Pew

The Pew Charitable Trusts' Opening Statement
to Panel 3 of the 25th Special Meeting of the ICCAT Commission
November 2026

The Pew Charitable Trusts welcomes this opportunity to comment on important work being considered by Panel 3 at the 25th Special Meeting of the ICCAT Commission.

In 2024, Panel 3 adopted management objectives to guide the management strategy evaluation (MSE) for the development of a management procedure (MP) for South Atlantic albacore. Significantly, this added the first southern stock to the ICCAT MSE roadmap and prompted multi-stakeholder collaboration among ICCAT members, commercial fishing industry, sustainable seafood certifications, and environmental NGOs.

This year, the SCRS conducted a stock assessment for South Atlantic albacore, which found the stock to be overfished. To have a 60% chance of recovering back into the green quadrant of the Kobe plot in 10 years, the TAC should be reduced to 22.5kt for 2027. We strongly urge Panel 3 to take this step in line with scientific advice by adopting a slightly revised version of Proposal PA3-702, or catches may need to be even lower in 2028 once the MP is adopted.

This year, the South Atlantic Albacore MSE Technical Team and SCRS Albacore Working Group reviewed operating models and preliminary candidate MP results based on the 2026 assessment. As the SCRS continues MSE work on the abundance indices and considers robustness scenarios, candidate management procedures are expected to be presented for adoption in 2027 - in accordance with the MSE roadmap.

Recognizing this progress, we urge Panel 3 to adopt Proposal PA3-703 which provides a framework for adoption of the MP in 2027. A similar process was employed for western Atlantic skipjack, where a year before MP adoption, Panel 1 adopted the general provisions of the subsequent MP. This process proved helpful to provide the Commission with an opportunity to input into the final stage of the MSE process and MP development and ease the transition to the MP the following year.

The South Atlantic albacore MSE gives Panel 3 an opportunity to demonstrate strong stewardship through an efficient process that could serve as a model across ICCAT. Pew commends Panel 3 in advancing this MSE to support the long-term sustainability of the fishery.