

**LETTER FROM PA2 CHAIR ON ALBACORE
(WAY FORWARD ON ROUND 2 OF CORRESPONDANCE PERIOD)**



FISHERIES AGENCY

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES, GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN

1-2-1, Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8907, Japan

November 5, 2020

Re: **Albacore**

Dear Panel 2 members:

Let me first express my thanks to those CPCs which submitted comments, questions and alternative proposals to the four draft Recommendations as well as the issues I highlighted in my previous letter. It is now clear that some issues need further discussion while others may be settled down more quickly. Based on this observation, this letter deals with only Albacore. I will send a separate letter on other issues.

1. Mediterranean albacore (Rec. 17-05) (No proposal)

No comment has been submitted. Rec. 17-05 will continue to be valid as it is. This item has been closed.

2. Northern albacore (Recs. 16-06 and 17-04) (PA2-606 and PA2-607)

(1) TAC and allocations

I suggested applying a pro-rata increase for 2021 to: (i) allocations; (ii) the catch limit for minor harvesters (215 t); and (iii) the bycatch tolerance for Japan (4%). Canada, the European Union, Japan, Norway, as well as PEW, supported my proposal while the United States asked clarification on the rationale for (iii), stating that this is a soft catch limit (non-binding) and the percentage has never been changed in relation to any TAC change. It is true that 4% is not binding as para 6 of Rec. 16-06 says, "Japan shall endeavor to limit..."

However, the 2013 Commission meeting discussed the fact that Japan's catch in 2012 had exceeded the soft limit and several CPCs requested Japan to take measures to avoid overshooting again. It is also true that the percentage has never been changed. However, there are two major changes compared to the situation back in 2016: the improved NALB stock status and the worsened bigeye stock status. This means that even if Japan maintains the fishing effort on BET, Japan's catch is more likely to go beyond 4% as the percentage is calculated by dividing NALB catches by BET catches. I believe that it would be fair if everyone can enjoy the benefit of the increased stock status. If things were normal, Panel 2 could discuss this issue in detail and may decide not to increase 4% in which case Japan may request allocation. Since this is difficult, I rather suggest increasing all the figures mechanically at the same rate.

In any case, this is a temporary measure only for 2021 and the measures (i) to (iii) above shall be discussed and amended, as appropriate, next year. In this regard, the United States stressed that while it does not oppose the pro rata increase this year, this shall not set a precedent for future discussion on allocation. The European Union provided that their understanding is different from mine with respect to relationship between the TAC and allocation under the HCRs while Norway seems to support mine. This issue should also be discussed at the 2021 annual meeting.

In conclusion, I suggest adoption of PA2-606A and PA2-607A as attached, which include several non-substantive edits proposed by the United States and slightly modified by myself.

(2) Consolidation of Recs. 16-06 and 17-04

Regarding consolidation of these Recommendations, I suggested deferring such task to the intersessional period. The European Union supported this idea, but the United States suggested that this work be done at the 2021 annual meeting where further amendments to these Recommendations are likely to happen. This makes sense to me. Consequently, I will not circulate any draft consolidated text intersessionally.

(3) MSE related work (particularly exceptional circumstances protocol)

I suggested deferring discussion on this to the 2021 Panel 2 Intersessional. The United States and Japan supported this idea. The European Union supported para 3 of PA2-607 and stressed that this would require adequate organization of the Commission/SCRS meetings for NALB in 2021. However, the Secretariat told me that it would be very difficult to hold any physical meeting in Madrid until May next year since the Spanish government has decided to extend the current restrictions until that time. This issue will be separately discussed because it could affect other subsidiary bodies, particularly Panel 1, Panel 4 and PWG. I would point out that if the Panel 2 Intersessional Meeting becomes a virtual one, this topic may have to be deleted because of the time restriction. I will discuss the meeting arrangement with the Secretariat and inform you of the results in due course.

Finally, as per Circular 7324/2020, CPCs who may have comments can submit those as Statements to the Panel 2, as the Commission Chair agreed to allow one statement per CPC and subsidiary body in each round of the correspondence period. These will be translated and posted on the 2020 Commission documents webpage. Comments other than in the form of statements may also be forwarded to me and the Secretariat, but these will not be translated to avoid delays on the decision-making process. There will be a two-week period for comments. The exact deadline will be specified by the Secretariat as it depends on their translation.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shingo Ota', is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shingo Ota
Panel 2 Chair