

**RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT ON A CANDIDATE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE
FOR WESTERN ATLANTIC SKIPJACK TUNA**

RECALLING the intent of the Commission to adopt management procedures (MPs) tested through management strategy evaluation (MSE) for priority stocks, including western skipjack tuna, as established in the *Recommendation by ICCAT on the development of harvest control rules and of management strategy evaluation* (Rec. 15-07) to manage fisheries more effectively in the face of identified uncertainties;

RECALLING the application of the precautionary approach in accordance with relevant international standards as established in the *Resolution by ICCAT concerning the use of a precautionary approach in implementing ICCAT conservation and management measures* (Res. 15-12);

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the efforts to sustainably manage the western Atlantic skipjack stock, consistent with the objectives of the Convention and the *Recommendation by ICCAT on the principles of decision making for ICCAT conservation and management measures* (Rec. 11-13);

TAKING FURTHER INTO ACCOUNT the relatively short life cycle and highly variable population dynamic of the skipjack tuna species;

NOTING the conclusions of the 2022 Stock Assessment conducted by the ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS), which indicated that the western Atlantic skipjack stock is most likely located in the green quadrant of the Kobe plot, indicating that the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring;

RECALLING that the preliminary performance indicators agreed to by the Commission for tropical tunas, as outlined in *Recommendation by ICCAT on a Multi-annual Conservation and Management Programme for Tropical Tunas* (Rec. 16-01), included four categories of management objectives, namely Status, Safety, Yield and Stability;

RECALLING the conceptual management objectives agreed by ICCAT for western skipjack in *Resolution by ICCAT on development of initial conceptual management objectives for western Atlantic skipjack* (Res. 22-02);

NOTING that the objective of the Convention is to maintain populations of tuna and tuna-like species at levels that will support maximum sustainable catch (usually referred to as Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY));

CONSIDERING the work of the SCRS since 2020 to test through MSE several candidate MPs;

RECALLING that the Commission requested the SCRS to continue testing various candidate MPs in 2024 and to meet with Panel 1 to review the results and support the Panel in selecting one to adopt in 2024 and for this purpose Panel 1 held three intersessional meetings in 2024, including one dedicated to the Western Skipjack MSE;

RECOGNISING that after 6 years of implementation of the MP it is advisable to review;

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RECOMMENDS THAT:

**Part I
General provisions**

1. Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities (CPCs) whose vessels fish for western Atlantic skipjack tuna in the Convention area shall implement the following [MP]. This [MP] shall be used to calculate the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for the western Atlantic management area for 2026 and beyond.

Management objectives

2. The management objectives for the western Atlantic skipjack tuna stock are:
 - a) Stock status: The stock should have a 60% or greater probability of occurring in the green quadrant of the Kobe matrix over the medium-term (4-10 years) using a 30-year projection period.
 - b) Safety: There should be no greater than 10% probability of the stock falling below B_{LIM} ($0.4 \cdot B_{MSY}$) at any point during the 30-year projection period.
 - c) Yield: Maximize overall catch levels.
 - d) Stability: Any changes in TAC between management periods should be 25% or less.

Performance indicators used to evaluate MP performance for each management objective are found in **Annex 1**.

Part II Management procedure and exceptional circumstances

3. Consistent with the management objectives specified in paragraph 2, the [XX] management procedure has been selected.

TAC setting

4. The first constant annual TAC derived from the MP shall apply in 2026, 2027, and 2028. The management cycle length shall be three years; therefore, the MP shall be applied every three years. The procedure for the establishment of the 3-year constant annual TAC is set out in **Annex 2**.
5. According to the timeline set out in **Annex 2**, the SCRS shall run the MP and advise the Commission of the resulting TAC per the process specified in **Annex 2**.
6. The Commission shall then adopt the TAC based on the outcome of the MP, unless the SCRS identifies exceptional circumstances that require consideration of alternative management actions to be taken by the Commission.
7. The SCRS shall assess the occurrence of exceptional circumstances annually and the Commission shall act in accordance with the exceptional circumstances protocol, developed based on scientific advice provided by the SCRS and adopted by the Commission.

Part III Final provisions

8. In 2025, the SCRS shall finalize tuning of the MP to achieve the status objective specified in paragraph 2 for review and adoption by the Commission at its 2025 Annual Meeting. This measure will be revised in 2025, and the final MP specifications will become Annex 3 of this Recommendation.
9. Panel 1 shall develop an approach to maintain catches within the TAC for review and adoption by the Commission at its 2025 Annual Meeting.
10. Panel 1, with scientific guidance from the SCRS, shall develop the exceptional circumstances protocol for this MP for review and adoption by the Commission at its 2025 Annual Meeting or as soon as possible thereafter. The protocol will become Annex 4 of this Recommendation once adopted.

11. A review of the performance of the MP by the Commission and the SCRS shall be completed by 2031 and every 6 years thereafter. The aim of the review is to ensure the MP is performing as expected and to determine whether there are conditions that justify its continuation, or that warrant reconditioning the MSE operating models; retuning the existing MP; including new indices into a new MP; and/or considering alternate candidate management procedures or development of a new MSE framework. Based on that review and subsequent SCRS advice, the Commission shall decide on future management measures, approaches, and strategies, including, inter alia, regarding TAC levels, for western Atlantic skipjack.
12. This Recommendation repeals and replaces *Resolution by ICCAT on development of initial conceptual management objectives for western Atlantic skipjack* (Res. 22-02).

Table of operational management objectives and performance indicators

Management objectives	Corresponding performance indicators
<p>Status The stock should have a 60% or greater probability of occurring in the green quadrant of the Kobe matrix over the medium-term (4-10 years) using a 30-year projection period.</p>	<p>PGK_{short}: Probability of being in the Kobe green quadrant (i.e., $SSB \geq SSB_{MSY}$ and $F < F_{MSY}$) in year 1-3 PGK_{medium}: Probability of being in the Kobe green quadrant (i.e., $SSB \geq SSB_{MSY}$ and $F < F_{MSY}$) in year 4-10* PGK_{long}: Probability of being in the Kobe green quadrant (i.e., $SSB \geq SSB_{MSY}$ and $F < F_{MSY}$) over years 11-30 PGK: Probability of being in the Kobe green quadrant (i.e., $SSB \geq SSB_{MSY}$ and $F < F_{MSY}$) over years 1-30 POF: Probability of $F > F_{MSY}$ over years 1-30 PNOF: Probability of $F < F_{MSY}$ over years 1-30</p>
<p>Safety There should be no greater than 10% probability of the stock falling below B_{LIM} ($0.4 * B_{MSY}$) at any point during the 30-year projection period.</p>	<p>LRP_{short}: Probability of breaching the limit reference point (i.e., $SSB < 0.4 * SSB_{MSY}$) over years 1-3 LRP_{medium}: Probability of breaching the limit reference point (i.e., $SSB < 0.4 * SSB_{MSY}$) over years 4-10 LRP_{long}: Probability of breaching the limit reference point (i.e., $SSB < 0.4 * SSB_{MSY}$) over years 11-30 LRP_{all}: Probability of breaching the limit reference point (i.e., $SSB < 0.4 * SSB_{MSY}$) over years 1-30</p>
<p>Yield Maximize overall catch levels.</p>	<p>AvC_{short}: Median catches (t) over years 1-3 AvC_{medium}: Median catches (t) over years 4-10 AvC_{long}: Median catches (t) over years 11-30</p>
<p>Stability Any changes in TAC between management periods should be 25% or less.</p>	<p>VarC_{medium}: Variation in TAC (%) between management cycles over years 4-10 VarC_{long}: Variation in TAC (%) between management cycles over years 11-30 Var_{all}: Variation in TAC (%) between management cycles over years 1-30</p>

*Tuning objective to be used for candidate MP development.

Schedule for Management Procedure Implementation

3-Year Cycle

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
SCRS check for exceptional circumstances		X	X	X	X	X	X
SCRS runs candidate MPs	X						
Commission adopts an MP	X						
SCRS runs MP	X			X			X
Commission adopts TAC based on MP	X			X			X
TAC in effect		X	X	X	X	X	X
SCRS MP review							X
Status Check/Assessment ¹							X
Commission assesses SCRS review and next steps							X

¹ The Status Check/Assessment will follow the methodology of the 2022 Stock Assessment, running both the SPSS and Stock Synthesis (SS3) models.