

GBYP Steering Committee Meeting

Madrid, 24 September 2018

The meeting of the GBYP Steering Committee (SC) was held at the ICCAT Secretariat in Madrid on 24 September 2018, with the participations of the SC members David Die (SCRS Chair), John Walter (W-BFT Rapporteur), Ana Gordo (E-BFT Rapporteur), Ivan Katavic (SC External Member), Camille Jean Pierre Manel (ICCAT Executive Secretary) and Miguel Neves dos Santos (ICCAT Assistant Executive Secretary). Francisco Alemany (GBYP Coordinator) and Stasa Tensek (GBYP Assistant Coordinator) joined the meeting, invited by the Steering Committee.

David Die welcomed all the participants and opened the meeting. He reminded the participants that, due to the busy schedule in relation to other ongoing SCRS meetings, the SC meeting should be brief, treating only the most important tasks. The tentative agenda, as proposed by the GBYP Coordinator (**Annex 1**) was approved, except for the points 3) and 5), which were considered too complex to be addressed at this occasion. Stasa Tensek was appointed as rapporteur.

GBYP Coordinator again raised the problem of the lack of proper communication of the Programme results to the main donors, given the fact that the achievements of the Programme have been during years presented from the point of view of the completed activities, instead of completed objectives and their impact to the final goal. The participants agreed that in the future, apart from general GBYP objectives, a strategic mid-term plan needs to be established, with more precise objectives defined and measurable deliverables for evaluating the achievements. The SC members acknowledged the criticism received from some CPCs related to the supposed repeating of the activities throughout the years and concluded that, although the activities might seem the same, they were not, because the objectives were different. The SC commented that some attempted activities, like the close kin study for example (which was initiated, but never carried out) should not be treated as a failure, but an exploratory study instead, but they reiterated that the appropriate way should be identified to communicate it as such. The external communication via presentation of the Programme through known social media was discussed as well, and it was presumed that, although it would not solve the problem of the communication towards the main donors, it should nevertheless be beneficial for the Programme. It was also noted that the original purpose of GBYP was to be investigation program for developing tools related to the bluefin tuna assessment, while over time it converted to the monitoring program for providing necessary inputs for the same tools. The SC suggested that the moment is reached when the Commission needs to realize that it needs to find a steady mechanism to finance the continuous long-term monitoring program and to decide if it would do it through GBYP or it would find another financial mechanism. Although at the beginning of the Phase 8 it was planned to contract the external experts for the purpose of Programme reviewing and communicating its achievements, it was decided that at this point it would not be necessary and that the internal review would be done instead. It was agreed that GBYP Coordinator, with the help of the rapporteurs, prepare a short text to be presented this week within the BFT SG meeting, which would focus on identifying the Programme priorities in view of the assessment goals and the BFT Group should be consulted for naming the objectives and providing specific suggestions on how to proceed. The agreed text would then become a specific addition to the Chapter 4 of the SCI/2018/026 which would be presented to the Commission.

As concerns the pending decisions of the SC, it was decided to proceed with the genetic study for finding the sex determination methodology. This study was initiated in the Phase 7, but it was postponed at the beginning of the Phase 8 due to its lower priority and the decision to resume it was conditioned by the availability of funds.

Regarding massive ageing of the otoliths which was intended to be done again in Phase 8, the Coordinator informed the SC that the new reference protocol for otolith reading has been in preparation, taking also into account the comparison with spine readings, which will be presented to the BFT SG this week. Given that the reading methodology will possibly be updated, it is probable that the previous readings will need to be validated/calibrated before making a reliable ALK. Therefore, the SC decided that the massive otolith ageing be postponed until the methodology has been agreed, although it reiterated the importance of having the ALK provided by paired structures for the purpose of the assessment. John Walter committed himself to help with the election of the otoliths to be aged, in line with current assessment priorities (old fish, paired readings).

In continuation, the Coordinator informed the SC of methodological problems the Programme is facing in the areas of tagging and aerial survey. With respect to electronic tagging, the retention rates are still low, although this year the tags have been implanted using the double anchor. The Coordinator proposed to deploy the tags in the future using the titanium anchor, instead of Domeier anchor, and to use longer tethers, which would allow its placement within the spines instead inside the muscle. This is the methodology used by Dr. Barbara Block who claims to have much longer retention rates than the current GBYP ones. Although this change in methodology would increase the price of an individual tag, the SC concluded that it would be worth if the longer retention rates are obtained.

Regarding the aerial survey, the Coordinator informed the SC of the series of methodological shortcomings that he detected and the need of having the calibration of spotters. Due to the limited time that could be dedicated to this issue at this occasion, it was decided that the Coordinator prepare the report listing all problems and possible plan for their improvement and to re-address this issue on the next occasion. The SC also commented that the calibration with acoustic/larval study should be explored, as well as video recording, in order to minimise the personal bias the spotters might introduce.

With reference to the detailed GBYP data publication policy which hasn't been defined yet, it was suggested that AOTTP and GBYP should have the same or similar publication policy and that the details of this point should be discussed during the SCRS Plenary.

Regarding the composition of the Steering Committee, it was commented that EU will probably suggest introducing its representative inside the SC. Although this topic needs to be further discussed at the Plenary, the idea of having a formal EU representative was welcomed by the current SC.

Annex 1

Points to be addressed during meeting

1. -Take final decisions on the only three actions that remain “opened” (I can make a short introduction to inform you about the reasons of the delay in launching these actions), it is:
 - a. -contract of external expert for a new GBYP review
 - b. -sex assignment genetic study
 - c. -reading of a new set of 2000 otoliths by FAS/otoliths readings calibration exercise
2. -Inform you about some further problems detected in electronic tagging and in aerial surveys (see attached document as background information. I’m sorry, it is written in Spanish because it is the result of a somewhat “informal” meeting I convened urgently after revising the final report on the last surveys, but I’ll summarize the relevant points quickly during the SC)
3. -Proposal for defining a clear GBYP data/samples use policy
4. -Open discussion about GBYP SCI document to be presented at SCRS plenary
5. -Role of GBYP in MSE ICCAT development.