Eastern Pacific Ocean tuna – purse seine (Messinia G.) FIP Position Statement for the 2025 IATTC Annual Meeting (September 1-5)

Drafted with agreement from all Eastern Pacific Ocean tuna – purse seine (Messinia G.) FIP Participants – July 2025

The submission of this position statement is regarding the Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) currently being undertaken by the Eastern Pacific purse seine tuna Fishery. The fishery targets bigeye (*Thunnus obesus*), yellowfin (*T. albacares*) and skipjack (*Katsuwonus pelamis*). The pelagic purse seine vessels are flagged to Nicaragua and Panama and fish on the high seas in the Eastern Pacific. The fishery is managed regionally by the Inter American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO). Further details can be found here: Eastern Pacific Ocean tuna - purse seine (Messinia G) | Fishery Progress

This FIP aims to meet the rising global demand for tuna in a sustainable manner by assuring catches do not exceed sustainable levels, promoting the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management and strengthening policy and governance systems in the region. The end goal is to achieve certification under the Marine Stewardship Council Fisheries Standard by 2026.

As part of this FIP reaching MSC certification there are various actions that need to be undertaken that involve a range of different stakeholders. To ensure the FIP meets these objectives we need the support of the IATTC and urge action at the IATTC annual meeting this year on multiple topics laid out in this position statement.

Eastern Pacific Ocean tuna – purse seine (Messinia) FIP strongly urges the IATTC and its member states to ensure the IATTC acts in August at the Annual Meeting of the IATTC Commission to:

1. **Compliance Processes**
   - Develop and adopt a hierarchy of infractions and a set of responses to specific categories of non-compliances.
   - Develop and adopt performance metrics for IATTC measures.

2. **Tuna stock conservation**
   - Adopt, for 2026, one of the following management options, as recommended by the IATTC scientific staff: o A reduction of not more than 10 days in the closure of the tuna purse seine fishery; or o A reduction of not more than 7 days accompanied by the elimination of the closure area known as the ‘corralito.’
   - Maintain the Individual Vessel Limit and support the Integrated Port Sampling Program (IPSP) by integrating the Traditional Port Sampling (TPS) and the Enhanced Monitoring Program (EMP).
   - Adopt a reporting requirement for the provision of detailed, set-by-set and vessel-specific catch and effort data for longline fisheries, both historical and current.

- Support the planning and implementation of a tropical tuna tagging project in the EPO to enable the next skipjack benchmark assessment in 2028–2029 and to improve stock assessments for yellowfin and bigeye tunas.

3. Effective Management Procedures (Harvest Strategies)

- Finalize the management strategy evaluation (MSE) for tropical tunas and develop management objectives and revised reference points for all tropical tunas.
- Develop and adopt harvest control rules (HCRs) for bigeye and yellowfin tuna that ensure exploitation rates are reduced as the PRI is approached.

4. FAD Management

- Adopt clear rules for FAD ownership and strengthen the monitoring of remote deactivation and reactivation events, as stipulated in Resolution C-24-01.
- Establish a monitoring program of stranded FADs and explore the development of a coordinated FAD retrieval network.
- Develop and implement standardized marking systems for both FAD structures and buoys, to improve FAD traceability.
- Establish a timeline to develop a FAD register that will integrate all FAD-related data monitoring.
- Collect historical FAD position and biomass data from echosounder buoys to produce indices of abundance independent from the fishery.
- Continue and strengthen research on acoustic data interpretation to accelerate its integration into scientific applications (i.e., selective fishing strategies, tuna behavior studies, and the development of abundance indices).
- Develop and implement science-based limits on FAD deployments and FAD sets.
- Develop FAD retrieval program performance indicators and a binding FAD-recovery policy.

5. Bycatch Mitigation & Shark Protections

- Amend Resolution C-24-05 to require that all retained sharks be landed with fins naturally attached without exceptions and include the best handling and release practices updated by the IATTC scientific staff in 2025.
- Adopt a revised seabird measure (C-11-02) to reflect the current state of scientific knowledge on seabird mitigation measures and align their specifications to meet the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) standards.
- Revise sea turtle Resolution C-19-04 to require longliners to simultaneously use circle hooks and finfish bait, as well as to implement the best safe-handling and release practices updated by the IATTC scientific staff in 2025, consistent with the simulated efficacy of different conservation measures assessed.
- Include the seven rays species identified by IATTC SAC in the list of species under the purview of IATTC according to paragraph f of Article VII of the Antigua Convention.

6. Vessel Monitoring Systems and Port State Measures

- Adopt amendments to Resolution C-23-11 to strengthen the IATTC VMS, including by establishing a centralized or partly centralized program and requiring simultaneous near-real time position reporting to the IATTC Secretariat and the flag State.

- Adopt amendments to Resolution C-21-07 to align it with the FAO PSMA, including by adding minimum standards for port inspector training and for inspection reports, establishing provisions on the denial of use of ports, and requiring reporting on all port inspections. If the above-mentioned are addressed effectively it will have positive long-term sustainability implications and improve the overall health of the Eastern Pacific marine ecosystem to allow for fisheries like our current FIP to achieve sustainability targets, particularly in line with MSC certification.