



**FFSAPI-SARGEN HANDLINE
FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

Philippines

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November 18, 2025

**To the Esteemed Members of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries
Commission (WCPFC):**

**Subject: Support for the Accelerated Adoption of Harvest Control Rules and
Strategies for Yellowfin and Bigeye Tuna**

Dear Esteemed Members,

Warm greetings from the Philippines.

On behalf of the **Fresh Frozen Seafood Association of the Philippines, Inc. (FFSAPI)** and the **Sargen Fish Port Tuna Handline Fishing Association, Inc. (SARGEN HANDLINE)**, we express our sincere appreciation to the Commission for its sustained efforts to ensure the long-term sustainability of tuna stocks across the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO).

Our organizations represent a vital segment of the Philippine handline tuna fishery operating under the **FFSAPI-SARGEN HANDLINE Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP)**, now on its third year of implementation within **Fisheries Management Areas (FMA) 2 and 3**. The project aims to achieve environmental and social sustainability through compliance with international eco-label standards.

Acknowledging Recent Scientific Progress

We welcome the outcomes of the **21st Meeting of the WCPFC Scientific Committee (SC21)** held in **Tonga**, which reported continued progress in the development of **Harvest Strategies (HS)** and **Harvest Control Rules (HCRs)** for **yellowfin (Thunnus albacares)** and **bigeye tuna (Thunnus obesus)**.

We commend the Scientific Committee and SPC for:

- Confirming that both yellowfin and bigeye stocks remain **not overfished** and **not subject to overfishing**, though bigeye stocks still require careful management to ensure full recovery;
- Advancing the **Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE)** work for tropical tunas, including simulation testing of candidate **harvest control rules**; and
- Reaffirming the need to finalize **Target Reference Points (TRPs)** and strengthen data collection especially from **small-scale and handline fisheries** to improve stock assessments.

These developments reflect the growing maturity of the WCPFC's science-based approach to regional fisheries management and provide a strong foundation for decisive action at this year's regular session in Manila.

Our Appeal to the Commission

Given these encouraging developments, we respectfully urge the Commission, during its **22nd Regular Session (Manila, December 1–5, 2025)**, to take the next critical steps toward full operationalization of the harvest strategy framework for tropical tunas by:

1. **Adopting Harvest Control Rules (HCRs)**
Finalize and adopt robust, transparent, and science-driven HCRs for yellowfin and bigeye tuna—consistent with the progress achieved through the SC21 MSE simulations.
2. **Endorsing Target Reference Points (TRPs)**
Establish clear, measurable biological targets that will guide management actions and ensure stocks remain well above limit reference points.
3. **Advancing Mixed Fishery MSE Work**
Strengthen coordination across fishing gears and fleets such as purse seine, longline, and handline, to balance sustainability objectives and socioeconomic realities among member nations.
4. **Recognizing the Role of Small-Scale Fisheries**
Integrate data and experiences from handline and artisanal sectors into the regional harvest strategy framework to ensure inclusive and equitable management.

Why This Matters

The adoption of HCRs and TRPs is not only a scientific milestone but a lifeline for small-scale and developing coastal states. For our FIP, this action directly supports our **MSC certification pathway** and ensures that our handline fishers, 88 vessels across the municipal and commercial sectors, remain viable participants in the global market for responsibly caught yellowfin and bigeye tuna.

Delays in these measures could jeopardize progress made by fisheries improvement projects across the WCPO. On the other hand, their timely adoption will send a powerful signal of the Commission's leadership and commitment to sustainability.

Closing Message

We express our deepest appreciation to the Commission, the Scientific Committee, and all members who continue to champion responsible tuna management.

The Philippine handline sector stands ready to support and align with the WCPFC's harvest strategies, as we share the same vision: **a healthy, competitive, and sustainable tuna industry for the Pacific and its people.**

Thank you for your continued dedication to this shared goal.

With sincere respect,



ENGR. EMMA F. GARAY

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