

Attachment H

Recommendations to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) on the ecologically sustainable management of the harvest of product from the Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) fishery.

DAFF's progress on meeting recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7

Recommendation 1

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) to continue to pursue Australian Government objectives to incorporate an ecosystem approach to fisheries management and rebuild the SBT stock to ecologically sustainable levels. This is to include working within the CCSBT to:

- a) restore confidence in catch data, including through the collection of fishery independent data;**

The implementation of the Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS) on 1 January 2010 will assist in verifying reported catch data.

Australia has, and will, continue to request that Japan provides fine-scale (spatial and temporal) catch and effort data from its long line fleet, in accordance with its obligations under the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), in order to improve confidence in the catch per unit effort (CPUE) data series.

Fishery-independent indicators of stock abundance such as the aerial survey, conducted by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), have been formally incorporated into the CCSBT Operating Model (OM) and Management Procedure (MP).

- b) establish effective Monitoring, Control and Surveillance measures (e.g. Catch Documentation Scheme, International Observer Program, Vessel Monitoring System, transshipment) to ensure compliance with the global TAC and ensure that unreported catches are eliminated;**

CCSBT15 (2008) adopted the following key resolutions to strengthen monitoring, control and surveillance:

- a Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS) to be implemented from 1 January 2010 which will provide a transparent paper trail of the catch of all SBT in the global fishery. The CDS will include tagging of fish on kill/harvest and recording of weights and lengths of all fish;
 - The CDS has been implemented on 1 January 2010.
- a vessel monitoring system (VMS) to be implemented from April 2009;
 - The VMS has been implemented.
- a revised transshipment measure to be implemented from April 2009.
 - The transshipment measure has been implemented and intersessional work is being undertaken to improve its performance.

- c) ensure that total allowable catch levels are sustainable through the continued development of a Management Procedure. In this regard, Australia should advocate a position consistent with the Harvest Strategy Policy;**

At CCSBT16 (October 2009) it was agreed to reduce the global TAC of SBT by an average of 20 per cent over the 2010 and 2011 fishing seasons. This agreement will set the groundwork for a long-term rebuilding strategy for SBT that will occur through the development and implementation of the MP.

Australia advocated the Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy as a benchmark of best practice in setting sustainable catch levels at the Strategy and Fisheries Management Working Group (SFMWG) in Tokyo (April 2009) where it was agreed that the interim rebuilding target for SBT should be 20 per cent of the unfished spawning stock biomass.

Significant work has continued on improving the OM which underpins the MP, including through the convening of a special Operating Model and Management Procedure (OMMP) Technical meeting (July 2009, Seattle).

At CCSBT16 a resolution was agreed that the MP should be finalised for agreement by CCSBT at its annual meeting in October 2010. There is a dedicated MP workplan to ensure delivery of the MP this year. CCSBT further agreed that the MP should be implemented in 2011 and be the basis for total allowable catch (TAC) setting for 2012 and beyond.

- d) ensure that decisions regarding the global TAC take into account all take of SBT;**

In reviewing the global TAC of SBT, CCSBT16 considered advice provided by its CCSBT Scientific Committee, which undertook a stock assessment in 2009. The CCSBT Scientific Committee had available to it catch data from all member fleets, as well as those of cooperating non-members. Additionally, the CCSBT SFMWG meeting, held in April 2009 discussed the framework for the MP, rebuilding strategies for SBT and considered future catch scenarios.

- e) monitor the SBT spawning grounds and status of the spawning stock and implement appropriate management measures to ensure protection if required; and**

Australia is developing a new, fisheries-independent method to potentially assess the status of the SBT spawning stock using close-kin genetics. This method is expected to be finalised in 2010/11. Australia has also proposed the development of decision rules for management of SBT based on fisheries-independent indicators such as the scientific aerial survey. Australia continues to work with Indonesia in the analysis of length and age data of SBT taken from the spawning grounds.

- f) pursue the development of measures to mitigate impacts on ecologically related species (ERS).**

At CCSBT15 (October, 2008), Australia asserted that the CCSBT Convention enables members to make binding measures for ecologically related species (ERS), but other members continue to disagree with Australia's interpretation. However,

the Commission agreed in 2008 to a non-binding ERS recommendation which commits members to applying bycatch mitigation measures for seabirds, sea turtles and sharks adopted by other tuna regional fisheries management organisations when fishing for SBT. The recommendation also commits members to reporting data on ERS to the Commission and/or its subsidiary bodies.

Further in 2009, CCSBT 16:

- Agreed to provide action plans that include verification of catch data of ERS reported by fishers through scientific observer coverage on vessels (10% minimum).
- Agreed to recommendations from the ERSWG – of particular note was the agreement to undertake ecological risk assessments and submission of tables as part of national reports, including bycatch levels and methodology used to scale up observed interactions.

Recommendation 2

DAFF and AFMA to continue to investigate appropriate catch monitoring technologies that ensures the highest level of confidence in the estimates of SBT catch in the purse seine sector.

DAFF and AFMA completed a scientific assessment of stereo-video technology in 2008, and reported on the accuracy and precision of stereo-video as a catch monitoring tool in the purse seine sector to the CCSBT Scientific Committee in 2008.

At CCSBT16 (2009) Australia agreed to implement in the 2011 fishing season commercial trials of stereo-video systems for monitoring of 10 % of the southern bluefin tuna transferred to cages and, if the systems prove successful, adopt them in the following season as the systems for ongoing monitoring.

Recommendation 3

Within 2 years, DAFF in conjunction with relevant State governments, to collect data and information on the recreational and charter catches of SBT, and provide relevant information to CCSBT16.

Recreational and charter sector catch of southern bluefin tuna is currently under the jurisdiction of the States and Northern Territory. DAFF is working with jurisdictions to develop a uniform and best practice approach to the management of recreational and charter catch of SBT. This may include consistent bag or vessel limits across jurisdictions and improved compliance measures and catch monitoring. This work is being conducted through the Australian Fisheries Management Forum.

At the CCSBT Scientific Committee meeting in 2009 and at CCSBT16, Australia reported that it is still awaiting survey results from South Australia and Tasmania on recreational and charter catches of SBT. The survey reports will be available soon and reported to CCSBT17 when released.

Recommendation 4

DAFF to ensure that the management of SBT takes account of all take of SBT, including recreational and charter take within Australia.

Recreational and charter sector catch of southern bluefin tuna is currently under the jurisdiction of the States and Northern Territory. DAFF is working with jurisdictions to develop a uniform and best practice approach to the management of recreational

and charter catch of SBT. This may include consistent bag or vessel limits across jurisdictions and improved compliance measures and catch monitoring. This work is being conducted through the Australian Fisheries Management Forum.

Recommendation 7

DAFF to ensure DEWHA is kept informed of any significant change in the CCSBT's management of SBT.

DAFF engages all relevant government agencies, including DEWHA, in developing a whole-of-government approach to all meetings of the CCSBT and debriefs those agencies on the outcomes of those meetings.

DEWHA officers also participated on the Australian Government delegation to various CCSBT meetings.