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**CHAIR'S SUMMARY OF THE PANEL 2 MEETING ON  
ATLANTIC BLUEFIN TUNA (BFT) MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION (MSE)**  
*(12 November 2021, Online)*

1. The purpose of this intersessional meeting of Panel 2 was for the SCRS to update the Panel on the progress of work on candidate management procedures (CMPs) for Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (BFT), including conceptual illustrations on how CMPs would work and on the tradeoffs in achieving different objectives, and for the Panel to provide feedback to the SCRS on their preferences for the parameters to be used to test and refine CMPs. The workplan to complete the MSE was also discussed, including the plan for future dialogue meetings. As agreed during this meeting, the Chair of Panel 2 has prepared this summary of the main conclusions of the meeting in lieu of a detailed report.

The adopted Agenda is provided as **Appendix 1**. The List of Participants is contained in **Appendix 2**.

2. Dr. John Walter (of the SCRS) presented on the operating models (OMs), CMPs under development, the trade-off space related to different management objectives, and performance statistics used to evaluate CMPs in relation to those management objectives. The SCRS requested views from Panel 2 on several specific questions.
3. The meeting confirmed that any numbers or thresholds discussed or recommended in this meeting were for use as starting points for the SCRS's analysis and testing of CMPs, and did not represent agreement on parameters for the future implementation of the selected MP.
4. Specific questions asked by the SCRS

#### *4.1 Caps on total allowable catches (TACs)*

In testing CMPs, the SCRS's default is not to place maximum caps on TACs; however, if a particular CMP requires a TAC cap in order to perform better, the SCRS sought Panel 2's view on a useful provisional starting point for testing such a cap, if necessary. Panel members expressed concern about the use of caps in CMPs. It was noted that a cap is not one of the management objectives considered in the context of the bluefin tuna MSE. Notwithstanding that the default is for no cap, the meeting agreed that if a cap is needed by a particular CMP for computational purposes (i.e., to improve its performance), a cap in the order of 55,000 t is an acceptable starting point for eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna. It was agreed that if caps are tested, the same CMPs be tested with and without the use of caps. The SCRS advised that if a CMP needed to test a cap, it might need levels to test on both Eastern and Western stocks. The meeting discussed the appropriateness of using the same principle for both stocks for calculating a first cap to test, such as to use historic high catch levels for both, or to multiply both current TACs by the same factor if a cap was needed for both stocks. There was neither agreement on the need for, nor the potential level of, a maximum cap on western Atlantic bluefin tuna. The meeting agreed to continue discussions at the Regular Meeting on this matter.

#### *4.2 Variation in TAC*

The SCRS proposed to use a limit of 20 percent change in TAC from one management cycle to the next as a starting point for testing, if needed. The meeting agreed that other values could be tested later if limits on variation are shown to be necessary for a top performing CMP. The meeting also agreed that such CMPs be tested with and without limits on TAC variation to show the impact. In that regard, the previous guidance provided by the Panel on this matter in 2019 was highlighted.

Panel 2 discussed the concept of setting a minimum threshold for a change in TAC resulting from the application of an MP, such that there would be pre-agreement that certain de minimis TAC changes would not be implemented - for instance to avoid the administrative burden associated with changing quotas when the increase or decrease is very small. The meeting agreed to continue discussions on this point at the Regular Meeting, taking into account the rule used in the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT).

*4.3 A performance statistic for fishing mortality*

The meeting agreed to request that the SCRS produce a performance statistic for fishing mortality to test CMPs on this property.

*4.4 Trade-off space between stock status and yield*

The SCRS presented the tradeoff space currently being tested for stock status versus yield, and asked whether the meeting wanted the SCRS to test a wider tradeoff space. The meeting did not express any interest in the SCRS testing a wider range of values, and some members expressed an interest in a narrower range of values. The meeting agreed that CMPs could continue to be tested within the current range of values, and that the range of values could be narrowed later when the highest performing CMPs are identified.

5. The meeting agreed to request that the SCRS continue to test both 2 and 3 year management cycles.
6. The meeting agreed to request that the SCRS continue to develop a proposal to establish  $B_{LIM}$  and present it at the next Intersessional meeting of Panel 2 in March 2022.
7. The meeting agreed to request that the SCRS provide Panel 2 with a table of different rates of movement between Eastern and Western stocks used in the OMs.
8. The meeting discussed the risk associated with a CMP relying on only one index, and agreed that consideration be given to this risk and how to mitigate it. However, CMPs that rely on only one index do not need to be removed from testing at this time.
9. The meeting endorsed the proposed “Detailed Workplan on BFT MSE for the Remainder of 2021 and 2022” (Doc. No. PA2\_03\_MSE), and supported regular and iterative engagement between scientists, managers, and stakeholders through the remainder of the MSE process. The SCRS noted that the timeline for developing an Exceptional Circumstances Protocol for BFT is not included in this workplan since this can be undertaken after an interim MP is selected.
10. One Panel member urged that the SCRS should conduct the stock assessment of Eastern BFT in 2022, rather than postpone it to 2023. The SCRS Chair noted that the SCRS schedule for 2022 is full, and that if the Commission requests them to conduct the Eastern BFT stock assessment in 2022, something else will have to be postponed. The meeting agreed to continue discussion on this topic at the Regular Meeting.
11. Panel 2 agreed to review and adopt the Chair’s summary at the 27th Regular Meeting of the Commission.

### Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Appointment of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. BFT MSE essentials

- a) Brief overview of operating models

The SCRS will explain the operating models to be used for MPs to be followed by questions and answers.

- b) Key developments

The SCRS will explain other key developments such as selection of indices and development of harvest control rules to be followed by questions and answers.

5. Overview of MP implementation

The SCRS will illustrate the first application of the MP to provide a TAC and then the process of future TAC setting to be followed by questions and answers.

6. Overview of existing CMP structure and the key role of performance

The SCRS will present the table of CMPs. Panel 2 is expected to indicate its preference to narrow down the number of CMPs to be further refined.

7. Illustrating the trade-off space and acceptable ranges in trade-offs

- i. Catch vs. biomass
- ii. Other trade-offs, including catch stability vs. average catch

The SCRS will explain possible trade-offs. Panel 2 is expected to discuss and, if possible, decide what trade offs should be incorporated in the future analysis.

8. Decision points on operational management objectives & performance statistics

- a) Refinement of operational management objectives and associated performance statistics

The meeting is expected to discuss and, if possible, decide operational management objectives based on Rec. 18-03 as well as performance statistics to measure the performance of the MP.

- b) MP structure, such as TAC setting interval (proposed options: 2 years or an alternative<sup>1</sup>), limitations on max/min TAC change and catch stability.

The meeting is expected to discuss and, if possible, decide these points for refinement of the MP.

- c) Reference points, including a potential limit reference point for stock size ( $B_{LIM}$ )

The meeting is expected to discuss and, if possible, decide reference points in relation to the management objectives.

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<sup>1</sup> While a 3-year management cycle was discussed in Panel 2, the current MSE uses a 2-year management cycle because it allowed CMPs to be more reactive, thus improving CMP performance.

9. Future work

a) Timeline of events/meetings for remainder of 2021 and 2022

The SCRS will propose the future events and meetings for 2021 and 2022 such as dialogue meetings and BFT MSE meetings with the timeline.

b) Nature of SCRS/Panel 2 dialogue meetings proposed for 2022

The SCRS will explain the nature of the SCRS/Panel 2 dialogue meetings in 2022. Panel 2 is expected to agree to the number of such meetings and the nature.

10. Report to the Commission (Panel 2)

The results of this meeting including recommendations will be reported to Panel 2 during the annual meeting for endorsement. For this purpose, a short paper which describes the conclusions of the meeting will be prepared.

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