

**Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
Year 2 Surveillance Report**

**SZLC, CSFC & FZLC Cook Islands EEZ South Pacific
albacore & yellowfin longline**

MEC-F-031

**On behalf of Liancheng Overseas Fishery (Shenzhen) Co.
Ltd (SZLC), China Southern Fishery Shenzhen Co. Ltd
(CSFC) and Liancheng Overseas Fishery (FSM) Co. Ltd.
(FZLC)**

Prepared by ME Certification Ltd

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1. General Information

Fishery name	SZLC, CSFC & FZLC Cook Islands EEZ South Pacific albacore & yellowfin longline	
Unit(s) of assessment	Species	Albacore (<i>Thunnus alalunga</i>)
	Geographical range	Area 81 Pacific, Southwest - Cook Islands Exclusive Economic Zone (excluding the internal waters and territorial sea of the Cook Islands)
	Method of capture	Longline
	Stock	South Pacific albacore
	Management System/s	At national level: Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources At regional level: Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)
	Client group	UoA 1: Luen Thai Fishing Venture (LTFV), with Liancheng Overseas Fishery (Shenzhen) Co. Ltd (SZLC); China Southern Fishery Shenzhen Co. Ltd (CSFC); and Liancheng Overseas Fishery (FSM) Co. Ltd (FZLC) ¹ UoA 3: C.F Incorporated C/- Cook Islands Trust Corporation Ltd / C.B. Incorporation Ltd. Note: these vessels are operating under CSFC. UoA 5: Shenzhen Shengang Overseas Industrial Co., Ltd / Rongcheng Ocean Fishery Co., Ltd. Note: these vessels are operating under CSFC.
	Species	Yellowfin (<i>Thunnus albacares</i>)
	Geographical range	Area 81 Pacific, Southwest - Cook Islands Exclusive Economic Zone (excluding the internal waters and territorial sea of the Cook Islands)
	Method of capture	Longline
	Stock	Western Central Pacific yellowfin
	Management System/s	At national level: Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources At regional level: Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)
	Client group	UoA 2: Luen Thai Fishing Venture (LTFV), with Liancheng Overseas Fishery (Shenzhen) Co. Ltd (SZLC); China Southern Fishery Shenzhen Co. Ltd (CSFC); and Liancheng Overseas Fishery (FSM) Co. Ltd (FZLC)

¹ This used to be the company called China Fishing Agency (CFA) and has just had a change in name. The actual company remains the same.

	<p>UoA 4: C.F Incorporated C/- Cook Islands Trust Corporation Ltd / C.B. Incorporation Ltd. Note: these vessels are operating under CSFC.</p> <p>UoA 6: Shenzhen Shengang Overseas Industrial Co., Ltd / Rongcheng Ocean Fishery Co., Ltd. Note: these vessels are operating under CSFC.</p>	
Date certified	9 th June 2015	Date of expiry 8 th June 2020
Surveillance level and type	Surveillance level 6, on-site assessment	
Date of surveillance audit	12, 13 September 2017	
Surveillance stage (tick one)	1st Surveillance	
	2nd Surveillance	x
	3rd Surveillance	
	4th Surveillance	
	Other (expedited etc)	
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2. Background

2.1. Overall changes

This report outlines the process and outcome of the second annual surveillance audit for the SZLC, CSFC & FZLC Cook Islands EEZ South Pacific albacore and yellowfin longline fishery. The fishery is carried out by the vessels listed in Table 1. Note that this list has expanded since the previous surveillance audit, following completion of the expedited assessment for the addition of yellowfin and new client groups to the certificate in February 2017. Also note that part of the fleet has MSC Chain of Custody certification as shown in Table 1; this is further discussed in Section 2.5.

The certified fishery operates in the EEZ of the Cook Islands; a small proportion of trips may include sets made on the high seas, but these are not included in the Unit of Certification. The Client fleet currently owns 46 licenses issued by the Cook Islands Government (Ministry of Marine Resources). With the license cap no longer in effect (see Section 2.2.2), there are currently 57 longliners licensed to fish in the Cook Islands EEZ.

Table 1. Vessels on the current Cook Islands albacore and yellowfin longline certificate (MEP-F-031),

List A: UoA vessels with MSC CoC certification (MSC-C- 55648)

Vessel Name	FFA VID	IRCS	Flag State	Registration number
CFA21	35771	V6P021	FSM	VR0112
HUA NAN YU 711	36073	BZXD22	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-100051
HUA NAN YU 712	36074	BZXD23	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-100050
HUA NAN YU 716	36238	BZXD24	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI) (2016) FT-100034
HUA NAN YU 717	36239	BZXD25	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI) (2016) FT-100033
HUA NAN YU 718	36246	BZXD26	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI) (2016) FT-100032
HUA NAN YU 719	36247	BZXD27	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI) (2016) FT-100030
HUA NAN YU 721	36259	BZXD28	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI) (2016) FT-100031
HUA NAN YU 722	36260	BZXD29	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI) (2016) FT-100029
HUA NAN YU 723	36261	BZXD32	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI) (2016) FT-100028
HUA NAN YU 731	36435	BZXD33	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200009
HUA NAN YU 732	36436	BZXD34	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200011
HUA NAN YU 736	36437	BZXD35	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200010
HUA NAN YU 737	36481	BZXD36	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200020
HUA NAN YU 738	36480	BZXD37	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200021
HUA NAN YU 739	36479	BZXD38	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200022
SHEN LIAN CHENG 760	36212	BZXC32	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT100047
SHEN LIAN CHENG 761	36208	BZXC33	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT100046
SHEN LIAN CHENG 881	36498	BZXD92	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200023
SHEN LIAN CHENG 882	36499	BZXD93	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200024
SHEN LIAN CHENG 883	36512	BZXD94	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200025
SHEN LIAN CHENG 884	36513	BZXD95	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200030
SHEN LIAN CHENG 885	36514	BZXD96	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT200031

List B: UoA vessels NOT undergoing MSC CoC certification

Vessel Name	FFA VID	IRCS	Flag State	Registration number
CHONG MYONG 703	34743	E5U2019	Cooks	1091
CHONG MYONG 709	36077	E5U2352	Cooks	1441
ESTHER	34742	E5U2018	Cooks	1090
GRACE	35719	E5U2209	Cooks	1293
GRACE 1	35720	E5U2210	Cooks	1294
HONG YANG 3	35988	BBL Y2	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)(2014)FT-100009
HONG YANG 8	36235	BBIW8	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)(2016)FT-200044
HONG YANG 88	36307	BBI O8	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)(2016)FT-200045
HONG YANG 9	36236	BBIW9	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)(2016)FT-200046
LU RONG YUAN YU 888	36456	BBIV8	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI) (2013) FT-200036
LU RONG YUAN YU 889	36457	BBIV9	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013) FT-200035
SHEN GANG FA 15	36493	BZXD52	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200026
SHEN GANG FA 16	36494	BZXD53	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200027
SHEN GANG FA 17	36495	BZXD54	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200028
SHEN GANG FA 18	36496	BZXD55	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200029
SHEN GANG FA 19	36506	BZXD56	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200034
SHEN GANG FA 715	36507	BZXD62	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200035
SHEN GANG FA 716	36502	BZXD63	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200036
SHEN GANG FA 718	36504	BZXD65	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200038
SHEN GANG FA 719	36505	BZXD66	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2013)FT-200039
SHEN GANG FA 720	36685	BZXD69	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)(2015)FT-200027
LU RONG YUAN YU 211	36771	BCLN8	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)2016FT-200164
LU RONG YUAN YU 212	36628	BBLM6	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)(2014)FT200134
HONG YANG 2	35987	BBL Y1	China	(LU)CHUANDENG(JI)(2014)FT100008
GUANG YUAN YU 338	36598	BZ WY47	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)FT-200009
GUANG YUAN YU 339	36599	BZ WY48	China	(YUE)CHUANDENG(JI)FT-200010

This fishery was certified by MEC on the 9th June 2015 with 8 conditions and one recommendation. Following the expedited assessment for scope extension, 2 new conditions were added in relation to yellowfin. The conditions, with their status ahead of the Year 2 surveillance audit, are summarised in Table 2. Following the year 1 surveillance audit, a recommendation was added; both recommendations and their status ahead of the Year 2 surveillance audit are shown in Table 3. Progress against the conditions and recommendations is further discussed in Sections 4.1 and 4.2.

Table 2. Summary of Assessment Conditions and scoring and status prior to this audit.

Condition number	Condition	Performance Indicator	Stock (P1)	Apply to which UoAs?	Current status
1	The management system should formally adopt a target reference point for the South Pacific albacore stock which is consistent with maintaining the stock at B_{MSY} or some other measure with similar intent or outcome. This target reference point should be used for management purposes.	1.1.2	albacore	UoA1,3,5	open – on target
2	The fishery should put in place a regional harvest strategy, incorporating limit and target reference points (management objectives), a harvest control rule and management actions, such that the strategy is responsive to the status of the stock and the elements of the strategy work together to maintain the stock at or around the target level. The key missing elements of the harvest strategy at present are 1. a target reference point formally adopted by the regional management system, and 2. a well-defined harvest control rule with associated management actions. These issues are also addressed specifically in conditions 1 and 3.	1.2.1	albacore	UoA1,3,5	open – on target
3	The fishery must put in place a well-defined regional-level harvest control rule, and associated management actions (in the form of a CMM or another form as appropriate) which together act effectively to reduce exploitation rates as the limit reference point is approached. The selection of the harvest control rule should take into account the main uncertainties regarding the status of the stock or the impact of the fishery (or other uncertainties if considered important).	1.2.2	albacore	UoA1,3,5	open – on target
4	The occurrence and outcome of all catches of ETP species by UoA vessels (sharks, seaturtles, seabirds and cetaceans) should be systematically and accurately reported on so that fishery-related mortality on ETP species can be quantitatively determined and the effectiveness of the management strategies can be determined. Where a need has been identified, the collected data should enable further development of management strategies to ensure that the fishery does not hinder recovery of ETP species.	2.3.1, 2.3.3	both	all UoAs	open – on target
5	The client should provide evidence that all Cook Islands regulations on fishery interactions with sea turtles are consistently respected and adhered to by UoA crew so that it can be demonstrated that the fishery does not pose a risk of serious harm to sea turtles, mortality of sea turtles is minimized and the fishery does not hinder recovery of vulnerable sea turtle populations.	2.3.2	both	all UoAs	open – on target

Condition number	Condition	Performance Indicator	Stock (P1)	Apply to which UoAs?	Current status
6	The client must provide evidence that processes at national level are put in place to i) regularly engage with key stakeholders to seek and accept relevant information, and ii) demonstrate that the information obtained from such engagement has been duly considered.	3.1.2	both	all UoAs	open – ahead of target
7	The client should demonstrate that the subsidies identified by FFA and acknowledged by the client do not lead to perverse incentives that are inconsistent with achieving the outcomes expressed by MSC principles 1 and 2; Or Implement a harvest strategy that includes strengthened harvest control rules that are more responsive to increasing effort in the albacore and yellowfin fishery, such that the impact of subsidies is restricted to lowering the operating costs of subsidized fleets, rather than acting as an incentive to increase effort.	3.1.4	both	all UoAs	open – on target
8	By working with the relevant Cook Islands management agencies, the client should demonstrate i) that decision-making processes at national level respond to serious and other important issues identified in relevant research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation, in a transparent, timely and adaptive manner and take account of the wider implications of decisions and ii) that information on fishery performance and management action at national level is available to stakeholders on request, and that explanations are provided for any actions or lack of action associated with findings and relevant recommendations emerging from research, monitoring, evaluation and review activity.	3.2.2	both	all UoAs	open – on target
9	The fishery should put in place a regional harvest strategy, incorporating limit and target reference points (management objectives), a harvest control rule and management actions, such that the strategy is responsive to the status of the stock and the elements of the strategy work together to maintain the stock at or around the target level. The key missing element of the harvest strategy at present is a well-defined harvest control rule with associated management actions. This issue is also addressed specifically in condition 10.	1.2.1	yellowfin	UoA2,4,6	open*
10	The fishery must put in place a well-defined regional-level harvest control rule, and associated management actions (in the form of a CMM or another form as appropriate) which together act effectively to reduce exploitation rates as the limit reference point is approached. The selection of the harvest control rule should take	1.2.2	yellowfin	UoA2,4,6	open*

Condition number	Condition	Performance Indicator	Stock (P1)	Apply to which UoAs?	Current status
	into account the main uncertainties regarding the status of the stock or the impact of the fishery (or other uncertainties if considered important).				

* Raised during the expedited assessment for the addition of yellowfin and new client groups. Progress against these conditions will be assessed for the 1st time during the Year 2 surveillance.

Table 3. Summary of Assessment Recommendations and status prior to this audit.

Recommendation number	Description	Status
1	Waste management	open
2	Shark Sanctuary compliance	open

The fishery is managed at both the regional level (through the WCPFC, via its Conservation and Management Measures - CMMs) and at national level (through the Cook Islands MMR). The WCPFC is responsible for management of tuna stocks in its area (as agreed by its member countries), while the Cook Islands may also take additional measures to manage fisheries in its EEZ. Since the initial assessment, a number of new CMMs have come into force. As these are applicable across the three MSC Principles, they have been summarised here (see Table 4).

Table 4. List of current Conservation and Management Measures and Resolutions of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission relevant to this fishery

CMM Reference	Title	Change from Year 1 surveillance?	Impact on scoring?
Res. 2005-03	Resolution on Non-Target Fish Species	No	N/a
2006-04	Conservation and Management Measure for Striped Marlin in the Southwest Pacific	No	N/a
2006-07, 2007-01	Conservation and Management Measure for the Regional Observer Programme	No	N/a
2006-08	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Boarding and Inspection Procedures	No	N/a
2008-03	Conservation And Management of Sea Turtles	No	N/a
Res. 2008-01	Resolution on Aspirations of SIDS and Territories	No	N/a
2009-03	Conservation and Management Measure for Swordfish	No	N/a
2009-06	Conservation and Management Measure on the Regulation of Transshipment	No	N/a
2010-06	Conservation and Management Measure to Establish a List of Vessels Presumed to have carried out Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing activities in the WCPO	No	N/a
2010-07	Conservation and Management Measure for Sharks	No	N/a
2011-04	Conservation and Management Measure for Oceanic Whitetip Sharks	No	N/a
2013-07	Conservation and Management Measure on the special requirements of Small Island Developing States and Territories	No	N/a
2013-08	Conservation and Management Measure for Silky Sharks	No	N/a
2014-05	Conservation and Management Measures for Sharks <i>(This CMM does not replace or prejudice any other existing shark CMM)</i>	No	N/a
2014-06	Conservation and Management Measures to develop and implement a harvest strategy approach for key fisheries and stocks in the WCPO	Yes	Revised harvest strategy workplan issued – see

CMM Reference	Title	Change from Year 1 surveillance?	Impact on scoring?
			Section 2.2.4
2015-02	Conservation and Management Measure for South Pacific Albacore	No	N/a
2015-03	Conservation and Management Measure for Mitigating Impacts of Fishing on Seabirds	No	N/a
2015-06	Conservation and Management Measure on target reference point for skipjack tuna	No	N/a
2015-07	Conservation and Management Measure on Compliance Monitoring Scheme	No	N/a
2016-01	Conservation and Management Measure for bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean	Yes	No – same outcome as for previous CMMs (e.g. 2013-01, 2014-01).

2.2. Principle 1

2.2.1. Catch and TAC data

UoC catch data for the last two years are given in Table 5. In 2015, 607 t yellowfin were caught by the UoC fleet, compared to the WCPO total of 575,900 t for the same year (i.e. 0.1% of the total YFT catch). For albacore the 2015 UoC catch was 2,811 t, compared to a WCPO total of 68,306 t (i.e. 4% of the total ALB catch).

From the 1st January 2017 the albacore fishery is managed at national level through a Quota Management System (Total Allowable Commercial Catch or TACC), replacing the license cap previously in place (see Section 2.2.2 for a more detailed discussion). At regional level, CMM 2015-02 continues to be in effect. For yellowfin there is no TACC; this stock therefore continues to be managed through CMM 2016-01 which replaces CMM 2015-01, and shall remain in effect until 31 December 2017.

Table 5. Catch data for albacore and yellowfin for the two most recent years (note: TACC does not yet apply to these years). Data provided by Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources.

Year	Amount (tonnes)	
	Albacore	Yellowfin
2015	2,811.03	908.73
2016	2,303.71	606.65

2.2.2. Albacore

For albacore, the most recent stock assessment was conducted by Harley et al. (2015) and is discussed in detail in the previous surveillance report (MEC, 2016).

The Cook Islands have now implemented a Quota Management System for albacore and bigeye which replaces the license limit of 50 vessels previously in place. The system came into force on the 6th December 2016 as part of the newly adopted Marine Resources (Large Pelagic Longline Fishery and Quota Management System) Regulations 2016. The quota applies to all in-zone longline fishing activities, with the exception of exploratory fishing and subsistence and recreational fishing. The 2017 albacore quota has been fixed at 9,698 tonnes (derived from peak landings in 2012) while the bigeye quota is fixed at 2,500 tonnes, in line with CMM 2015-01.

For the 1st year of implementation, only vessels with existing licenses are eligible for a quota allocation. License holders are required to purchase a minimum quota allocation of 25t albacore and 20t bigeye. Individual companies may transfer quota between vessels but quota may not be transferred between companies. Quota uptake is monitored on a weekly basis with albacore and bigeye (as well as yellowfin) catches reported electronically by each Wednesday. The MMR issues a notification when 80% of a company's quota is reached, requiring vessels to report every 24 hrs; at 90% a stop fishing notification is sent out. For companies that exceed their quota, the overage is deducted from the following year's allocation. As only 80% of the national quota is allocated annually, TACC overages are reasonably unlikely. However, there is no provision for re-allocating the unused quota. This is with the intention of helping reduce catch levels to a target reference point which is to be agreed upon in future.

To date, the Cook Islands remain the only Tokelau signatory to have implemented a catch management system at national level. While the Tokelau arrangement is still in place (the final text was agreed at the 91st meeting of the Forum Fisheries Committee on 31st October 2014), an agreement has yet to be reached and discussions over the Tokelau Catch Management system,

which may include a longline VDS (as per the PNA example for purse seine) or QMS are still ongoing.

These developments were considered further by the team in their assessment of the fishery's progress against conditions, discussed in Section 4.1. No changes in scoring are proposed on the basis of this information.

2.2.3. Yellowfin

Yellowfin was added to the certificate in February 2017 through a scope extension. The most recent stock assessment was conducted by Davies et al. (2014) and is discussed in detail in the Public Certification Report for the scope extension (MEC, 2017). Since the Cook Islands Quota Management System only applies to albacore and bigeye tuna, the yellowfin fishery continues to follow the WCPFC CMM: WCPFC13 replaced CMM 2015-01 for tropical tuna with CMM 2016-01. This is a one-year interim measure; it is hoped that a multi-annual tropical tuna management measure will be developed by WCPFC14 at the end of 2017. CMM 2016-01 is no different to 2015-01 for yellowfin; it sets F_{MSY} as the management objective, and implements management controls by way of the following:

- FAD time closure, FAD limits and a ban on FAD sets in the high seas (with some exceptions)
- purse seine effort limits in EEZs and on the high seas (as well as the PNA vessel day scheme – see below)
- no discarding of yellowfin (or the other tropical species)
- CCMs to take measures 'not to increase catches by their longline vessels of yellowfin tuna'.
- The CMM foresaw WCPFC setting catch limits for yellowfin at WCPFC13 (2016) – but this did not happen; presumably it will be a key part of the multi-annual measure which will be the focus of work in 2017.

There is also some management of yellowfin under the PNA vessel day scheme, which limits purse seine effort in the EEZs of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) which among them cover >50 % of WCPO purse seine effort.

The team considered that the new CMM did not constitute a material change requiring re-scoring of P1 for yellowfin.

2.2.4. WCPFC harvest strategy

Along with CMM 2014-06, the Commission agreed upon a workplan to implement the CMM which has the objective to agree to a harvest strategy for each stock. The workplan does not complete the process, but takes each stock to an agreed target, indicators and acceptable level of risk, and provides for an analysis of options for harvest control rules. The key objectives for WCPFC13 for South Pacific albacore and yellowfin, according to the workplan, were to record management objectives and agree acceptable levels of risk for both stocks, and to agree a target reference point for albacore. At the time of writing, none of these things were achieved, except to note that an acceptable level of risk could not be >20 %. A revised workplan (WCPFC, 2017; Attachment N) was agreed which pushes the key decisions forward to next year (Table 6). In harmonisation with other WCPFC fisheries, the audit team considered that this should be addressed under Principle 3, more specifically under PI 3.2.2 – Decision-making processes. This Performance Indicator was therefore rescored as detailed in Appendix 1.

Table 6. Decisions due to be made by WCPFC13 according to the 2014-06 workplan, outcome of WCPFC13 and revised workplan (WCPFC, 2017; Attachment N)

Due to be achieved by end 2016 (WCPFC13) (CMM 2014-06 workplan)	Outcome at WCPFC13	New deadline (revised workplan)
<i>Albacore</i>		
Record management objectives	No agreement	Folded into process of evaluation of candidate HCRs
Agree acceptable levels of risk for breaching LRP	No agreement, except that it should not be >20%	Folded into process of evaluation of candidate HCRs
Agree TRP	No agreement	2017 'at the latest' (WCPFC14)
Agree monitoring strategy	No agreement	Folded into process of evaluation of candidate HCRs
Agree performance indicators to evaluate HCRs	No agreement	Folded into process of evaluation of candidate HCRs
<i>Yellowfin</i>		
Agree acceptable levels of risk for breaching LRP	No agreement, except that it should not be >20%	Folded into process of evaluation of candidate HCRs
Record management objectives	Accepted an initial list for the tropical purse-seine fishery as a basis for evaluation of HCRs	2017 (WCPFC14)

2.3. Principle 2

To identify changing trends in retained and discarded catch data (for species other than albacore and yellowfin), logbook and observer data for all vessels within the UoC for 2016 were requested, together with complete data for 2015. Due to a change in staffing at the MMR, there were some issues with obtaining a summary of 2015 and 2016 logbook data as per the initial assessment and year 1 surveillance. While a summary of the 2015 and 2016 logbook data were provided to the audit team by MMR, these data summaries did not provide details on the non-P1 retained catch to the species-level. As such, the catch composition for 2016 was derived from observer data and reflects the total catch (retained + discarded) as opposed to retained catch only. Despite this change in methodology, the overall catch profile of the fishery remains similar with only bigeye exceeding the 5% threshold for 'main' retained species. The MMR confirmed that overall bycatch trends in the fishery are stable with yellowfin showing most variability from season to season.

Table 7. Retained catch aboard all UoC vessels, shown as volume (tonnes) and % composition for 2013 – 2015 (from SPC logbook data provided by MMR).

Species		% Catch composition				
		From logbook data (retained catch)				From observer data total (retained + discarded) catch
		2013	2014	2015	Average	2016
ALB	Albacore (<i>Thunnus alalunga</i>)	72.57	58.14	58.70	61.88	58.54
BET	Bigeye (<i>T. obesus</i>)	4.99	7.13	6.83	6.41	8.84

YFT	Yellowfin (<i>T. albacares</i>)	9.01	24.40	24.21	20.04	23.15
MLS	Striped marlin (<i>Kajikia audax</i>)	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.01	2.08
BUM	Blue marlin (<i>Makaira nigricans</i>)	6.77	4.82	4.69	5.27	2.13
BLM	Black marlin (<i>Istiompax indica</i>)	0.00	0.21	0.24	0.16	0
SWO	Swordfish (<i>Xiphias gladius</i>)	0.70	0.55	0.55	0.59	0.48
SFA	Indo-Pacific sailfish (<i>Istiophorus platypterus</i>)	0.44	-	-	0.36	0.28
LAG	Moonfish/Opah (<i>Lampris guttatus</i>)	0.16	-	-	0.13	0.04
OIL	Oilfish (<i>Ruvettus pretiosus</i>)	0.48	-	-	0.39	0
DOL	Mahi mahi (<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i>)	1.51	0.52	0.48	0.77	0.2
WAH	Wahoo (<i>Acanthocybium solandri</i>)	2.63	2.06	1.95	2.16	2.40
OTH	Other	0.74	2.15	2.33	1.82	1.82

SPC produced a new stock assessment for WCPO bigeye tuna in 2017. The 2017 stock assessment incorporates the following changes since the previous assessment:

- A further three years of data since the last stock assessment was done in 2014 (including more biological data, catch-per-unit-effort data for longline fisheries and tagging data)
- Extension of the model time period to the end of 2015;
- New growth function based on recent ageing of otoliths;
- An alternative regional structure (with the boundaries between the tropical and northern temperate regions shifted from 20N to 10N)
- Exploration of uncertainties in the assessment model
- Improvement of diagnostic weaknesses of previous assessments.

Several model runs were presented, exploring the relative impacts of key data and model assumptions for the diagnostic case model on the stock assessment results and conclusions. The assumptions on growth function and regional structure were found to have the most significant impact on estimates of stock status with the latest assumptions showing more optimistic results. In contrast with the 2014 stock assessment, the authors placed little emphasis on the diagnostic case model, recommending instead that management advice is formulated from the results of the structural uncertainty grid. The general conclusion of the assessment could be summarised as follows:

1. All models that assume the new growth function estimate significantly more optimistic stock status than the 2014 assessment, with the stock above the limit reference point $20\%SB_{F=0}$ in all cases.
2. All models with the new growth estimate a significant recent recruitment event that has increased spawning potential in the last several years, and it is expected that for the old growth

models these recruits will soon progress into the spawning potential and increase stock status, at least in the short-term.

3. Of the four sets of models in the structural uncertainty grid (the combinations of old/new growth and 2017/2014 regions), only the old growth/2014 regions models estimate spawning potential to be below 20%SB_{F=0} for all models in the set. These models estimate SB_{latest} / SB_{F=0} to be between 0.08 and 0.17 which is slightly more pessimistic than the structural uncertainty grid of the 2014 assessment (between 0.1 and 0.2).

4. A substantial decline in bigeye abundance was estimated by all models in the assessment and recent estimates of depletion with respect to estimates earlier in the assessment period, and with respect to estimates in the absence of fishing, are significant and appear to be ongoing, at least on a multi-year scale.

5. The significance of the recent high recruitment events and the progression of these fish to the spawning potential component of the stock are encouraging, although whether this is a result of management measures for the fishery or beneficial environmental conditions is currently unclear.

While the new stock assessment may have significant implications for management of bigeye in the WCPO, the audit team considered it more prudent to wait until the outcome of WCPFC14, taking place in December 2017, to determine the likely impact on scoring.

At Cook Islands level, bigeye catches are now also subject to an annual TACC as part of the quota management system for albacore (see Section 2.2.4). License holders are required to purchase a minimum quota allocation of 25t albacore and 20t bigeye, with the overall bigeye quota fixed at 2,500 tonnes, in line with CMM 2015-01.

The surveillance team decided that these changes in relation to bigeye will be taken into consideration at the Year 3 surveillance audit at which point the Retained Species PIs may be re-scored.

For bait, the fishery continues to rely on the Indian oil sardine, sourced from Oman and China. The volumes used in this fishery are shown in Table 8 and still only represent a fraction of the total landings of the species. No changes to the scoring are therefore proposed.

Table 8. Bait use by the UoC (volume shown in tonnes).

Bait	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Indian oil sardine (<i>Sardinella longiceps</i>)	2,297	2,688	1,930	1,401	1,438

A summary of the observer data is shown in Table 9. In 2016, observer coverage for Chinese-flagged vessels was 11%. For 2017, this figure is likely to be less, in part due to various circumstances (the MMR had placed observers on some boats which decided not to do trips in the Cook Islands). At the site visit the MMR reported that they are undertaking efforts to restructure the observer programme, to account for changes in observer staff as well as an increased need for observer coverage in the Indian Ocean. Emphasis is also being placed on improving the quality of observer reports.

Table 9. Summary of 2014 – 2016 observer data for the UoC fleet, showing yearly number of discarded individuals (with nb. observed trips) and summarised (2014 – 16) total observed catch, discards as % composition of overall observed catch and overall % composition for the species. For ETP species, the number and % of dead individuals is also shown. Data provided by MMR.

Species	No. discarded				Total observed catch (2014-16)	Discards as % total observed catch	% of total (observed retained and discarded) catch	ETP species % discarded dead (out of total observed catch for that species) (N=no. dead discards)
	2014 (4 trips)	2015 (1 trip)	2016 (5 trips)	Total (2014-16)				
ALBACORE	120	63	150	333	22476	0.84	56.99	
YELLOWFIN	102	64	98	264	8281	0.66	21.00	
BIGEYE	43	22	20	85	2539	0.21	6.43	
WAHOO	20	10	0	30	1711	0.07	4.34	
MAHI MAHI / DOLPHINFISH / DORADO	8	1	0	9	471	0.02	1.20	
ESCOLAR	14	6	28	48	717	0.12	1.82	
SKIPJACK	26	4	0	30	728	0.07	1.85	
BLUE MARLIN	4	1	0	5	381	0.02	0.97	
PELAGIC STING-RAY	88	92	77	253	253	0.65	0.65	0.81% or 2 ind.
SHORT-BILLED SPEARFISH	2	0	0	2	177	0.00	0.45	
STRIPED MARLIN	2	8	2	12	242	0.03	0.61	
BLUE SHARK	62	110	85	257	257	0.65	0.65	17% or 44 ind.
OILFISH	128	2	51	181	183	0.45	0.46	
SLENDER SUNFISH	43	2	82	127	136	0.39	0.38	
SHORTSNOUTED LANCETFISH	37		3	40	43	0.11	0.10	
SNAKE MACKEREL	79	9	2	90	92	0.22	0.23	
LONGSNOUTED LANCETFISH	33	33	26	92	92	0.22	0.23	
SWORDFISH	3	17	0	20	110	0.06	0.28	
GREAT BARRACUDA	35	21	17	73	75	0.19	0.19	
SILKY SHARK	57	41	21	119	119	0.30	0.39	38% or 45 ind.
SAILFISH (INDO-PACIFIC)	0	1	0	1	70	0.00	0.18	
SICKLE POMFRET	35	11	7	53	54	0.14	0.14	

Species	No. discarded				Total observed catch (2014-16)	Discards as % total observed catch	% of total (observed retained and discarded) catch	ETP species % discarded dead (out of total observed catch for that species) (N=no. dead discards)
	2014 (4 trips)	2015 (1 trip)	2016 (5 trips)	Total (2014-16)				
OCEANIC WHITE-TIP SHARK	14	15	4	33	33	0.08	0.08	25% or 8 ind.
LONG FINNED MAKO SHARK	33	21	6	60	60	0.15	0.15	22% or 13 ind.
SHORT FINNED MAKO SHARK	18	4	0	22	22	0.06	0.06	13% or 3 ind.
BLACK MARLIN	0	0	0	0	29	0.00	0.07	
OPAH / MOONFISH	0	0	1	1	9	0.00	0.02	
BIGEYE THRESHER SHARK	6	2	0	8	9	0.02	0.02	75% or 6 ind.
SARGENT MAJOR	0	0	0	0	4	0.00	0.01	
PELAGIC THRESHER SHARK	5	0	0	5	5	0.01	0.01	40% or 2 ind.
GIANT MANTA	1	3	0	4	5	0.01	0.01	0%
OMOSUDID	1	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00	
ROUDI ESCOLAR	6	0	0	6	7	0.02	0.02	
SHARKS (UNIDENTIFIED)	3	0	0	3	3	0.01	0.01	66% or 2 ind.
LOGGERHEAD TURTLE	3	0	0	3	3	0.01	0.01	33% or 1 ind.
CRESTFISH/UNICORNFISH	3	0	0	3	4	0.01	0.01	
RAINBOW RUNNER	0	0	0	0	2	0.00	0.00	
LEATHERBACK TURTLE	1	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00	100% or 1 ind.
SNAKE MACKERELS AND ESCOLARS	0	0	0	10	10	0.02	0.02	
SHARPTAIL MOLA	0	0	0	0	2	0.00	0.00	
DEEPWATER RED SNAPPER	0	0	0	0	1	0.00	0.00	
UNSPECIFIED	1	0	0	0	1	0.00	0.00	
BATFISH	0	0	0	0	2	0.00	0.00	
RED SEA CATFISH	0	0	0	0	2	0.00	0.00	
HAIRTAILS, CUTLASSFISHES	0	0	0	0	2	0.00	0.00	
RAYS (TORPEDINIDAE, NARKIDAE)	0	1	0	0	1	0.00	0.00	0%
GOLDRIBBON SOAPFISH	0	0	0	0	1	0.00	0.00	
BLACK BREEM	0	0	0	0	1	0.00	0.00	

Species	No. discarded				Total observed catch (2014-16)	Discards as % total observed catch	% of total (observed retained and discarded) catch	ETP species % discarded dead (out of total observed catch for that species) (N=no. dead discards)
	2014 (4 trips)	2015 (1 trip)	2016 (5 trips)	Total (2014-16)				
LUMINOUS HAKE	0	0	0	0	1	0.00	0.00	
GREAT HAMMERHEAD	1	0	0	0	1	0.00	0.00	0%
OCEAN SUNFISH	0	0	0	0	1	0.00	0.00	
DRIFT FISH	0	1	0	1	1	0.00	0.00	
ATLANTIC POMFRET / RAY'S BREAM	1	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00	
CHINA ANCHOVY	1	0	0	1	1	0.00	0.00	
GREEN TURTLE	0	0	1	0	1	0.00	0.00	100% or 1 ind.
Total				2785	39433	5.82	100.00	

Based on the table above, there have been no major changes in either overall species composition or in the rate of interactions with ETP species:

- Seabirds: no interactions reported.
- Sea turtles: 3 loggerheads and 1 leatherback in 2014; no reported interactions in 2015. One green sea turtle was caught and discarded dead in 2016.
- Marine mammals: no interactions, other than those reported on during the initial assessment (i.e. false killer whale and bottlenose dolphin).
- Sharks and rays: sharks and rays are protected under the Marine Resources (Shark Conservation) Regulations 2012 which provide the regulatory framework for the Cook Islands Shark Sanctuary, in force since December 2012. Fewer total interactions were noted than in 2015 for every encountered shark species in this fishery which is noteworthy as observer data only cover one trip in 2015 compared to five in 2016. Unlike during the year 1 surveillance audit these 2016 observer data could not be compared with the logbook discard data recorded by the fleet. This is due to a potential change in how the data query from the audit team was addressed at the MMR following a staffing change. For this reason the client has adopted the action of entering logbook data with details on the number of retained and discarded ETP species by trip, to the species level. If the MMR is unable to provide this level of detail to the MEC audit team for the Year 3 surveillance audit, this will be the client's approach to addressing the condition on 2.3.1 (ETP outcome) as further discussed in Section 1.1.1.

Finally, there have been no changes in fishing footprint or in the fishing gear used.

2.4. Principle 3

The Cook Islands management framework has undergone a complete overhaul since the initial assessment. It is hoped that the new Marine Resources Bill (2017) will be passed into law before the end of the year (2017) which is a year later than originally anticipated (as reported on in the Year 1 surveillance report). The Bill shall provide for the conservation, management and development of marine resources, fish processing and export, and related matters. Associated with this impending new legislation is the recently promulgated "Marine Resources (Large Pelagic Longline Fishery and Quota Management System) Regulations, as of 6th December 2016. As mentioned previously under Principle 1, this provides the framework for the current Quota Management System for albacore and bigeye. The Ministry of Marine Resources is in the process of legislative validation of the Draft Rules of Procedure for a "Quota Management Advisory Committee" to replace the previous "Licensing Committee", to ensure relevant stakeholder input to the new management process. In addition, there is a Draft "Quota Management System Allocation Policy" document as a publicly available policy statement on matters which will guide MMR in the annual allocation process. Finally, as of 13th July 2017 there is an overarching "Marae Moana Act" which was enacted to protect and conserve the ecological, biodiversity and heritage values of the Cook Islands marine environment through sustainable integrated management.

During the surveillance site visit the MMR reported that the client group continues to cooperate well and that communications are good. No major compliance issues were mentioned although some problems with data submission remain: physical logsheets should be with the MMR three weeks after landing, as stipulated under the new regulations. At the time of the Year 1 surveillance, a formal process was put in place by the client fleet to address the issue of late logsheet submissions. Although the MMR indicates the process is now more effective and all logsheets for 2016 are up to date, none of the 2017 logsheets had been submitted at the time of surveillance. Part of the lag in physically receiving the logs is that few vessels offload in

Rarotonga, preferring instead Pago Pago or Apia, or even transshipping out of Pukapuka. However, with the implementation of the quota management system as of 1 January 2017, weekly submissions of catch reports for albacore, bigeye and yellowfin are mandatory and the client fleet is reportedly in full compliance with this requirement.

The case of illegal shark fin retentions noted during the Year 1 surveillance audit were in fact determined to be isolated incidents but still punishable under current fishery laws. A recommendation was raised following the Year 1 surveillance and this is further discussed in Section 4.2.

2.5. Traceability

At the time of certification, albacore and yellowfin caught by this fishery were deemed eligible to enter further chains of custody, subject to the following requirements:

- Any trips which include sets in the high seas area (or other areas outside the Cook Islands EEZ) shall be classed as non-MS-C certified and will not be eligible to enter further chains of custody;
- LTFV also commits to ensuring that all fishing trips (defined as a 'trip that commences and finishes with an empty hold and only fishes in MSC certified waters in between') shall start and finish with empty holds.

In February 2017, part of the client fleet obtained separate Chain of Custody certification which means those vessels do have the separation systems in place required for having both MSC and non-MS-C albacore and yellowfin on board. However, as the CoC certification is only in effect from February 2017, the traceability of these vessels was still considered during the Year 2 surveillance audit (which looked at the 2016 fishing season).

As per the Year 1 surveillance, the audit team conducted a review of traceability records for a 10% sub-sample of the MSC trips undertaken after the eligibility date. The review included a traceback exercise for each trip, covering commercial invoices, certificates of confirmation (to purchasing party), port clearance and permit applications, certificates of clearance (confirming empty holds), logsheets and trip VMS data. No discrepancies were noted and the audit team were satisfied that the client fleet continues to abide by the terms listed above. Product therefore remains eligible to enter further chains of custody. This will be reviewed on an annual basis.

2.6. Harmonisation

Since the WCPFC pilot harmonisation meeting that took place in April 2016, there have been no new formal harmonisation meetings for South Pacific albacore or WCPO yellowfin. Harmonisation discussion did take place via email between CABs involved in WCPFC fisheries in the MSC programme listed below. The discussion focused on the re-scoring of Principle 3 PI 3.2.2 following the release of the revised CMM 14-06 workplan (see Appendix 1). This discussion resulted in agreement between all CABs:

- AAFA and WFOA South Pacific albacore tuna (certified);
- Fiji albacore tuna longline (in re-assessment);
- New Zealand albacore tuna troll (recertified);
- PNA Western and Central Pacific skipjack and yellowfin, unassociated / non-FAD set, tuna purse seine (in re-assessment)
- Walker Seafood Australia albacore, yellowfin tuna and swordfish (certified);
- Solomon Islands skipjack and yellowfin tuna purse seine and pole & line (certified);

- Tri Marine Western and Central Pacific skipjack and yellowfin tuna (certified);
- SZLC, CSFC & FZLC Cook Islands EEZ South Pacific albacore & yellowfin longline (certified)
- American Samoa EEZ Albacore and Yellowfin Longline Fishery (in assessment)
- Japanese Pole and Line skipjack and albacore tuna fishery (certified).
- WPSTA Western and Central Pacific skipjack and yellowfin free school purse seine (in assessment)
- PT Citraraja Ampat, Sorong pole and line Skipjack and Yellowfin Tuna

3. Assessment Process

The SZLC, CSFC & FZLC Cook Islands EEZ South Pacific albacore longline fishery was certified on the 9th June 2015. The initial assessment team consisted of Dr Jo Gascoigne (Team Leader, Principle 1), Dale Kolody (Principle 1), Chrissie Sieben (Principle 2) and Ian Cartwright (Principle 3). The site visit for the assessment took place in Cairns, Australia in December 2013, simultaneously with WCPFC10, and in Rarotonga, Cook Islands in February 2014.

A scope extension for the addition of yellowfin and new client groups to the certificate was completed on the 27th February 2017. The scope extension was carried out following an expedited assessment undertaken at the same time as the Year 1 surveillance audit in Rarotonga. The assessment team consisted of Chrissie Sieben (Team Leader, Principle 2) and Dr Jo Gascoigne (Principle 1).

Based on the relatively high risk-level of this fishery, as well the number and nature of conditions to which the certification is subject, a surveillance level of 6 was awarded in accordance with the MSC FCR v2.0 (7.23.2). Level 6 is the maximum level of surveillance, requiring 4 annual on-site visits.

The year 2 surveillance audit team consisted of Chrissie Sieben (Team Leader) and Charles Daxboeck, with the on-site audit held at the MMR offices Rarotonga, Cook Islands from the 12th to the 13th September 2017. The audit was attended by the participants and stakeholders listed in Table 10.

Table 10. Audit participants

Name	Role / organisation
Ben Ponia	Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources, Secretary
Tim Costello	Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources, Director, Offshore Division
Andrew Jones	Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources, Senior Fisheries Officer, Offshore Division
Marino Wichman	Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources, Data Manager
Latishia Mani	Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources, Fisheries Officer
Joe Murphy	LTFV (remote participant)
Eric Gilman	LTFV
Vincent Dong	Huanan Fishery (Cook Islands) Co.,Ltd.
Kelvin Passfield	Te ipukarea society (remote participant)
Charles Daxboeck	MEC (Independent consultant)
Chrissie Sieben	MEC

4. Results

4.1. Conditions

Progress against the conditions raised during the initial assessment is shown below. No new conditions were raised during this surveillance audit.

4.1.1. Condition 1: Reference points albacore

	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	1.1.2	The target reference point is such that the stock is maintained at a level consistent with B_{MSY} or some measure or surrogate with similar intent or outcome.	75
Condition	The management system should formally adopt a target reference point for the South Pacific albacore stock which is consistent with maintaining the stock at B _{MSY} or some other measure with similar intent or outcome. This target reference point should be used for management purposes.		
Original milestones	<p>By the first annual surveillance audit, there shall be evidence that the client has started a process of consultation and representation for the establishment of a precautionary target reference point with appropriate regional management bodies.</p> <p>By the third annual surveillance audit a target reference point for regional management of the South Pacific albacore stock should be formally adopted by the WCPFC.</p>		
Revised milestones (following pilot harmonisation)	<p><i>One of the agreed outcomes of the pilot harmonisation process for Principle 1 for WCPFC stocks (Hong Kong, April 2016) was that milestones for 1.1.2 should be aligned with the CMM 14-06 workplan.</i></p> <p><i>Note: this workplan was revised in December 2016 but the milestones remain in line with the initial workplan.</i></p> <p>By the second annual surveillance audit (i.e. at WCPFC 2016) a target reference point for regional management of the South Pacific albacore stock should be formally adopted by the WCPFC, as set out in the agreed workplan for CMM 14-06.</p>		
Client action plan	<p><i>The client action plan was already consistent with the revised milestones.</i></p> <p>Client Actions:</p> <p><u>Action 1.</u> During 2014 and 2015, encourage the FFA Southern Committee, Sub-Committee on South Pacific Tuna and Billfish Fisheries (SC-SPTBF), through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation, to adopt an explicit target reference point for south Pacific albacore to be used in management of sub-regional pelagic longline fisheries.</p> <p><u>Action 2.</u> During 2014, 2015 and 2016, encourage WCPFC, through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation to the Commission, to adopt an explicit target reference point for south Pacific albacore to be used in management of regional pelagic longline fisheries.</p> <p><u>Action 3:</u> From 2014 onwards, participate in meetings and joint activities of the WCPO Tuna MSC Alignment Group to pursue adoption of a sub-regional and WCPFC target reference point for south Pacific albacore. The Group is</p>		

	<p>comprised of client groups of fisheries certified and under assessment against the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standard and of participants of Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) for fisheries for albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tunas in the Convention Area of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), and other stakeholders. The Group participants work together to coordinate and align policy activities of relevant MSC client groups and participants of FIPs related to sub-regional and regional management of fisheries for albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tunas in the Convention Area of the WCPFC. (see https://sites.google.com/site/seafoodcompaniestunamanagement/home/wcpo_tuna-p1_alignment).</p> <p>Outcomes & Schedule:</p> <p><u>Outcome 1.</u> In 2016, FFA SC-SPTBF formally adopts a target reference point for sub-regional management of south Pacific albacore.</p> <p><u>Outcome 2.</u> By December 2016 at WCPFC 14, WCPFC formally adopts a target reference point for regional management of south Pacific albacore.</p>
<p>Progress on Condition [Year 1]</p>	<p>A series of ‘management options workshops’ (MOW) and a ‘harvest strategy workshop’ (HSW) have been held over the last few years, immediately preceding the WCPFC plenary meeting. The MOW/HSW process considered options for bio-economic reference points, based on an analysis by SPC (Pilling et al., 2015). At WCPFC12 (December 2015) FFA proposed a TRP of 45%B₀ (which would require cuts in longline fishing catch of 37%), but the proposal was not adopted. The Cook Islands spoke in favour of cuts in catch, putting on the table an offer to reduce their catch limit to 7,000 t if an agreement could be reached on compatible cuts elsewhere, particularly the eastern high seas pocket (see WCPFC summary report 2015, paras. 345 and 354).</p> <p>In December 2014, WCPFC adopted CMM 2014-06 which requires the development and implementation of a formal harvest strategy for both Pacific Ocean albacore stocks (as well as WCPO skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye). CMM 2014-06 has an associated timetable, which provides for the agreement of a TRP for South Pacific albacore in 2016.</p>
<p>Progress on Condition [Year 2]</p>	<p>Significant progress has already been made by the Cook Islands on a national harvest strategy for albacore; this is discussed further in Section 2.2.2 and in relation to Condition 2. The focus of this condition however is on the agreement of a TRP at regional level among WCPFC member states. According to the initial workplan 14-06, the key objectives for WCPFC13 (end 2016) for South Pacific albacore and yellowfin were to record management objectives and agree acceptable levels of risk for both stocks, and to agree a target reference point for albacore. At the time of writing, none of these things were achieved, except to note that an acceptable level of risk could not be >20 %. A revised workplan (WCPFC, 2017; Attachment N) was agreed at WCPFC13 in which the possible adoption of an interim Target Reference Point for the South Pacific Albacore stock, originally agreed to take place in 2015 under the Harvest Strategy Work Plan, was deferred until December 2017 at the latest. Noting the considerable effort made by the Cook Islands in implementing a national HCR on albacore, this progress is unfortunately not being met at regional level. Until at least an interim TRP has been agreed upon, this condition cannot be closed out.</p> <p>In mid-2017, the WCPO Tuna MSC alignment group was disbanded. The client therefore revised the client action plan to address this change, as follows:</p> <p>REVISED CLIENT ACTIONS (Adopted Nov. 2017):</p> <p>Action: The client will annually discuss all conditions of certification with staff of the Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources, including the schedule required by the</p>

	<p>conditions to fill gaps in south Pacific albacore and WCPO yellowfin tuna harvest strategies.</p> <p>OUTCOMES AND SCHEDULE Outcome: Dec. 2017 (at WCPFC14), WCPFC adopts a TRP for south Pacific albacore, originally scheduled to be adopted in 2016 under the CMM 14-06 harvest strategy workplan.</p> <p>The audit team was satisfied that the actions above are covered by the initial client action plan as detailed in the initial Public Certification Report (MEC, 2015). No additional letter of support from the MMR was therefore required.</p>
<p>Status of condition</p>	<p>This condition is now behind target. Taking into account the revised workplan, a target reference point for South Pacific albacore should be agreed at WCPFC14, which takes place in December 2017.</p>

4.1.2. Condition 2: Harvest strategy albacore

	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	1.2.1	The harvest strategy is responsive to the state of the stock and the elements of the harvest strategy work together towards achieving management objectives reflected in the target and limit reference points	70
Condition	<p>The fishery should put in place a regional harvest strategy, incorporating limit and target reference points (management objectives), a harvest control rule and management actions, such that the strategy is responsive to the status of the stock and the elements of the strategy work together to maintain the stock at or around the target level.</p> <p>The key missing elements of the harvest strategy at present are 1. a target reference point formally adopted by the regional management system, and 2. a well-defined harvest control rule with associated management actions. These issues are also addressed specifically in conditions 1 and 3.</p>		
Original milestones	By the fourth annual surveillance audit the client should provide evidence that the key missing elements of the harvest strategy are put in place.		
Revised milestones (following pilot harmonisation)	<p><i>One of the agreed outcomes of the pilot harmonisation process for Principle 1 for WCPFC stocks (Hong Kong, April 2016) was that milestones for 1.2.1 should be aligned with the CMM 14-06 workplan. The condition and milestones for 1.1.2 are linked with the condition and milestones for 1.2.1; hence the revised milestones below.</i></p> <p><i>Note: this workplan was revised in December 2016 but the milestones remain in line with the initial workplan.</i></p> <p>By the fifth annual surveillance audit the client should provide evidence that the key missing elements of the harvest strategy are put in place.</p>		
Revised client action plan	<p><i>The client action plan has been revised to align with the revised milestones.</i></p> <p>Client Actions:</p> <p><u>Action 1.</u> During 2014 and 2015, encourage FFA SC-SPTBF, through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation, to define a preferred option for the sub-regional system to monitor, conduct stock assessments, and define a harvest control rule and management actions (collectively referred to as a harvest strategy) for south Pacific albacore to ensure that if a TRP were to be exceeded, that the sub-regional management authorities would respond to the change in status of the stock to bring the stock back to within the TRP in a fully effective and timely way.</p> <p><u>Action 2.</u> During 2014, 2015 and 2016 and ongoing as necessary, encourage WCPFC, through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation to the Commission, to adopt a harvest strategy for south Pacific albacore that is consistent with any FFA sub-regional harvest strategy, and that ensures that if a TRP were to be exceeded, that WCPFC would respond to the change in status of the stock to bring the stock back to within the TRP in a fully effective and timely way.</p> <p><u>Action 3.</u> From 2014 onwards, participate in meetings and joint activities of</p>		

	<p>the WCPO Tuna MSC Alignment Group to pursue adoption of a sub-regional and WCPFC robust and precautionary harvest strategy for south Pacific albacore.</p> <p>Outcomes & Schedule:</p> <p><u>Outcome 1.</u> In 2016, FFA SC-SPTBF formally adopts a harvest strategy for sub-regional management of south Pacific albacore.</p> <p><u>Outcome 2.</u> In 2017, WCPFC formally adopts a harvest strategy for regional management of south Pacific albacore.</p> <p><u>Outcome 3.</u> By December 2019 at WCPFC 16, there is evidence that the harvest strategy for south Pacific albacore is responsive to the state of the stock and the elements of the harvest strategy work together towards achieving management objectives reflected in the target and limit reference points is in place.</p>
<p>Progress on Condition [Year 1]</p>	<p>CMM 14-06 commits WCPFC to adopting a formal harvest strategy for South Pacific albacore, with an associated timetable running to December 2018 (WCPFC 16) (which does not, however, cover the full development of the harvest strategy).</p> <p>At the same time, a sub-regional process is underway via FFA, based on the Tokelau Arrangement. As detailed above, the FFA is currently working on a sub-regional catch management scheme for albacore, but the Cook Islands has taken the initiative on its own account to develop a TAC/quota scheme for its own albacore fishery – the legislation, regulations and management plan required to implement this are in the final stages of public consultation, and MMR hope to obtain final Parliament and Cabinet approval before the end of the year (2016), so the scheme can be implemented in 2017. The TAC for albacore under this scheme will be based initially on the existing agreed limits under the Tokelau Arrangement, but as noted under Condition 1, the Cook Islands have publically expressed a willingness to take a cut in their TAC, as part of a wider regional or sub-regional agreed reduction.</p>
<p>Progress on Condition [Year 2]</p>	<p>In addition to the ongoing work on a WCPFC harvest strategy (described in Section 2.2.4), the Cook Islands government has on the 1st January 2017 implemented the new QMS which sets a TACC for albacore and bigeye. The QMS is part of the newly adopted Marine Resources (Large Pelagic Longline Fishery and Quota Management System) Regulations 2016 and is independent from the discussions taking place under the Tokelau Arrangement which has yet to agree on a catch management system (see Section 2.2.2). While the implementation of the QMS is certainly an important development and demonstrates the willingness of the CI government to control albacore (and bigeye) catches, there remains a need for an agreed-upon harvest strategy at regional (WCPFC) level.</p> <p>Note: the WCPO Tuna MSC alignment group was disbanded in 2017. See Condition 1 for further detail and for the revised Client Action Plan.</p>
<p>Status of condition</p>	<p>There is no milestone for this Condition before Year 5. The development of a formal harvest strategy is a process that includes the agreement of a formal TRP (Condition 1) and a formal HCR with tools (Condition 3), as well as other elements (monitoring, stock assessment) which are already in place. The harvest strategy therefore cannot really be evaluated separate from these more concrete requirements. The revised 14-06 timetable do not result in an agreed and implemented HCR before Year 5, so the harvest strategy cannot be argued to be in place until then either. Meanwhile, however, there has been progress as outlined above. The condition is on target.</p>

4.1.3. Condition 3: Harvest control rules albacore

	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
<p>Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)</p>	<p>1.2.2</p>	<p>Well defined harvest control rules are in place that are consistent with the harvest strategy and ensure that the exploitation rate is reduced as limit reference points are approached. The selection of the harvest control rules takes into account the main uncertainties. Available evidence indicates that the tools in use are appropriate and effective in achieving the exploitation levels required under the harvest control rules.</p>	<p>60</p>
<p>Condition</p>	<p>A well-defined regional-level harvest control rule should be put in place, with associated management actions (in the form of a CMM or another form as appropriate) which together act effectively to reduce exploitation rates as the limit reference point is approached. The selection of the harvest control rule should take into account the main uncertainties regarding the status of the stock or the impact of the fishery (or other uncertainties if considered important).</p>		
<p>Original milestones</p>	<p>By the first annual surveillance audit, there shall be evidence that the client has started a process of consultation and representation for the establishment of a precautionary and robust harvest control rule with appropriate regional management bodies.</p> <p>By the third annual surveillance audit, the client should provide evidence that the harvest control rule and associated management actions are put in place.</p>		
<p>Revised milestones (following pilot harmonisation)</p>	<p><i>One of the agreed outcomes of the pilot harmonisation process for Principle 1 for WCPFC stocks (Hong Kong, April 2016) was that milestones for 1.1.2 should be aligned with the CMM 14-06 workplan. (Note: this workplan runs only to WCPFC, December 2018 – i.e. as far as the fourth annual surveillance audit for this fishery.)</i></p> <p><i>Note: this workplan was revised in December 2016 but the milestones remain in line with the initial workplan.</i></p> <p>By the first annual surveillance audit, there shall be evidence that the client has started a process of consultation and representation for the establishment of a precautionary and robust harvest control rule with appropriate regional management bodies.</p> <p>By the second annual audit (mid-2017), WCPFC adopts a target reference point (TRP) for south Pacific albacore, WCPFC identifies an acceptable level of risk of breaching the existing limit reference point (LRP), and WCPFC identifies management objectives and performance indicators to evaluate candidate harvest control rules (HCRs).</p> <p>By the third annual audit (mid-2018), WCPFC has defined options for a HCR for South Pacific albacore - defined by MSC as, “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 should be designed to keep stocks near the proposed new TRP and to have a low risk of exceeding the existing LRP. HCR actions are to be designed to</p>		

	<p>reduce fishing mortality rates as limit reference points are approached and keep stocks fluctuating around the new TRP.</p> <p>By the fourth annual audit (mid-2019), WCPFC has reviewed advice from SPC on the likely effects of alternative HCRs on the south Pacific albacore stock, and WCPFC continues to make progress in considering options for a formal HCR.</p> <p>By the fifth annual audit (mid-2020), WCPFC has adopted a HCR and tools, and began implementation of the HCR and tools, for South Pacific albacore, as well as monitoring to assess the efficacy of the TRPs and HCR.</p>
<p>Revised client action plan</p>	<p><i>The client action plan has been revised to align with the revised milestones.</i></p> <p>Client Actions:</p> <p><u>Action 1:</u> During 2014 and 2015, encourage FFA SC-SPTBF, through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation, and continued participation in the WCPO Tuna MSC Principle 1 Alignment Group, to adopt the proposed Tokelau Arrangement, and to take steps to ensure full compliance.</p> <p><u>Action 2:</u> During 2014, 2015 and 2016 and ongoing as required, encourage WCPFC, through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation to the Commission, and continued participation in the WCPO Tuna MSC Principle 1 Alignment Group, to adopt a HCR for the stock that establishing catch limits by CCM, and explicit pre-agreed actions to be taken to reduce the exploitation rate if the stock approaches or falls below reference points.</p> <p>Outcomes & Schedule:</p> <p><u>Outcome 1.</u> By the end of 2015, FFA SC-SPTBF adopts a well-defined and effective harvest control rule for sub-regional management of south Pacific albacore, establishing catch limits for the FFA member SIDS, and explicit pre-agreed actions to be taken to reduce the exploitation rate if the stock approaches or falls below reference points.</p> <p><u>Outcome 2.</u> By December 2019 at WCPFC 17, WCPFC adopts a well-defined and effective harvest control rule for regional management of south Pacific albacore, that is consistent with any adopted FFA sub-regional measure, and at a regional level establishes catch limits by CCM, and explicit pre-agreed actions to be taken to reduce the exploitation rate if the stock approaches or falls below reference points.</p>
<p>Progress on Condition [Year 1]</p>	<p>The Year 1 milestone has been retained from the original milestones: <i>By the first annual surveillance audit, there shall be evidence that the client has started a process of consultation and representation for the establishment of a precautionary and robust harvest control rule with appropriate regional management bodies.</i></p> <p>Under the sub-regional Tokelau Arrangement, the Cook Islands has agreed to a limit on albacore catch from their zone, and they are taking steps to enforce this limit via a TAC/quota system (the framework for which is currently being established). It is proposed that these limits be reduced across the region in order to maintain stock biomass compatible with bio-economic reference points, and the Cook Islands have agreed to be part of this sub-regional process of reduction, as long as the high seas can be included (the Eastern high seas pocket being adjacent to the CI's EEZ). They have made a public commitment to reduce their limit to 7,000 t as a first step, as detailed under Condition 1.</p> <p>Meanwhile, WCPFC has adopted CMM 14-06, which commits to a formal</p>

	<p>harvest strategy, including harvest control rules and tools, although the associated workplan (through 2018) does not reach the point of a formal agreement of an HCR and tools. The above milestones have been re-aligned with the 14-06 workplan.</p>
<p>Progress on Condition [Year 2]</p>	<p>Significant progress has already been made by the Cook Islands on a national harvest strategy for albacore; this is discussed further in Section 2.2.2 and in relation to Condition 2. The focus of this condition however is on the agreement of a HCR at regional level among WCPFC member states. The revised 14-06 workplan has delayed the decision on an interim TRP for albacore until December 2017 with the other elements of the workplan (Agreement on acceptable levels of risk for breaching LRP, management objectives and performance indicators) all folded into the ongoing process of evaluation of candidate HCRs. The revised workplan again does not reach a point of a formal agreement of an HCR and tools. Noting the considerable effort made by the Cook Islands in implementing a national HCR on albacore, this progress is unfortunately not being met at regional level.</p> <p>Note: the WCPO Tuna MSC alignment group was disbanded in 2017. See Condition 1 for further detail and for the revised Client Action Plan.</p>
<p>Status of condition</p>	<p>Despite the significant progress at national level, this condition is now behind target.</p>

4.1.4. Condition 4: ETP species outcome / information and monitoring

	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	2.3.1	The effects of the fishery are known and are highly likely to be within limits of national and international requirements for protection of ETP species.	75
	2.3.3	information is collected to support the management of fishery impacts on ETP species, including: - information for the development of the management strategy; - information to assess the effectiveness of the management strategy; and - information to determine the outcome status of ETP species.	
Condition	The occurrence and outcome of all catches of ETP species (sharks, sea turtles, seabirds and cetaceans) by LTFV vessels should be systematically and accurately reported on so that fishery-related mortality on ETP species can be quantitatively determined and the effectiveness of the management strategies can be determined. Where a need has been identified, the collected data should enable further development of management strategies to ensure that the fishery does not hinder recovery of ETP species.		
Milestones	By the first annual audit, demonstrate that training is underway for vessel crew members in identification, handling and reporting of relevant ETP species. By the second annual audit it should be demonstrated that an appropriate reporting system is in place and is being used by all LTFV crew.		
Client action plan	<p>Client Actions:</p> <p><u>Action 1:</u> By August 2014, develop a ‘train-the-trainer’ ETP workshop to build the capacity for Cook Islands government and catch sector company dockside staff to train longline captains in the Cook Islands longline albacore fishery to: (i) understand Cook Islands government longline rules, (ii) improve species identification, (iii) understand proper methods for completing SPC logbook forms, (iv) understand handling and release practices for seabirds, sea turtles, cetaceans and elasmobranchs to optimize the probability of post-release survival.</p> <p><u>Action 2:</u> By the end of 2015, all captains of vessels in the client group attend a minimum of one ETP training workshop per year.</p> <p><u>Action 3:</u> If data suggest an issue with ETP interactions (such that PI 2.3.1 is not being met at the 80 level) then the fishery will develop and implement further management actions to address the issue(s) identified.</p> <p>Outcomes & Schedule:</p> <p><u>Outcome 1:</u> Materials for the ETP workshop, bilingual English/Chinese, are completed by June 2015. Materials include: a powerpoint presentation to lead the training workshop, summary of Cook Islands longline rules, handling/release methods guides for each of the four groups (turtles, cetaceans, seabirds, elasmobranchs), species identification guide.</p>		

	<p><u>Outcome 2:</u> By the end of 2016, records confirm that all captains of vessels in the client group that were active in the fishery during 2015 attended at least one workshop during 2015.</p> <p><u>Outcome 3:</u> By June 2016, logbook records of interactions with ETP species are consistent with observer records (demonstrated that an appropriate reporting system is in place and is being used by all LTFV crew).</p> <p><u>Outcome 4:</u> By June 2016, Observer records of handling and release practices for ETP species demonstrate longline fisher compliance with relevant binding measures.</p> <p><u>Outcome 5:</u> By December 2016, data on interactions with ETP species have been analysed and any issues in terms of outcomes for ETP species have been flagged.</p> <p><u>Outcome 6:</u> By June 2017, if necessary, new management measures are agreed and in place to deal with any outstanding issues for ETP species, such that the 80 level is met for PI 2.3.1 for all relevant ETP species.</p>
<p>Progress on Condition [Year 1]</p>	<p>The training programme commenced during the 1st year of certification with an initial captain training workshop taking place on 26-27 August 2014: fisheries consultant Mike McCoy met with staff from the Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources (MMR) and the Huanan Fishery Cook Islands Company, a subsidiary of Luen Thai Fishing Venture (LTFV), to review the objectives, draft workshop presentation and training materials for a workshop on 28 August. The purpose of the workshop was to augment the capacity of Cook Islands government and longline fishing company staff to lead workshops for captains of longline vessels that fish in the Cook Islands Exclusive Economic Zone. On 28 August a two-hour workshop took place attended by MMR and fishing company staff, and by available longline captains.</p> <p>A refresher train-the-trainer workshop was again conducted by Mike McCoy on 14 April 2016 in Zhoushan, China to train LTFV staff who train fishing base managers to instruct captains of pelagic longline tuna vessels that are based out of the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Cook Islands. In addition to the LTFV trainers, three longline vessel captains and their crew attended the workshop. A summary of the workshop is shown in Appendix 4. Note that this training is being undertaken as a result of this condition, as well as in the context of several tuna Fishery Improvement Programmes (FIPs), including the Federated States of Micronesia and Marshall Islands Longline Tuna Fishery Improvement Projects.</p> <p>The aim of the workshops is to provide longline captains with an improved understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Cook Islands rules for longline vessel operators (ii) how to properly complete government logbook forms (iii) how to use a guide to identify catch to the species level, to augment the rigor of logbook records (iv) prescribed methods to handle and release sea turtles, sharks, rays, cetaceans and seabirds to maximize the probability of their survival after release, and (v) LTFV Venture company policy restricting gear and fishing methods and prohibiting the retention of sharks, including shark fins.

	<p>More information can be seen here: http://fishing-living.org/category/cook-islands/#sthash.ivqflkV1.ceg0AvEi.dpuf</p> <p>Training materials are made available to captains via this link: https://sites.google.com/site/fsmlonglinefip/home/captain-training-workshop-materials/</p> <p>Li Pan is the LTFV lead for coordinating the captain training and supplied the audit team with a summary of the captains and vessels that are currently fishing in the Cook Islands that have received training so far during calendar year 2016.</p> <p>With regards to the training programme, the audit team was satisfied that the client group is on target with their action plan and with addressing the condition.</p> <p>While this is not a formal milestone of the condition, the action plan did identify the following outcome: <u>Outcome 3</u>: By June 2016, logbook records of interactions with ETP species are consistent with observer records (demonstrated that an appropriate reporting system is in place and is being used by all LTFV crew). A comparison of shark discard data recorded in logbooks vs observer data indicates that significant inaccuracies in the recording of ETP species (in this case, sharks) remain. Silky and mako sharks in particular continue to be underreported in the logbooks. There is further no indication that interactions with other ETP species such as turtles are being recorded by the crew in logsheets. The fishery is therefore not on target with the action plan outcome; however, it is overall on target with the condition.</p>
<p>Progress on Condition [Year 2]</p>	<p>The client demonstrated that the training programme continues. Two kinds of training are now taking place: one is the Crew Capacity-Building training (which includes the Garbage management plan training – see Section 1.1.1), the other is the NOAA Dolphin Safe Training Program Training. The training covers the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic longline regulations; • Company policy banning the use of gear designs to target sharks and banning the retention of sharks and rays, including shark fins; • Best practice methods to handle and release at-risk species, including sharks, rays, marine mammals, sea turtles and seabirds; • Use of prescribed handling and release equipment to safely release at-risk species; • Completing logsheets, including training in species identification to improve logsheet data quality; • Implementation of garbage management plans; and • NOAA Dolphin Safe Training. <p>Despite this the audit team was unable to confirm whether interactions with ETP species are being accurately reported on by the crew in logsheets. This is due to a potential change in how MMR produces summaries of logbook data following a staffing change. For this reason the client has decided that, if MMR is unable to provide the audit team with a logbook data summary for subsequent annual surveillance audits that includes information on the number of interactions with ETP species by trip, then the client will enter data from original logsheets to produce the summary data required by the CAB in order to address the condition on 2.3.1 (ETP outcome).</p>
<p>Status of condition</p>	<p>This condition is currently behind target. The client is however taking remedial action which should ensure that the milestone <i>'it should be demonstrated that an appropriate reporting system is in place and is being used by all LTFV crew'</i> is met by the Year 3 surveillance audit.</p>

4.1.5. Condition 5: ETP species management

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	2.3.2	There is evidence that the strategy is being implemented successfully.	75
Condition	The client will provide evidence that all Cook Islands regulations on fishery interactions with sea turtles are consistently respected and adhered to by LTFV crew so that it can be demonstrated that the fishery does not pose a risk of serious harm to sea turtles, mortality of sea turtles is minimized and the fishery does not hinder recovery of vulnerable sea turtle populations.		
Milestones	<p>By the first annual audit, demonstrate that training is underway for vessel crew members in identification, handling and reporting of relevant ETP species.</p> <p>By the second annual audit, demonstrate awareness in crew members of the regulations and handling requirements for sea turtles.</p> <p>By the third annual audit, the client should demonstrate that all Cook Islands regulations on fishery interactions with sea turtles are consistently respected and adhered to by LTFV crew.</p>		
Client action plan	<p>Client Actions:</p> <p><u>Action 1.</u> By the end of 2016, via a dockside inventory of longline vessel gear designs, estimate the depth of hooks in a basket (between 2 floats) when gear is soaking, and if some of the hooks are soaking shallower than 50m, identify options to get all hooks below 50m (a best practice gear design to avoid and minimize catch of sea turtles and some elasmobranch species).</p> <p><u>Action 2:</u> Improvement in identification of ETP species to the species level (including for sea turtles) and recording on SPC logbook forms by captains and crew of vessels in the client group will be pursued via the training workshop described under condition 4.</p> <p><u>Action 3:</u> Captains of vessels in the client group will be required to annually attend a ETP training workshop, described under Condition 4, in part to improve compliance with required sea turtle handling and release methods.</p> <p>Outcomes & Schedule:</p> <p><u>Outcome 1:</u> By the third annual audit, client demonstrates that all Cook Islands regulations on fishery interactions with sea turtles are consistently complied with, including through the implementation of the subsequent Outcomes under this condition.</p> <p><u>Outcome 2:</u> By June 2017, all vessels in the client group are employing gear designs that are predicted to result in the terminal tackle soaking below 50m depth.</p> <p><u>Outcome 3:</u> (Same as Outcome under Condition 4) By June 2016, logbook records of interactions with ETP species are consistent with observer records (demonstrated that an appropriate reporting system is in place and is being used by all LTFV crew).</p>		
Progress on Condition [Year]	Progress on the training programme is discussed under condition 4.		

<p>1]</p>	<p>During the 1st certification year, LTFV base managers were consulted to obtain information on vessel gear designs, with information on float line length, branchline length, and number of hooks between floats. In addition, on 27 Jan 2015, the client group submitted an inquiry to Cooks MMR to review observer data for the most recent 3 years to obtain mean float line and branchline lengths and hooks per float to confirm information provided by the vessel captains. Based on the gear designs, including accounting for the distance between floatlines and the first branchlines attached closest to floats, the depth of shallowest hooks was estimated to soak at a depth >50m.</p> <p>As per condition 4, the observer and logbook discard data for ETP species indicates that outcome 3 of the client action plan is behind target. However here also, the condition does not specify this requirement as a formal milestone for Year 1; the fishery is therefore on target overall with addressing the condition.</p>
<p>Progress on Condition [Year 2]</p>	<p>The client demonstrated that the training programme continues. Two kinds of training are now taking place: one is the Crew Capacity-Building training (which includes the Garbage management plan training – see Section 1.1.1), the other is the NOAA Dolphin Safe Training Program Training. Other than the isolated shark finning incidents referred to in Section 2.4, the MMR confirmed through observer reports that the client fleet is generally compliant with the Cook Islands regulations on fishery interactions with sea turtles, which this condition ultimately relates to. As per Condition 4, however, the audit team was unable to verify whether reporting on interactions with ETP species is improving.</p>
<p>Status of condition</p>	<p>On target in relation to condition milestones</p>

4.1.6. Condition 6: Consultation, Roles and Responsibilities

	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	3.1.2	The management system includes consultation processes that regularly seek and accept relevant information, including local knowledge. The management system demonstrates consideration of the information obtained.	75
Condition	The client must provide evidence that processes at national level are put in place to i) regularly engage with key stakeholders to seek and accept relevant information, and ii) demonstrate that the information obtained from such engagement has been duly considered.		
Milestones	<p>By the first annual audit, demonstrate that there has been discussion with MMR regarding stakeholder consultation processes</p> <p>By the second audit, demonstrate that the development by MMR of formal stakeholder consultation processes has started.</p> <p>The processes should be in place by the third annual audit</p>		
Client action plan	<p>Client Actions:</p> <p><u>Action 1:</u> By June 2015, the client will request in a letter to MMR that MMR convene at least one stakeholder consultation per year to provide a venue to discuss and collect information on the domestic management framework for the Cook Islands longline albacore tuna fishery, and to request that, if the number of applications for longline licenses exceeds the limit, that a consultative Licensing Committee be convened. The client will emphasize that the national consultation process should provide opportunity and encouragement for all interested and affected parties to be involved, and facilitates their effective engagement, and that the management system demonstrate how information received during the stakeholder consultations was considered, and how it was used or not used, and why.</p> <p>Outcomes & Schedule:</p> <p><u>Outcome 1:</u> The domestic consultative processes are in place by the third annual audit.</p>		
Progress on Condition [Year 1]	<p>The Marine Resources Bill as currently drafted makes provision for a Fisheries Advisory Committee (FAC) (Section 10) to provide management advice to MMR. The bill does not stipulate who should be on the FAC, but it is proposed that it include stakeholders from industry and NGOs. The bill also requires the preparation of a fishery plan for any 'designated fishery' (which includes the offshore longline fishery), and requires a formal public consultation process in the preparation of a fishery plan. It also requires a formal public consultation process before any quota system is put in place and regarding the designation of marine parks and protected areas.</p> <p>The draft of the bill, as well as the fishery plan for the offshore longline fishery and the new fishery regulations, are currently out for their final phase of public consultation prior to presentation to Parliament and Cabinet for final approval.</p> <p>The process of preparing the quota management system included a full week of</p>		

	<p>formal public consultation – presentation of the outline plan to the public on the Monday, incorporation of comments into a three-day workshop, supported by experts from New Zealand and FFA during which the details were developed, and finally presentation of the workshop results to the public on the Friday. It was reported that stakeholder comments were generally positive, although the industry had concerns about cost.</p>
<p>Progress on Condition [Year 2]</p>	<p>The Draft Marine Resources Bill (version 2017) which will repeal the current Marine Resources Act 2005, makes provision for various formal mechanisms by which stakeholders are able to provide management advice to MMR in a transparent and legislated manner. The Bill does not stipulate who should be members of any proposed committees but in the Draft QMAC (Quota Management Advisory Committee) Rules, membership is spelled out under Section 9. The 2017 Draft Bill also requires the preparation of a fishery plan for any 'designated fishery' (which includes the offshore longline fishery), and requires a formal public consultation process in the preparation of a fishery plan. It also requires a formal public consultation process before any quota system is put in place and regarding the designation of marine parks and protected areas. The Cook Islands Marine Resources Act (2005) is currently the legal national instrument in force for fishery resource management. Under provisions of this Act, in sections 6 and 92, the Executive Council enacted the "Marine Resources (Large Pelagic Longline Fishery and Quota Management System) Regulations on 6th December 2016. Included under these new regulations are provisions for: i) a formal stakeholder consultation process (Schedule 4, Part 14), including Draft Rules of Procedure; ii) the creation of a Quota Management Advisory Committee (Schedule 4, Part 15) and: iii) regular review of the fishery plan (Schedule 4, Part 16).</p>
<p>Status of condition</p>	<p>The audit team considered that formal stakeholder consultation processes are being put in place and that this condition is on target.</p>

4.1.7. Condition 7: Incentives for Sustainable Fishing PI

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	3.1.4	The management system provides for incentives that are consistent with achieving the outcomes expressed by MSC Principles 1 and 2, and seeks to ensure that perverse incentives do not arise.	60
Condition	<p>The client should demonstrate that the subsidies identified by FFA and acknowledged by the client do not lead to perverse incentives that are inconsistent with achieving the outcomes expressed by MSC principles 1 and 2; Or Implement a harvest strategy that includes strengthened harvest control rules that are more responsive to increasing effort in the albacore fishery, such that the impact of subsidies is restricted to lowering the operating costs of subsidized fleets, rather than acting as an incentive to increase effort.</p>		
Original milestones	This condition should be met by the third annual audit		
Revised milestones	<p><i>The milestones and action plan for this condition are the same as for Condition 2 – the milestone has therefore been revised in line with the revision of milestones for Condition 2 above.</i></p> <p>This condition should be met by the fifth annual audit</p>		
Client action plan (Note: outcomes adjusted to correspond to revised milestones)	<p>Client Actions:</p> <p><u>Action 1:</u> In implementing defined actions to meet conditions of certification related to MSC principles 1 and 2, and meeting relevant Outcomes for these actions, the client will contribute to achieving effective sub-regional and regional management systems for the south Pacific albacore regional fishery, including the adoption of a formal target reference point that maintains the stock at a level consistent with B_{MSY} or similar precautionary management target, a harvest strategy responsive to the state of the stock and designed to achieve the management objectives, and HCR and tools consistent with the harvest strategy that reduce fishing mortality as the BRPs are approached and which account for uncertainty. By securing this effective stock management system this will ensure that the impact of government subsidies is not able to result in unsustainable levels of fishing under WCPFC.</p> <p>Outcomes & Schedule:</p> <p><u>Outcome 1:</u> By December 2019 at WCPFC 16, robust sub-regional and regional management systems are in place. For details see Condition 2.</p>		
Progress on Condition [Year 1]	The response to this condition is the same as for Condition 2.		
Progress on Condition [Year 2]	The response to this condition is the same as for Condition 2.		
Status of condition	The status of this condition is the same as for Condition 2 – i.e. on target .		

4.1.8. Condition 8: Decision-Making Processes

	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	3.2.2	Decision-making processes respond to serious and other important issues identified in relevant research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation, in a transparent, timely and adaptive manner and take account of the wider implications of decisions.	75
Condition	By working with the relevant Cook Islands management agencies, the client should demonstrate i) that decision-making processes at national level respond to serious and other important issues identified in relevant research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation, in a transparent, timely and adaptive manner and take account of the wider implications of decisions and ii) that information on fishery performance and management action at national level is available to stakeholders on request, and that explanations are provided for any actions or lack of action associated with findings and relevant recommendations emerging from research, monitoring, evaluation and review activity.		
Milestones	<p>By the first annual audit, demonstrate that there has been discussion with MMR regarding decision-making processes</p> <p>By the second annual audit, demonstrate that information is available to stakeholders on request</p> <p>By the third annual surveillance audit it should be demonstrated that Cook Islands decision-making processes are transparent, timely and adaptive and that information is available to stakeholders on request.</p>		
Client action plan	<p>Client Actions:</p> <p><u>Action 1:</u> By June 2015, the client will urge the Cook Islands Government, via including in the letter to MMR to be written and sent per the activity under condition 6, requesting that the national decision-making processes for management of the Cook Islands longline albacore fishery respond to serious and other important issues identified in relevant research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation, in a transparent, timely and adaptive manner and take account of the wider implications of decisions.</p> <p>Outcomes & Schedule:</p> <p><u>Outcome 1:</u> The domestic consultative processes is in place by the third annual audit. Stakeholder consultations will be open to all interested parties.</p>		
Progress on Condition [Year 1]	As set out in relation to Condition 6, improved procedures for stakeholder participation in decision-making are in the process of being put in place, and the procedures followed in relation to the development of the quota management system provided multiple opportunities for stakeholders to obtain information as well as to comment.		
Progress on Condition [Year 2]	In 2015 the client sent a letter to MMR urging the Cook Islands Government to ensure that the national decision-making processes for management of the Cook Islands longline fishery respond to serious and other important issues identified in relevant research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation, in a transparent, timely and adaptive manner and take account of the wider implications of decisions. In mid-2016, the client emailed and met with MMR to		

	<p>remind them of this and all other conditions of certification, milestones, and client actions and outcomes.</p> <p>As per condition 6, the formal processes for stakeholder consultation are being put in place through the Draft Marine Resources Bill (version 2017) and new Marine Resources (Large Pelagic Longline Fishery and Quota Management System) Regulations (promulgated on 6th December 2016).</p> <p>To verify progress against this condition the audit team reached out specifically to those stakeholders that contributed to the initial assessment. Comments were received from Kelvin Passfield of the Te Ipukarea Society only. While progress appears to have been made, Mr Passfield remained concerned about the lack of responsiveness from the MMR in relation to information requests about the purse seine fishery as well as the longline fishery. For the longline fishery in particular (which is what this condition relates to), an excel spreadsheet showing the percentage catches of different tuna species and other non-tuna species by weight and year was requested. In addition, the total number of sea turtles caught for 2009 to 2015 was also requested. Although some information on longline fishing for 2015 was made available in the MMR annual report, this was not in the format requested (XL spreadsheet). It also contained no mention of sea turtles. Furthermore, the Te Ipukarea Society is currently not listed as a stakeholder in the draft Marine Sector Policy document.</p> <p>The audit team took into consideration the stakeholders' feedback on this issue and were of the opinion that the above comments are not sufficient to say that information on fishery performance and management action at national level is NOT available – after all, the MMR annual reports provide an overview of fishing operations with catch statistics by gear and species as well as information on other work areas of the Marine Resources Offshore Division including the Observer Program, Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) activities, and flagged vessels operating in areas beyond national jurisdiction. It is also noteworthy that information on interactions with sea turtles in the longline fishery is detailed in the annual Part I reports for the Cook Islands which is publically available on the SPC website: http://www.spc.int/CoastalFisheries/Country/DigitalLibrary/CK. The audit team did , however, take note of the concerns raised by the Te Ipukarea Society. While the evidence is insufficient to state that progress against this condition is behind target, progress against this condition will be kept under review for the Year 3 surveillance audit.</p> <p>Note: following re-scoring of PI 3.2.2 this condition has been revised. For the revised scoring tables please see Appendix 1. The revised condition and Client Action Plan are shown in Appendix 2.</p>
<p>Status of condition</p>	<p>On target</p>

4.1.9. Condition 9: Harvest strategy yellowfin

	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	<p>1.2.1</p>	<p>The harvest strategy is responsive to the state of the stock and the elements of the harvest strategy work together towards achieving management objectives reflected in the target and limit reference points</p>	<p>70</p>
Condition	<p>The fishery should put in place a regional harvest strategy, incorporating limit and target reference points (management objectives), a harvest control rule and management actions, such that the strategy is responsive to the status of the stock and the elements of the strategy work together to maintain the stock at or around the target level.</p> <p>The key missing element of the harvest strategy at present is a well-defined harvest control rule with associated management actions. This issue is addressed specifically in Condition 10.</p>		
Milestones	<p><i>Aligned with workplan for CMM 14-06 as per pilot harmonisation (see Appendix 2)</i> <i>Note: this workplan was revised in December 2016 but the milestones remain in line with the initial workplan.</i></p> <p>By the end of Year 5, the client should provide evidence that WCPFC has put in place the key missing elements of the harvest strategy.</p>		
Client action plan	<p>Client Actions:</p> <p><u>Action 1.</u> During 2017 and ongoing as necessary, encourage WCPFC, through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation to the Commission, to adopt a harvest strategy for WCPO yellowfin tuna that ensures that if a TRP were to be exceeded, that WCPFC would respond to the change in status of the stock to bring the stock back to within the TRP in a fully effective and timely way.</p> <p><u>Action 2.</u> From 2017 onwards, participate in meetings and joint activities of the WCPO Tuna MSC Alignment Group to pursue adoption of a WCPFC robust and precautionary harvest strategy for WCPO yellowfin tuna.</p> <p>Outcomes & Schedule:</p> <p><u>Outcome 1.</u> By December 2019, at WCPFC16, WCPFC adopts a comprehensive harvest strategy, including a target reference point, and harvest control rule and associated management actions, for regional management of WCPO yellowfin tuna.</p> <p><u>Outcome 2.</u> By the end of certification, there is evidence that the harvest strategy is responsive to the state of the stock and the elements of the harvest strategy work together towards achieving management objectives reflected in the target and limit reference points.</p>		
Progress on Condition [Year 1]	<p>N/a (yellowfin was added in February 2017)</p>		
Progress on Condition [Year 2]	<p>Since the Cook Islands Quota Management System only applies to albacore and bigeye tuna, the yellowfin fishery continues to follow the WCPFC CMM: WCPFC13 replaced CMM 2015-01 for tropical tuna with CMM 2016-01. This is</p>		

	<p>a one-year interim measure; it is hoped that a multi-annual tropical tuna management measure will be developed by WCPFC14 at the end of 2017.</p> <p>As for albacore, the initial 14-06 workplan set out the key objectives for WCPFC13 which were to record management objectives and agree acceptable levels of risk. At the time of writing, none of these things were achieved, except to note that an acceptable level of risk could not be >20 %. A revised workplan (WCPFC, 2017; Attachment N) was agreed which pushes the key decisions forward to end 2017 (see Section 2.2.4) or further.</p> <p>Note: the WCPO Tuna MSC alignment group was disbanded in 2017. See Condition 1 for further detail and for the revised Client Action Plan.</p>
<p>Status of condition</p>	<p>There is no milestone for this year; overall the condition is considered to be on target.</p>

4.1.10. Condition 10: Harvest control rules and tools

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	1.2.2	There are well defined and effective harvest control rules in place	60
Condition	A well-defined regional-level harvest control rule should be put in place, with associated management actions (in the form of a CMM or another form as appropriate) which together act effectively to reduce exploitation rates as the limit reference point is approached. The selection of the harvest control rule should take into account the main uncertainties regarding the status of the stock or the impact of the fishery (or other uncertainties if considered important).		
Milestones	<p><i>Aligned with workplan for CMM 14-06 as per pilot harmonisation (see Appendix 2)</i> <i>Note: this workplan was revised in December 2016 but the milestones remain in line with the initial workplan.</i></p> <p>By the second annual audit (mid-2017), WCPFC identifies an acceptable level of risk of breaching the existing limit reference point (LRP), and WCPFC identifies management objectives to evaluate candidate harvest control rules (HCRs).</p> <p>By the third annual audit (mid-2018), there is evidence that the Scientific Committee has been working on defining and evaluating options for yellowfin HCRs. WCPFC has reviewed advice from the Scientific Committee on options for HCRs for the WCPO yellowfin stock, and WCPFC continues to make progress in considering options for a formal HCR.</p> <p>By the fourth annual audit (mid-2019), WCPFC agrees a monitoring strategy and performance indicators by which to evaluate candidate HCRs. WCPFC has reviewed advice from SPC and the Scientific Committee on MSE of alternative HCRs on the WCPO yellowfin stock, and WCPFC continues to make progress in considering options for a formal HCR.</p> <p>By the end of certification, WCPFC has adopted a HCR and tools, and began implementation of the HCR and tools, for WCPO yellowfin, as well as monitoring to assess the efficacy of the HCR.</p>		
Client action plan	<p>Client Actions:</p> <p><u>Action 1:</u> During 2017 and ongoing as required, encourage WCPFC, through client submission of a position statement to the Cook Islands delegation to the Commission, and through the client's continued participation in the WCPO Tuna MSC Alignment Group, to adopt a HCR for the stock with explicit pre-agreed actions to be taken to reduce the exploitation rate if the stock approaches or falls below reference points.</p> <p>Outcomes & Schedule:</p> <p><u>Outcome 1.</u> By the annual surveillance audit in 2020 (i.e., at WCPFC16 in Dec. 2019), WCPFC adopts a well-defined and effective harvest control rule for regional management of WCPO yellowfin tuna, and establishes explicit pre-agreed actions to be taken to reduce the exploitation rate if the stock approaches or falls below reference points.</p>		
Progress on Condition [Year 1]	N/a (yellowfin was added in February 2017)		

<p>Progress on Condition [Year 2]</p>	<p>As for albacore, the initial 14-06 workplan set out the key objectives for WCPFC13 which were to record management objectives and agree acceptable levels of risk. At the time of writing, none of these things were achieved, except to note that an acceptable level of risk could not be >20 %. A revised workplan (WCPFC, 2017; Attachment N) was agreed which pushes the key decisions forward end 2017 (see Section 2.2.4) or further. The revised workplan again does not reach a point of a formal agreement of an HCR and tools.</p> <p>Note: the WCPO Tuna MSC alignment group was disbanded in 2017. See Condition 1 for further detail and for the revised Client Action Plan.</p>
<p>Status of condition</p>	<p>This condition is considered behind target</p>

4.2. Recommendations

Two recommendations have been raised for this fishery: one was raised during the initial assessment in relation to marine litter; the other was raised at the Year 1 surveillance in relation to the shark finning incident.

4.2.1. Recommendation 1: Waste management

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	n/a	n/a	n/a
Recommendation	<p>The audit team reviewed 2012 and 2013 observer reports and noted frequent infringements against Marpol regulations due to the dumping at sea of plastics, metals, chemicals, and old fishing line. The exact frequency of these types of incidents is unknown and therefore the impact cannot be estimated. While there is no provision in the MSC standard to assess this type of activity against the scoring guideposts, any fishery proclaiming to provide the best environmental choice in seafood (through the MSC logo) should be discouraged from any form of dumping at sea. The team acknowledges that this is a widespread problem across global fisheries; however it is recommended that incidents of dumping at sea are demonstrably reduced.</p>		
Milestones	n/a		
Client action plan	n/a		
Progress on Recommendation [Year 1]	<p>During the 1st certification year, the client group issued a summary of longline vessel rules to captains of all UoC vessels which includes a reminder to not discharge any non-degradable rubbish at sea. All plastic and other non-biodegradable waste should be stowed on the vessel until its return to port, where the waste can be disposed of using seaport facilities (see Appendix 5).</p> <p>However, a review of 2014/2015 observer reports at the surveillance audit indicated that this issue is still ongoing. In response to concerns raised by the audit team, the client group has now put in place a 'garbage management plan' for its longline vessels operating in Cook Islands and FSM waters. The management plan prohibits any discharging of inorganic waste and sets out procedures for garbage disposal, designation of responsible staff within the client group (at sea and onshore) and a system for reward and punishment. The plan is being implemented on the 16th September 2016. The management plan is shown in Appendix 6.</p>		
Progress on Recommendation [Year 2]	<p>A garbage management plan was adopted and implemented by the client fleet in October 2016. In addition to the management plan, training on its implementation is now also incorporated into the Crew Capacity-Building training programme which is run on an annual basis. The Client reported that since the start of implementation, 18 UoC vessels were inspected in port at the end of 23 trips to assess compliance with the management plan. During all of the 23 trips, all of the vessels had garbage onboard, indicating compliance. The seaports at the end of the trips were in Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia and China. During the surveillance, review of observer reports indicates that at-sea discarding of non-biodegradable waste is still an ongoing issue. By way of example, in a single observer report, 11 separate incidents were recorded.</p>		

Status of recommendation	To be reviewed at the next surveillance audit. Continued non-compliance with the garbage management plan may result in re-scoring of the Ecosystem component 2.5.
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4.2.2. Recommendation 2: Shark sanctuary compliance

Performance Indicator(s) & Score(s)	Insert relevant PI number(s)	Insert relevant scoring issue/ scoring guidepost text	Score
	n/a	n/a	n/a
Recommendation	<p>The audit team noted some confusion within the MMR regarding the procedure to be followed in the case of contraventions against the Marine Resources (Shark Conservation) Regulations 2012 (i.e. for the Shark Sanctuary) and have made the following recommendation:</p> <p>The formal process for infractions of this kind should be documented and should be presented at the next (year 2) surveillance audit. The audit team will then also verify the outcome of the decision-making process regarding the shark finning incidents mentioned in the Year 1 surveillance report.</p>		
Milestones	N/a		
Client action plan	N/a		
Progress on Recommendation [Year 1]	N/a		
Progress on Recommendation [Year 2]	<p>The case of illegal shark fin retentions noted during the Year 1 surveillance audit were in fact determined to be isolated incidents but still punishable under current fishery laws. A formal decision-making process for infractions of this kind has now been documented. It was determined that the incidents represented contraventions of the Cook Islands Marine Resources (Shark Conservation) Regulations of 2012. During the Year 2 surveillance audit the team was able to verify the successful outcome of the decision-making process regarding these incidents. Full details of the settlement policy and structure was sent to the FFA and the WCPFC to show transparency on how the Cook Islands prosecutes non-compliance of fisheries management regulations, especially concerning the issue of shark finning.</p>		
Status of recommendation	This recommendation is closed.		

5. Conclusion

The audit team confirms that this fishery continues to conform to the MSC Principles and Criteria for sustainable fishing. The Client Group is on target with addressing the majority of conditions, although progress against Conditions 1, 3, 4 and 10 was behind target. The lack of progress against milestones was mainly related to a delay in the schedule and apparent lack of commitment by some WCPFC CCMs² to develop and implement a harvest strategy approach for key fisheries and stocks in the WCPO, including South Pacific albacore and WCPO yellowfin. Progress against these conditions will need to be demonstrated by the next surveillance audit. In relation to Principle 2 (Condition 4) the issue was more of a technical nature and may be resolved by either the MMR or by the remedial action put in place by the client, to ensure that the relevant milestone is met by the Year 3 surveillance audit. .

Despite implementation of the new Garbage management plan, the surveillance team noted a lack of actual progress at sea. Although so far only a recommendation has been issued in relation to the issue of discharging non-biodegradable waste, continued non-compliance with the management plan may result in re-scoring of the Ecosystem Component for this fishery. The team was, however, satisfied that the incident of shark finning discussed during the Year 1 surveillance audit has been appropriately addressed by the MMR and this recommendation is therefore closed.

Traceability in this fishery was reviewed and was found to be in line with the general terms stated at the time of certification.

Performance Indicator 3.2.2 on Decision-making processes (scoring issue b) was rescored as detailed in Appendix 1 to take account of the implications of the revised CMM 14-06 workplan. Note that the revised rationale did not result in a change in the overall score but does require re-wording of Condition 8. The revised condition and accompanying Client Action Plan are shown in appendix 2.

The surveillance level remains at 6.

The audit team recommends that this fishery should remain certified and that product remains eligible to enter further chains of custody.

² WCPFC Commission Members, Cooperating non-Members, and participating Territories

6. Evaluation Results

6.1. Principle level scores

The final principal scores are provided in Table 11.

Table 11. Final Principle scores (UoAs 1, 3, 5: South Pacific albacore / UoAs 2, 4, 6: WCPO yellowfin)

Principle	Score					
	UoA1	UoA2	UoA3	UoA4	UoA5	UoA6
Principle 1 – Target Species	81.3	83.1	81.3	83.1	81.3	83.1
Principle 2 – Ecosystem	81.7	82.0	82.0	82.0	82.0	82.0
Principle 3 – Management System	80.8	80.8	80.8	80.8	80.8	80.8

6.2. Summary of PI Level Scores

Prin ciple	Component	Weighting	PI nb.	Performance Indicator	UoA1	UoA2	UoA3	UoA4	UoA5	UoA6
1	Outcome	0.5	1.1.1	Stock status	100	90	100	90	100	90
			1.1.2	Reference points	75	90	75	90	75	90
			1.1.3	Stock rebuilding	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Management	0.5	1.2.1	Harvest Strategy	70	70	70	70	70	70
			1.2.2	Harvest control rules and tools	60	60	60	60	60	60
			1.2.3	Information and monitoring	80	80	80	80	80	80
			1.2.4	Assessment of stock status	90*	95	90*	95	90*	95
2	Retained species	0.2	2.1.1	Outcome	80	85	85	85	85	85
			2.1.2	Management	80	80	80	80	80	80
			2.1.3	Information	80	80	80	80	80	80
	Bycatch species	0.2	2.2.1	Outcome	80	80	80	80	80	80
			2.2.2	Management	80	80	80	80	80	80
			2.2.3	Information	80	80	80	80	80	80
	ETP species	0.2	2.3.1	Outcome	75	75	75	75	75	75
			2.3.2	Management	75	75	75	75	75	75
			2.3.3	Information	75	75	75	75	75	75
	Habitats	0.2	2.4.1	Outcome	100	100	100	100	100	100
			2.4.2	Management	80	80	80	80	80	80
			2.4.3	Information	95	95	95	95	95	95
	Ecosystem	0.2	2.5.1	Outcome	80	80	80	80	80	80
2.5.2			Management	80	80	80	80	80	80	

Prin ciple	Component	Weighting	PI nb.	Performance Indicator	UoA1	UoA2	UoA3	UoA4	UoA5	UoA6
			2.5.3	Information	85	85	85	85	85	85
3	Governance and Policy	0.5	3.1.1	Legal and customary framework	85	85	85	85	85	85
			3.1.2	Consultation, roles and responsibilities	75	75	75	75	75	75
			3.1.3	Long term objectives	90	90	90	90	90	90
			3.1.4	Incentives for sustainability	60	60	60	60	60	60
	Fishery-specific management system	0.5	3.2.1	Fishery specific objectives	90	90	90	90	90	90
			3.2.2	Decision making processes	75	75	75	75	75	75
			3.2.3	Compliance and enforcement	85	85	85	85	85	85
			3.2.4	Research plan	90	90	90	90	90	90
			3.2.5	Management performance evaluation	80	80	80	80	80	80

7. References

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Pilling G. et al. 2015. Revised bio-economic TRPs. Presentation to HSW3 by SPC-OFP, 30 Nov - 1 Dec 2015, Stones Hotel, Kuta, Bali, Indonesia (Agenda item 7a).

Appendices

Appendix 1. Re-scoring evaluation table for PI 3.2.2 – Decision-making processes (scoring issue b)

Note: revised rationale is shown in red

PI 3.2.2		The fishery-specific management system includes effective decision-making processes that result in measures and strategies to achieve the objectives, and has an appropriate approach to actual disputes in the fishery under assessment.		
Scoring Issue		SG 60	SG 80	SG 100
a	Guide post	There are some decision-making processes in place that result in measures and strategies to achieve the fishery-specific objectives.	There are established decision-making processes that result in measures and strategies to achieve the fishery-specific objectives.	
	Met?	Y	Y	
	Justification	There are clear requirements on decision under the 2005 Act. Decision-making processes within the MMR are described in the 2008 Longline plan and 2012 regulations, which place certain obligations on the Secretary or his delegate in relation to taking decisions on fisheries management measures including the licensing of vessels and vessel caps. WCPFC decision-making processes are open, seek to apply the precautionary approach and best available information and are well documented. Consensus is the general rule for decision-making by Commission Members during their annual meetings. If consensus cannot be reached, voting, grounds for appealing decisions, conciliation and review are all part of the established decision-making process, as described in Article 20 of the Convention. The degree to which the decision making processes at the Commission result in measures that achieve fishery specific objectives could be questioned in respect of the control of fishing effort in the fishery (see discussion under P1 and 3.1.4 above). SG80 is considered as met.		
b	Guide post	Decision-making processes respond to serious issues identified in relevant research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation, in a transparent, timely and adaptive manner and take some account of the wider implications of decisions.	Decision-making processes respond to serious and other important issues identified in relevant research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation, in a transparent, timely and adaptive manner and take account of the wider implications of decisions.	Decision-making processes respond to all issues identified in relevant research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation, in a transparent, timely and adaptive manner and take account of the wider implications of decisions.

	Met?	Y	N	N
	Justification	<p>Commission decision-making processes are based heavily on Scientific Committee reports on the status of target and non-target species and respond to serious issues, such as overfishing, and suspected overfished (e.g. status of bigeye). However, at the Thirteenth Regular Session of the WCPFC, December 2016, the Ocean Fisheries Programme of SPC reported that although the South Pacific Albacore stocks were not overfished, the decline in CPUE since 1992 has raised concerns over the economic viability of the fishery. The SPC projections suggest that current catch and effort is not sustainable and the SPC bio-economic analysis suggests that consideration should be given for the implementation of alternative management measures as the CMM for South Pacific Albacore (CMM 2015-02) appears to not be effective in constraining effort. So far, the decision-making process has not responded effectively. The team decided to treat this issue as 'important' (based on its impact on many WCPFC CCMs), although not (as yet) 'serious' (based on the stock status). Therefore, for regional-level decision-making processes, the team concluded that SG60 is met, but SG80 is not yet met.</p> <p>As stated above, serious issues in the fishery are generally identified by SPC stock assessment and other reports at the regional level, and addressed through decisions taken under national fisheries legislation. The vessel cap, replaced by a Quota Management System for Albacore and bigeye, and catch monitoring provide evidence that the issue of bigeye overfishing is being addressed and that Cook Islands is displaying 'a responsible level of development of their fisheries for South Pacific Albacore' as required by CMM 2010-05 and now 2015-02, para 2. For non-target species, the issue of shark mortality has resulted in the establishment of the Shark Sanctuary and the banning of wire traces. SG80 is met at the national level.</p> <p>Overall, SG80 is not met.</p>		
c	Guide post		Decision-making processes use the precautionary approach and are based on best available information.	
	Met?		Y	
	Justification	<p>Article 4 (a) i) of the 2005 Act requires that decisions are based on the best scientific advice available in seeking MSY (as qualified by relevant environmental and economic factors) and b) that the precautionary approach should be applied to the management of the fishery. There is evidence that decision-making processes utilise best available information as a trigger point for a review based on best available information).</p> <p>The WCPF Convention (Art. 6) also requires the application of the precautionary approach and the use of a Scientific Committee to ensure that the Commission obtains the best scientific information available for its consideration and decision-making.</p> <p>This scoring issue is met.</p>		
d	Guide post	Some information on fishery performance and management action is generally available on request to stakeholders.	Information on fishery performance and management action is available on request, and explanations are provided for any actions or lack of action associated with findings and relevant recommendations emerging from research, monitoring,	Formal reporting to all interested stakeholders provides comprehensive information on fishery performance and management actions and describes how the management system responded to findings and relevant recommendations

			evaluation and review activity.	emerging from research, monitoring, evaluation and review activity.
	Met?	Y	N	N
	Justification	<p>Quarterly and annual MMR reports provide national stakeholders with information on licensing and fleet structure, catch and effort, catch rates and other key fishery performance information. Information on fishery performance is publicly available through SPC data and Part 1 reports, the latter providing detailed reporting on catch, fleet size and other issues relating to the fishery. MMR produce annual and quarterly reports. Commission, SC and TCC papers and reports on the web provide a high level of public access and transparency, showing how scientific information is used to inform management actions, which are then monitored for effectiveness and discussed at the Commission. SG60 is thus met.</p> <p>Evidence is, however, available to show that the MMR is responsive to requests from information from stakeholders on decisions, but not always to the satisfaction of the latter. The team was made aware by stakeholders in the Cook Islands that there is, at times, a lack of transparency with respect to management decisions, including vessel licensing. It is not always clear to all stakeholders that decisions were arrived at based on available evidence and due process, particularly in relation to vessel licensing. On this basis, the team felt that SG80 was not met.</p>		
e	Guide post	Although the management authority or fishery may be subject to continuing court challenges, it is not indicating a disrespect or defiance of the law by repeatedly violating the same law or regulation necessary for the sustainability for the fishery.	The management system or fishery is attempting to comply in a timely fashion with judicial decisions arising from any legal challenges.	The management system or fishery acts proactively to avoid legal disputes or rapidly implements judicial decisions arising from legal challenges.
	Met?	Y	Y	N
	Justification	<p>No evidence is available to suggest that the MMR is disrespectful to, or defiant of Cook Islands law, or indeed, legally binding agreements reached at the Commission as they apply to the UoC. To the contrary, Cook Islands has shown considerable responsibility in upholding laws or regulations in respect of ensuring the sustainability of the fishery, including enacting agreements reached at the Commission into national legislation. SG 60 is thus met.</p> <p>While there have been no judicial decisions arising from legal challenges associated with the fishery, the management system in Cook Islands has the legal and other frameworks that would enable the MMR to comply with any such decisions in a timely fashion. SG 80 is thus met.</p> <p>The management system acts proactively to avoid legal disputes at the regional level by the prompt incorporation of CMMs into national legislation and the implementation of measures to support such legislation. There is some evidence at the national level that the management system could be more proactive in avoiding legal disputes by providing greater transparency through additional collective, participative and publically accountable involvement in the management of the fishery. Not all of SG 100 is met.</p>		

References	<p>CMM 2010-05 Marine Resources Act 2005 Marine Resources (Longline Fishery) Regulations 2008 (incorporates the 2008 Longline Fishery Plan) 2012 Large Pelagic Longline Fishery Regulations WCPF Convention MMR Annual and Quarterly Tuna Longline Fishery Reports</p>	
OVERALL PERFORMANCE INDICATOR SCORE:	75	
CONDITION NUMBER (if relevant):	8 (revised)	

Appendix 2. Revised Condition 8 and Client Action Plan

Note: revisions are shown in red

Performance Indicator	PI 3.2.2 - Decision-making processes
Score	75
UoAs	All UoAs
Rationale	<p>Commission decision-making processes are based heavily on Scientific Committee reports on the status of target and non-target species and respond to serious issues, such as overfishing, and suspected overfished (e.g. status of bigeye). However, at the Thirteenth Regular Session of the WCPFC, December 2016, the Ocean Fisheries Programme of SPC reported that although the South Pacific Albacore stocks were not overfished, the decline in CPUE since 1992 has raised concerns over the economic viability of the fishery. The SPC projections suggest that current catch and effort is not sustainable and the SPC bio-economic analysis suggests that consideration should be given for the implementation of alternative management measures as the CMM for South Pacific Albacore (CMM 2015-02) appears to not be effective in constraining effort. So far, the decision-making process has not responded effectively. The team decided to treat this issue as 'important' (based on its impact on many WCPFC CCMs), although not (as yet) 'serious' (based on the stock status). Therefore, for regional-level decision-making processes, the team concluded that SG60 is met, but SG80 is not yet met.</p> <p>Quarterly and annual MMR reports provide national stakeholders with information on licensing and fleet structure, catch and effort, catch rates and other key fishery performance information. Information on fishery performance is publicly available through SPC data and Part 1 reports, the latter providing detailed reporting on catch, fleet size and other issues relating to the fishery. MMR produce annual and quarterly reports. Commission, SC and TCC papers and reports on the web provide a high level of public access and transparency, showing how scientific information is used to inform management actions, which are then monitored for effectiveness and discussed at the Commission. SG60 is thus met.</p> <p>Evidence is, however, available to show that the MMR is responsive to requests from information from stakeholders on decisions, but not always to the satisfaction of the latter. The team was made aware by stakeholders in the Cook Islands that there is, at times, a lack of transparency with respect to management decisions, including vessel licensing. It is not always clear to all stakeholders that decisions were arrived at based on available evidence and due process, particularly in relation to vessel licensing. On this basis, the team felt that SG80 was not met.</p>
Condition	<p>By working with the relevant Cook Islands management agencies, the client should demonstrate i) that decision-making processes at national level respond to serious and other important issues identified in relevant research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation, in a transparent, timely and adaptive manner and take account of the wider implications of decisions and ii) that information on fishery performance and management action at national level is available to stakeholders on request, and that explanations are provided for any actions or lack of action associated with findings and relevant recommendations emerging from research, monitoring, evaluation and review activity.</p> <p>At the Commission level, decision-making processes should respond to important issues, and specifically to the declining catch rates of South Pacific albacore, in a</p>

	<p>transparent, timely and adaptive manner. This could be done by implementing a formal harvest strategy, as set out in CMM 2014-06 or by some other means if appropriate.</p>
<p>Milestones</p>	<p>Year 1: demonstrate that there has been discussion with MMR regarding decision-making processes (Score: 75).</p> <p>Year 2: demonstrate that information is available to stakeholders on request (Score: 75).</p> <p>Year 3: demonstrate that Cook Islands decision-making processes are transparent, timely and adaptive and that information is available to stakeholders on request. At regional level, it should be demonstrated that the Commission is responding to the issue of declining South Pacific albacore catch rates, e.g. by progressing with the harvest strategy as per the agreed workplan, or some other evidence. (Score: 75; note that Scoring Issue d should be met at this stage)</p> <p>Year 4: demonstrate that the Commission is responding to the issue of SP albacore catch rates, e.g. by progressing with the harvest strategy as per the agreed workplan, or some other evidence. (Score: 75)</p> <p>Year 5: Decision-making processes have responded to the albacore catch rate issue by putting in place a harvest strategy, or by some other suitable means. (Score: 80)</p>
<p>Client action plan</p>	<p>Client Actions:</p> <p><u>Action 1:</u> In 2015 the client urged the Cook Islands Government to ensure that the national decision-making processes for management of the Cook Islands longline albacore fishery respond to serious and other important issues identified in relevant research, monitoring, evaluation and consultation, in a transparent, timely and adaptive manner and take account of the wider implications of decisions. This was done via the letter to MMR written and sent per the activity under condition 6.</p> <p><u>Action 2:</u> In mid-2016 and mid-2017, the client emailed and met with MMR to remind them of this and all other conditions of certification, milestones, and client actions and outcomes, and the client will continue to consult with MMR on these issues in years 4 and 5. This includes the issues raised in Condition 2, that WCPFC needs to put in place a formal and rigorous harvest strategy, a process that includes the agreement of a formal TRP (Condition 1) and a formal HCR with tools (Condition 3), as well as other elements (monitoring, stock assessment) which are already in place by the end of Year 5.</p> <p>Outcomes & Schedule:</p> <p><u>Outcome 1:</u> The domestic consultative process is in place by the annual surveillance audit in mid-2018. Stakeholder consultations will be open to all interested parties.</p>
<p>Consultation on condition</p>	<p>NGOs with an interest in the Cook Islands longline fishery, MMR. See MEC (2015) for letter of support from the MMR.</p>