management procedures that include mechanisms for catch or effort constraints are identified.	Copy or url to a report identifying WCPFC-adopted operating models and candidate MPs that include tools for catch or effort constraints are identified to undergo subsequent testing through MSE.
b2	Operating models and candidate management procedures that include mechanisms for catch or effort constraints are tested through management strategy evaluation simulations.	Copy or url to a report documenting the findings of MSE that tested operating models and candidate MPs that include mechanisms for catch or effort constraints.
D	Preferred harvest strategy(ies) adhering to a management procedure approach with an agreed catch or effort constraint identified.	Copy or url to report identifying WCPFC's preferred HS that adheres to a MP approach (i.e., preferred subset of MPs that were tested in the MSE) and that specifies mechanisms for catch or effort constraints.
E	Mechanism for catch or effort constraints is agreed.	Copy or url to report documenting WCPFC's agreed mechanism for catch or effort constraints as tested within the candidate MPs of the MSE.
f1	Management procedure approach is adopted.	Copy or url to report of WCPFC-adopted MP (i.e., the technical aspects including general catch or effort constraints at the fishery level).
h1	Present a plan with steps to engage and prepare WCPFC CCMs for implementation of the harvest strategy.	Copy or url to a WCPFC-adopted plan that defines steps to engage and prepare WCPFC CCMs for implementation of the HS for WCPO BET and YFT stocks, such as the through the formation of a BET and YFT roadmap intersessional working group, and/or through WCPFC adoption of an updated WCPFC HS Workplan that adds schedules for BET and YFT implementation of MPs.
h2	Show that the plan to engage and prepare WCPFC CCMs for implementation of the harvest strategy has been enacted.	Copy or url to a report documenting that WCPFC has "enacted" (interpreted here to mean begun to implement, and not the more common definition of officially adopted, which is

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UID	Milestone	Example of evidence
		interpreted to be required under milestone h1) a plan defining steps to engage and prepare the WCPFC CCMs to implement the HS, such as through the examples provided in h1.
h3	Provide a progress report showing that the plan to engage and prepare WCPFC CCMs for implementation of the BET HS continues to be enacted.	Copy or url to a report that provide information on WCPFC progress in implementation of the plan, described in milestone h1, to engage and prepare CCMs to implement the HS.
f2	Harvest strategy adhering to a management procedure approach, with and including catch or effort constraints or resource-sharing mechanism that follows scientific advice, is implemented.	Copy or url to a report that documents WCPFC is fully implementing the MP, including catch and effort constraints, in quota allocations amongst the CCMs, that follow the WCPFC science advisor's advice, as specified by the MP.
G	Effectiveness review schedule of the implemented harvest strategy is determined.	Copy or url of a report that documents WCPFC's explicit definition of the time or time interval at which performance of key elements of the harvest strategy (such as the MP) are to be evaluated against its objectives.

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4. Appendices

4.1. Evaluation processes and techniques

4.1.1. Site visit

A remote site visit took place on 7th February 2025 with Jo Akroyd (Team leader and P3), Kevin McLoughlin (P2 and P3), who comprised the LRQA assessment team. Doug Loder (Talley’s fishery) attended representing the client. The client had provided the auditors with a Client Update Report, summarising developments in the fishery and progress against conditions. No stakeholders wished to attend the site visit

4.1.2. Stakeholder participation

The audit was announced on 6th January 2025 and stakeholders were invited to participate in person or provide written comments.

4.2. Stakeholder input

MPI

A copy of the letter sent from MPI to all stakeholders “Key outcomes from 21st Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, Suva, Fiji: 28 November - 3 December 2024, was provided. This included a summary of what happened to SP albacore. The purpose was to keep stakeholders informed and demonstrate MPI’s involvement

FNZ

An email was also received from Seafood NZ informing that they engage with MPI regularly on highly migratory species, including on the priorities and positions of New Zealand in relevant RFMOs. These primarily being the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

In recent years, they have expressed to MPI the importance of progress on the South Pacific Albacore Harvest Strategy and have sent a representative to the WCPFC Commission meeting as part of the New Zealand delegation to provide any input or operational advice to the delegation as well as to reiterate the importance of this matter.

ISSF

Input was received from ISSF for this year’s surveillance (see Table 16, below).

Table 16. ISSF Stakeholder Input

General comments	Evidence or references	CAB response to stakeholder input	CAB response code
HS Advocacy ISSF acknowledges its advocacy recommendations have been accepted by the CAB, however we are concerned that the client action plan still does not incorporate some of our suggestions. We reiterate our recommendations	ISSF RFMO Priorities: https://www.issf-foundation.org/tuna-stocks-and-management/fisheries-management/regional-fisheries-management-organizations-rfmos/western-	As requested, the CAB has shared these comments with the client.	Accepted (no change)

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<p>and request the CAB to ensure these are adopted by the client:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Publicly support the appeals for RFMOs developed by global NGOs that are participants in the NGO Tuna Forum. 2) Advocate to the flag state delegations of the fishery and all other parties associated with the fishery at WCPFC to take a strong public position on advancing harvest strategies and HCRs, in line with ISSF WCPFC priorities and Position statements. 3) Publicly support ISSF’s WCPFC Position Statements that contain detailed asks on harvest strategies and harvest control rules, as well as other issues like FAD management, bycatch mitigation and shark protection, increased observer coverage & implementation of electronic monitoring in accordance with the 2024 Interim EM Standards, strengthening regulation of transshipment, etc. 4) Support technical work of the WCPFC, as well as capacity workshops on Management Strategy Evaluation in the region, to support WCPFC members in the adoption of robust harvest strategies and HCRs. 	<p>and-central-pacific-fisheries-commission-wcpfc/ ISSF WCPFC Position Statements: https://www.issf-foundation.org/downloads/30957/?tmstv=1697704160 https://ngotunaforum.org/rfmo-advocacy/</p>		
<p>Monitoring</p> <p>While ISSF recognizes the New Zealand Government's commitment to installing Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS) on commercial fishing vessels—presumably including some vessels within the client's fishery—we are concerned about the up-to-date low level of observer coverage in this fishery. According to the report data, observer coverage never reached more than 2% and dropped to 0% during the most recent period (2022/2023).</p> <p>ISSF believes that MSC-certified fisheries should be bound to higher sustainability standards than those currently required by RMFOs or national regulations. Regarding electronic monitoring, ISSF strongly encourages the fishery to make efforts for at least 20% observer coverage of fishing effort. This level of independent observation is essential to effectively evaluate and verify compliance with management strategies for P2 components.</p> <p>ISSF expects significant progress in this area for the next Surveillance Audit report, given that the cameras installed on the client's vessels should now be reporting observer data. If this progress is not demonstrated, ISSF believes the CAB should raise a new condition to address this critical issue.</p>		<p>The New Zealand MPI continues to conclude that there is a very low environmental risk associated with this fishery and has not prioritised the fishery for on-board monitoring. There is a high level of port monitoring. In addition, many of the troll vessels have cameras installed (not currently required to be used when trolling but required when using other gear). The auditors emphasised with the client the likelihood of the need for increased independent monitoring for ongoing certification of the fishery. The client indicated a</p>	<p>N/A {comment noted; no change at this stage}</p>

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1.1.1 Stock status	Evidence or references	CAB response to stakeholder input	CAB response code
<p>Input summary According to the Medley et al (2024) independent report, scoring issues 1.1.1.a and 1.1.1.b do not meet SG100 (see pages 205 and 206 of the report). Although we are aware that the report refers to the 2021 assessment, the continued decline in stock biomass noted then, is still a concern according to the most recent 2024 stock assessment.</p> <p>Medley, P.A.H. and Gascoigne, J. (2024). An Evaluation of the Sustainability of Global Tuna Stocks Relative to Marine Stewardship Council Criteria (Version 11). ISSF Technical Report 2024-06. International Seafood Sustainability Foundation, Pittsburgh, PA, USA.</p> <p>Input detail The last full assessment was conducted in 2024 and covers the whole South Pacific, including catches from the IATTC Convention Area. The 2024 assessment provides stock status based upon an uncertainty ensemble comprising 100 models derived from prior distributions for average natural mortality and steepness together with estimation error for individual models. The assessment results were similar to those in 2021 and indicated the following (Figure PO-4):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The estimated ratio F_{recent}/F_{MSY} in 2018-2021 is 0.18 (10th - 90th percentiles: 0.06-0.44), indicating that overfishing is not occurring. 2. The estimated ratio of spawning biomass SSB_{recent}/SSB_{MSY} in 2019-2022 is 3.02 (10th - 90th percentiles: 2.04-5.21). This indicates that the stock is not in an overfished state. However, the stock's biomass may be approaching an un-profitably level for fisheries targeting South Pacific Albacore. 3. The estimate of MSY is 101,100 tonnes (the median across the uncertainty grid) with a range between 74,018 and 176,330 tonnes (10th - 90th percentiles)." 	<p>Teears, T., Castillo Jordán, C., Davies, N., Day, J., Hampton, J., Magnusson, A., Peatman, T., Pilling, G., Xu, H., Vidal, T., Williams, P. and Hamer, P. (2024). Stock assessment of South Pacific albacore: 2024. WCPFC-SC20-2024/SA-WP-02-Rev 3. 14 August 2024.</p> <p>ISSF. 2024. Status of the world fisheries for tuna. Nov. 2024. ISSF Technical Report 2024-07. International Seafood Sustainability Foundation, Pittsburgh, PA, USA.</p>	<p>The updated 2024 assessment concluded that results were broadly consistent with the 2021 stock assessment and suggest that the SP ALB stock across the South Pacific is not overfished (0% probability $SB_{recent}/SB_{F=0} < LRP$) nor undergoing overfishing (100% probability $F_{recent} < F_{MSY}$). The auditors conclude that the 2024 assessment outcomes do not indicate the need to re-score PI 1.1.1 at this stage but this will be revisited at the next surveillance audit following the 2025 harmonisation discussions.</p>	<p>Not accepted (information for PI score has not changed)</p>

4.3. Surveillance Program

Table 17: Fishery surveillance program

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Surveillance level	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Level3	Off-site surveillance audit	Off-site surveillance audit	Off-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit & re-certification site visit

Table 18: Timing of surveillance audit

Year	Anniversary date of certificate	Proposed date of surveillance audit	Rationale
3	12 th August 2025	Remote audit during late 2025	This fishery has been rectified twice, it is a small very well managed troll fishery and has never had P2 or P3 conditions. The current condition relates to Harvest strategy and HCR - being dealt with at RFM level. NZ has continued to participate at government and industry level. The client keeps abreast of development and liaises with government and industry reps.

Table 19: Surveillance level justification

Year	Surveillance activity	Number of auditors	Rationale
3	Off-site audit	1-2	P1 and Team leader

4.4. Harmonised fishery assessments

Overlapping Units of Assessment

The scoring for south Pacific albacore is harmonised across the WCPO overlapping fisheries. A full list of overlapping UoAs can be found in the final report for the early application of Section SE (available on the MSC website at https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/new-zealand-albacore-tuna-troll/@_@assessments). Re-scoring for PIs 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 as a result of the application of Section Se are shown at paragraph 3.5.4

Harmonisation discussions to consider updated information SP ALB took place in May / June 2024. There were no further changes in the scoring for SP ALB as a result of the 2024 harmonisation.

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