Multi-year Seabird Strategy

(Adopted at the Twenty-Ninth Annual Meeting: 14 October 2022)

Introduction

The Ecologically Related Species Working Group commenced consideration of a multi-year seabird strategy at ERSWG12.

ERSWG has decided that the seabird strategy should, among other things:

- consider research, monitoring needs
- include actions for reducing uncertainty and associated risks
- consider recommendations from the *Report of the Effectiveness of Seabird Mitigation Measures Technical Group* (CCSBT-ERS/1503/Rep1) (the SMMTG Report), as modified by ERSWG11 (CCSBT-ESC/1509/Rep2, Att. 4), noting progress in implementing the recommendations (CCSBT-ERS/1905/05)
- take account of the *International Plan of Action for reducing incidental catch of seabirds* (IPOA-S) (FAO 1999) and associated best practice technical guidelines (BPTG) (FAO 2009).

The Extended Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna has adopted a *Resolution to align CCSBT's Ecologically Related Species measures with those of other tuna RFMOs* (CCSBT25: Noumea, New Caledonia, 15–18 October 2018). This binding Ecologically Related Species (ERS) measure requires CCSBT Members to implement the ERS measures of other relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) as part of the CCSBT's determination to mitigate incidental harm to ERS caused by fishing for southern bluefin tuna (SBT).

ERSWG remains of the view that the level of interaction between seabirds and SBT fisheries is still a significant level of concern. Some seabird species, particularly some albatross and petrel species, are threatened with global extinction (CCSBT-ERS/2203/16).

ERSWG continues to progress the development of the multi-year seabird strategy. The EC has agreed to the overall objective and five specific objectives for the strategy. ERSWG has developed actions under each of the specific objectives. ERSWG has also developed the approach to implementation and evaluation of the strategy. ERSWG proposed that the seabird strategy be implemented taking account of the General Principles of the *Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea Convention of 10 December 1982 Relating to the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and Straddling Fish Stocks* (UN Fish Stocks Agreement).

ERSWG will continue work on the multi-year seabird strategy, including through intersessional consultations.

Overall objective

This strategy's overall objective is:

> To reduce or eliminate seabird bycatch, such that SBT fisheries do not impose a significant adverse impact on seabirds.

Specific objectives

To achieve the overall objective, the following specific objectives have been developed consistent with the International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds, and associated Best Practice Technical Guidelines (BPTGs), that recommend RFMOs establish attainable objectives that lead to ongoing reductions in seabird mortality (FAO 1999, 2009).

> *Objective 1*: To reduce the level of impact of seabird bycatch by SBT fishing operations on seabird populations.
>
> *Objective 2*: To ensure the collection of timely, reliable, representative data to support accurate regular estimations of total seabird mortality in SBT fisheries and its impact on seabird populations.
>
> *Objective 3*: To develop and refine, in collaboration with industry and ACAP, practical, cost-effective and safe seabird bycatch mitigation technologies and techniques.
>
> *Objective 4*: To develop and refine compliance approaches to ensure fleet-wide compliance with seabird bycatch mitigation measures required while conducting fishing for SBT.
>
> *Objective 5*: To enhance education and outreach programs highlighting the importance of mitigating seabird interactions while fishing, and advocating effective implementation of mitigation measures.

Actions to achieve the specific objectives

The following actions will be undertaken against each of the specific objectives.

Objective 1: To reduce the level of impact of seabird bycatch by SBT fishing operations on seabird populations.			
No.	Action	Action by	Timeframe
1A	To agree on a SBT seabird bycatch target for reducing the level of impact of SBT fishing operations on seabird populations, including, but not limited to: a. Targets based on nominal reported seabird bycatch rates. b. Targets based on SEFRA outputs.	ERSWG	ERSWG15
1B	That a minimum level of 10% observer coverage is achieved on a fleet-by-fleet basis for SBT fisheries or a comparable minimum level of review of video footage collected using electronic monitoring	CCSBT Members	Ongoing
1C	Evaluate the effectiveness of the seabird CMMs introduced around 2005 by tuna RFMOs, in the context of reducing the overall seabird mortalities, taking into consideration fleet differences and seabird distributions and identify the areas for improvement. The outcomes from the evaluation will be communicated across tuna RFMOs and used as a basis for future evaluations.	ERSWG	Within 2 years, after that every 5 years
1D	Agree on the list of priority species and corresponding management targets, taking into account the status of seabird population, distributional overlaps with SBT fisheries, and significance of SBT fisheries in their mortality.	ERSWG, CCSBT	Within 2 years
1E	Update SEFRA seabird risk assessment to evaluate the progress in seabird bycatch mitigation by SBT fisheries and their impacts on seabird populations from the previous assessment in 2019. The results to be communicated across tuna RFMOs.	ERSWG	ERSWG 15, after that every 2 years

1F	Establish a robust definition of *high risk* areas that takes into account the precautionary approach by: a. Establishing a definition of *high-risk* areas. b. Identifying areas that meet the definition. c. Characterising the nature of the risk in each area. d. Developing tailored measures aimed at reducing those risks.	ERSWG, CCSBT	Within 2 years

Objective 2: To ensure the collection of timely, reliable, representative data to support accurate regular estimations of total seabird mortality in SBT fisheries and its impact on seabird populations.			
No.	Action	Action by	Timeframe
2A	Define improved protocols for reporting and analysing fishing effort data in the context of estimating seabird bycatch and its impacts on seabird populations, including concerning any implicit assumptions used when raising data.	ERSWG	Within 2 years
2B	Report and disseminate annually numbers of incidentally caught seabirds by species according to agreed reporting standards, total and observed effort, and mitigation use, according to agreed formats and strata.	CCSBT Members, Secretariat	Annually
2C	Explore options for the use of electronic monitoring systems by: a. Including seabirds (and other ERS) in discussions and the development of electronic monitoring systems. b. Considering electronic monitoring systems that contribute to, among other things, the effective monitoring of the implementation of seabird mitigation measures, and seabird interaction levels, throughout SBT fisheries.	ERSWG, CC, SC, ACAP, other tuna RFMOs	Within 3 years

2D	Explore methodologies and techniques for estimating seabird mortalities in a timely and reliable manner, based on best available information and technologies, and not limited to observers and electronic monitoring.	CCSBT Members	Ongoing
2E	Agree on the CCSBT standard protocols for collecting feather samples and photographing dead bycaught seabirds, based on ACAP guidance.	ERSWG	ERSWG 15
2F	Review observer coverage of each stratum and fishing fleet to identify gaps and where additional coverage is needed concerning seabird bycatch.	CCSBT Members	At each ERSWG
2G	Update guidance for observers to include electronic monitoring seabird related task priorities including how to allocate time appropriately, recognising the multiple tasks undertaken, where applicable.	ERSWG	ERSWG 15
2H	Review procedures and protocols to facilitate improved reporting of seabird interactions to species level by: a. Consistent reporting of seabird interactions across SBT fishing fleets. b. Removing any ambiguity about species groupings.	ERSWG, CC, BirdLife International	Within 2 years, after that every 5 years
2I	Consider options for the use of fishing vessel logbook records of seabird interactions by examining the potential for logbook records to supplement other seabird interaction information sources, where appropriate.	ERSWG, CC, ACAP, other tuna RFMOs	Within 3 years

Objective 3: To develop and refine, in collaboration with industry and ACAP, practical, cost-effective and safe seabird bycatch mitigation technologies and techniques.			
No.	Action	Action by	Timeframe
3A	Encourage CCSBT Members to undertake and support research and development to refine practical, cost-effective and safe seabird bycatch mitigation technologies and techniques.	CCSBT Members	Ongoing
3B	Advocate for strengthened seabird CMMs relevant to SBT fisheries within tuna RFMOs, where appropriate, taking account of, among other things, the best practice advice provided by ACAP.	CCSBT Members	Ongoing
3C	Regularly monitor and identify changes in the spatial overlap of fishing effort for SBT and the distribution of seabird species, particularly threatened albatross and petrel species, and inform the relevant fisheries across tuna RFMOs.	ERSWG	At each ERSWG
3D	Assess the cumulative impacts of fishing for SBT on seabirds, particularly threatened albatross and petrel species, across tuna RFMOs including developing methods for extrapolating seabird bycatch levels and seabird bycatch rates to identify total mortalities and total mortality rates.	ERSWG	At each ERSWG
3E	Consider the development of protocols on potential management responses to high seabird bycatch events.	ERSWG, BirdLife International, ACAP	Within 3 years

Objective 4: To develop and refine compliance approaches to ensure fleet-wide compliance with seabird bycatch mitigation measures required while conducting fishing for SBT.			
No.	Action	Action by	Timeframe
4A	Collate information from compliance programs of CCSBT Members on implementation of seabird bycatch mitigation measures in SBT fisheries on a fleet-by-fleet basis.	CCSBT Members, Secretariat	Annually
4B	Review procedures and methods to improve compliance by SBT fishing operators with seabird CMMs and reporting requirements concerning seabird interactions by: a. Reviewing existing procedures and methods, including for in-port and transhipment at-sea inspections, and when other monitoring and surveillance technologies and techniques are used. b. Considering implementation, where appropriate, of additional monitoring and surveillance technologies and techniques. c. Considering options for management responses concerning non-compliance. d. Considering the development of options to enable, particularly for high seas SBT fishing fleets, the timely reporting of non-compliance events.	CC	Within 2 years
4C	Review data collection forms and procedures across tuna RFMOs regarding compliance with seabird CMMs by longline fishing operators and develop harmonised format to communicate and advocate across tuna RFMOs.	CC	Within 2 years, after that every 5 years

Objective 5: To enhance education and outreach programs highlighting the importance of mitigating seabird interactions while fishing, and advocating effective implementation of mitigation measures.			
No.	Action	Action by	Timeframe
5A	Share documents, formats and procedures for observer and electronic monitoring, seabird bycatch data collection through a centralised portal, e.g. the Bycatch Mitigation Information System hosted by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.	Secretariat, BMIS	Ongoing
5B	Pursue collaboration across tuna RFMOs in capacity building in seabird bycatch monitoring and analyses.	CCSBT Members, Secretariat	Ongoing
5C	Explore options (if data are available) for the establishment of a reference DNA database for seabird species bycaught during fishing for SBT across tuna RFMOs.	CCSBT Members, ACAP, Seabird Experts	Within 2 years
5D	Support the establishment of a reference photographic database through a centralised portal, e.g. the Bycatch Mitigation Information System (BMIS) hosted by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, for seabird species bycaught during fishing for SBT across tuna RFMOs. This may include involving volunteer networks and seabird specialists.	CCSBT Members, BMIS, Seabird Experts	Within 2 years
5E	Translate ACAP's seabird species identification guide into key languages (e.g. French, Indonesian, Korean, Spanish, and Taiwanese) and disseminate together with the other languages (e.g. English Japanese).	Common Ocean Project II, ACAP	ERSWG 15

Implementation and Evaluation

Effective implementation of the Seabird Strategy will be monitored through direct observer programmes, audited electronic monitoring systems, and other monitoring and compliance approaches at-sea and in port. This will ensure fishing operators fully and effectively implement their seabird bycatch mitigation obligations and accurately report any incidental catch of seabirds. Implementation will require sufficient capacity

among individual CCSBT Members, and collectively, to collate, analyse and develop responses that avoid or minimise the incidental catch of seabirds in SBT fisheries.

The ERSWG, with assistance from CCSBT Members, will monitor the effectiveness of the Seabird Strategy. The progress of the Seabird Strategy will be evaluated at intervals of no more than four years, with the plan revised as appropriate. The strategy will remain in effect until the overall objective is achieved, with particular regard given to the reduction of seabird bycatch levels, and reduction in seabird bycatch rates.

References

FAO (1999) *International Plan of Action for reducing incidental catch of seabirds in longline fisheries.* Rome, Italy

FAO (2009) *Fishing Operations. 2. Best practices to reduce incidental catch of seabirds in capture fisheries.* Rome, Italy

IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature (2019) The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2018-2. Available at: http://www.iucnredlist.org