

SC/68B/HIM/06

IWC Secretariat discussion document on A
Review of Regional Fisheries Management
Organization Efforts in Addressing
Cetacean Bycatch: Report to the
International Whaling Commission
(SC/68B/HIM/05)

IWC Secretariat



INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

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IWC SECRETARIAT

ABSTRACT

The IWC Secretariat commissioned a report on the management actions of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) in relation to cetacean bycatch. The report was commissioned to assist the IWC's Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (BMI) in its understanding of RFMO activities and in its prioritisation of RFMOs to engage with on bycatch management. This document provides the background context for the work and poses some specific questions for the Committee's consideration on the proposed recommendations to the IWC and on the methodology used.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

The IWC's Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (BMI) aims to raise awareness of cetacean bycatch and provide information on the tools and solutions available for addressing bycatch and increase national and regional capacity to address this issue. The BMI has strategically identified the need to work on cetacean bycatch with priority Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), however there is a need to prioritise which RFMOs the IWC should engage with, given limited time and resources. In 2018 the IWC Commission endorsed a Recommendation CO1831, which asked the 'Secretariat to identify priority RFMOs and RFBs of relevance to the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative workplan and strategic plan, and develop a plan for effective long term engagement on cetacean bycatch'. To assist in this effort, the IWC Secretariat commissioned a review (SC/68B/HIM/05) to assess the current status of cetacean bycatch management in Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs). The review was carried out by Brianna Elliott, then a NOAA Knauss Marine Policy Fellow at the U.S. Department of State working on fisheries policy.

Drafts of this report have been reviewed by the IWC Secretariat, the Expert Panel on Bycatch, and by members of the Standing Working Group on Bycatch as well as by external reviewers from RFMO Secretariats and NGOs. The draft report will be finalised following SC68B and a review by RFMO Secretariat staff. The final version, with its recommendations to the IWC will be submitted for consideration to the IWC Conservation Committee meeting at IWC68.

The author is also planning to independently develop a paper for submission to a peer-review journal on the methodology described in the report to assess RFMO action on addressing cetacean bycatch. A strong methodology to review RFMOs will potentially be beneficial to the cetacean and fisheries management community for future monitoring purposes.

This cover paper therefore invites feedback from the Scientific Committee on 1) (for the IWC Secretariat) the report as drafted and the recommendations suggested for the IWC and 2) (for the author's purposes) the methodology used in reviewing the RFMO management measures. These two different questions are identified below for clarity.

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE TO IWC

The report makes the following recommendations to the IWC:

1. **Prioritize collaboration with the following Regional Fisheries Management Organisations:**
 - **Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC):** Prioritize this RFMO because of the prevalence of gillnet fishing and the threat this gear type poses to cetaceans. Engagement could include: advocating for more observer coverage, data reporting and analysis, and gear modifications.
 - **International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT):** Prioritize due to its lack of cetacean-focused CMMs and its vast scope of managing fisheries throughout the Atlantic Ocean including the Mediterranean. Engagement could include helping build consensus towards adoption of a cetacean CMM, advocating for more observer coverage, and advocating for better data reporting and data analysis.
 - **South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO):** Prioritize due to its geographic scope (i.e. it covers one-fourth of the world's oceans) and conservation potential, as a newer RFMO that is already collaborating with CCAMLR and other bodies. Engagement could include advocating for more observer coverage and better data reporting and analysis.

- **Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA):** Prioritize due to its regional overlap with IOTC and the prevalence of gillnet fishing in the Indian Ocean region. Engagement could include advocating for more observer coverage, data reporting and analysis, and gear modifications.

2. **Hold a BMI workshop on cetacean bycatch analyses.**

Improving knowledge of cetacean bycatch levels and population-level impacts within RFMO areas will be necessary to determine which specific bycatch issues require attention and the intervention of a policy response. The BMI could bring together representatives from RFMOs, the FAO, fisheries experts, bycatch taxa experts, and others to discuss: how to best estimate bycatch, understand the population level consequences of these removals, and mitigate them where appropriate.

The IWC (and other collaborators) could assist by providing/analyzing existing data on cetacean tracking and at-sea surveys to identify areas within convention areas with high cetacean presence, such as those linked to Important Marine Mammal Areas. This would require scientists and others to be willing to share their data within the prioritized RFMO convention regions, and that a standardized analysis be developed which could then be incorporated into the RFMO processes.

- 3. **Collaborate with the FAO and RFMOs to build awareness and capacity to a) implement FAO Technical Guidelines on marine mammal bycatch, and b) with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and the South Pacific Community (SPC) to contribute technical information for BMIS and BDEP, and c. raise awareness within IWC Community of these tools.**

In relation to building capacity, the BMI could work with the FAO, relevant RFMO & Member States (and other organisations) to assist implementation of the Technical Guidelines, with training programmes and technical input on mitigation measure effectiveness. The BMI could also assist national governments and RFMOs to better understand bycatch risk (e.g. training workshops on rapid risk assessment approaches, monitoring programmes and analysis).

In relation to sharing existing information on mitigation measures and bycatch monitoring, the BMIS and BDEP, both launched within the past ten years, offer excellent platforms for RFMOs to harmonize cetacean bycatch data and collate them in one location. The IWC could engage with Secretariats or Scientific Committee Chairs encouraging them to participate in BMIS/BDEP by submitting more data and increasing awareness for the online platforms.

- 4. **Collaborate with RFMOs (in addition to the four listed above) and the FAO to advocate for baseline cetacean bycatch-related requirements in RFMOs.**

These could include: increased observer coverage, reporting cetacean bycatch data, greater data synthesis at the Secretariat level, and sharing the FAO's marine mammal bycatch guidelines as standards for cetacean-related CMMs.

- 5. **Expand on research presented in this report.**

There are several major areas where this report could be improved and expanded with more resources: increase the scope to include review of all RFMOs and Regional Fisheries Bodies; obtain and analyse adequate fisheries effort data; calculate and/or obtain cetacean bycatch rates for the range of fisheries (where possible); and expand the analysis to include FADs, ghost gear, and aquaculture (if deemed relevant for cetacean distribution). Continuing to develop this research – particularly in synthesizing information from all FAO-recognized RFMOs and RFBs – would be useful in creating the first global synthesis of RFMO progress on cetacean bycatch.

METHODOLOGY USED TO ASSESS RFMO ACTION ON CETACEAN BYCATCH

The methodology used for assessing the RFMO management measures is set out in page 17-21 of SC/68B/HIM/05 the draft report. Questions for the IWC Scientific Committee relating to the methodology, and how this research could be expanded upon are set out below.

QUESTIONS TO SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Questions relating to the recommendations to the IWC proposed in SC/68B/HIM/05:

1. Which recommendations from this paper are most imperative to address cetacean bycatch? Which should be prioritized for the BMI to undertake? Which are most feasible to implement?
2. Do you agree that ICCAT, IOTC, SIOFA and SPRFMO should be prioritized for BMI engagement?
3. How can the IWC Scientific Committee assist with providing up to date information to inform the identification of cetacean bycatch hotspots?
4. Are there some more specific recommendations related to the prioritised RFMOs where the IWC (SC, CC, BMI) could provide assistance? E.g. are there activities being planned in these RFMOs which could benefit from IWC contributions?
5. What other suggested recommendations to fill data gaps, or address bycatch could be considered?
6. Do you have any specific comments on the suggestions for expanding this research?
7. There is an inherent need to assess cetacean bycatch levels in RFMOs. Who is best-poised to carry out this research? Are the data available to do so?
8. Specific to revising the report, what changes are vital to address, bearing in the mind the original intent of this report (i.e., a high-level policy summary of initiatives at RFMOs related to cetacean bycatch)? For example, expanding the review to all RFMOs and RFBs focused on capture fisheries? Include review of FADs and ghost gear?
9. Do you agree with the suggestions for any future development of this research [see Considerations for future work] and are there synergies with work of the SC HIM sub-committee that could assist with this?
10. Are there other comments or concerns you would like to share?

Questions on the methodology for assessing RFMO action.

1. Fishing effort: Many comments were received during the drafting process on how the fishing effort metric used (e.g. number of vessels via the CLAV) was inadequate and/or inaccurate. Are there suggestions for a better fishing effort metric, that can be scalable and comparable across all tuna RFMOs?
2. Bycatch data: Several comments were received that the data analysis, particularly for the “potential for risk” needs to incorporate data on cetacean bycatch levels. This is, indeed, a critical variable. However, do these data currently exist in a publicly available format? Is this lack of data not the crux of the problem?
3. Several commenters suggested weighing the different gear types more discretely. The author concurs that trawls and gillnets, for example, should receive different weights. Is there consensus on this? Is this necessary at this stage to inform the IWC on recommendations to engage with RFMOs?
4. Should there be an additional scoring/setback variable specific to IATTC since it has managed fishing effort with intentional setting on cetaceans?