



FFSAPI-SARGEN HANDLINE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Philippines

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Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

P.O. Box 2356, Kaselehlie Street, Kolonia

Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, 96941

Thru:

Ms. Rhea Moss-Christian

Executive Director

Dr. Sungkwon So

Science Manager

Sustaining Tuna, Securing Livelihoods: Appeal to SC21 for Decisive Action on Harvest Strategies

Dear Members of the WCPFC Scientific Committee,

In the spirit of sustainability and shared stewardship, we, the **Fresh Frozen Seafood Association of the Philippines, Inc. (FFSAPI)** and the **SARGEN Fishport Tuna Handline Fishing Association, Inc. (SARGEN HANDLINE)**, write to express our continuing support and high expectations for your work and to appeal for your **dedicated and accelerated effort** in the development and adoption of **harvest control rules (HCRs)** and a robust **harvest strategy** for yellowfin and bigeye tuna in the WCPO.

Our associations are implementing the **FFSAPI-SARGEN Handline Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP)**—a five-year initiative to elevate the environmental and social performance of our tuna handline fishery in FMAs 2 and 3. Now in its second year, the project has enrolled **88 vessels** (66 commercial and 22 municipal), all committed to meeting sustainability standards for future **eco-label certification**.

We strongly welcome the outcomes of the **21st Regular Session of WCPFC (December 2024)**, which include:

- The **formal adoption of the updated Harvest Strategy Workplan** (Attachment L of the final report), reaffirming the Commission's commitment under CMM 2022-03;

- The revised timeline that now targets the **adoption of Target Reference Points (TRPs) and Harvest Control Rules** for yellowfin and bigeye tuna at **WCPFC22 in December 2025**;
- Continued scientific advancements led by SMD03, SC20, and TCC20 toward evaluating candidate Management Procedures (MPs) for these stocks.

As stakeholders engaged in a sustainability-driven transition, we view the **Scientific Committee's upcoming meeting (SC21)** as a **critical milestone**. It is at SC21 where scientific advice on the stock status, candidate HCRs, and operating models will be reviewed forming the technical backbone for policy decisions in 2025.

Our small-scale handline fishers are directly affected by the health and credibility of regional tuna management systems. Adoption of science-based HCRs not only supports **stock conservation**, but also addresses **market demands for sustainability and traceability**, especially as trade arrangements like the **EU's GSP+ sunset in 2027** and buyers tighten eco-label requirements.

We therefore appeal to the WCPFC Scientific Committee to:

- **Maintain the pace of work** on harvest strategies for tropical tunas and provide sound scientific recommendations in line with the adopted workplan;
- Recognize the urgent need for timely adoption of HCRs to ensure fair and inclusive participation of small-scale and developing state fisheries in sustainable tuna trade;
- Encourage strong collaboration between science, industry, and government to ensure alignment of technical recommendations with practical realities on the ground.

Together, let us sustain not only the health of our tuna stocks but also the future of our artisanal fishers and coastal communities who depend on them. We express our deep appreciation for your efforts and look forward to a decisive and productive SC21 in Tonga.

Respectfully yours,


ENGR. EMMA F. GARAY
 President, FFSAPI


MERCEDES ONG
 President, SARGEN HANDLINE