



WWF

STATEMENT

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Smart Fishing Initiative

STATEMENT

WWF statement on the outcome of the Third Preparatory Conference of The South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SP RFMO), Santiago, Chile, 30 January - 3 February 2012.

WWF believes that the SP RFMO measures such as agreed during the Third Preparatory Conference of the SP RFMO are insufficient to allow recovery of the currently endangered Chilean jack mackerel stock (*Trachurus murphyi*), a migratory fishery species of extreme important for the Southern Pacific region.

As such, WWF urgently calls upon all participants to ratify the SP RFMO Convention over the next months so that it can enter into force and become legally binding, to comply with the currently agreed interim measures and to adopt and put in place a long-term, comprehensive management plan that will ensure full recovery of the specie.

The issues

The international consultations regarding the establishment of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SP RFMO, <http://www.southpacificrfmo.org/>) concluded with the adoption of the Convention in 2009. As soon as this Convention enters into force, the existing gaps between the international conservation and management of non-highly migratory species and the protection of marine biodiversity in the South Pacific will be closed. In the meantime, key coastal states like Chile, Peru, Australia and New Zealand, and also distant waters nations including Russia, China, South Korea, the Faroe Islands and the European Union involved in the SP RFMO have been negotiating interim fishery management measures, particularly for the Chilean Jack mackerel, a fish species that is heavily being exploited.

Apart from the national waters of Chile, Peru and Ecuador, the Chilean Jack mackerel fishery is presently also developed in waters beyond national jurisdictions, with Asian, European and Russian pelagic trawling companies being the main players. The fishery is mostly used as forage fish (fishmeal and fish oil) production that represents one-third of the global fish catch. It is also traded as fresh, frozen and processed (canned) food on local and global markets. The species has undergone rapid decline over the last years because of rampant overfishing in national and international waters.

Key issues discussed at the third SP RFMO Preparatory Conference included:

- **The status of jack mackerel fish stock in the Southeastern Pacific Ocean.** Results from the Scientific Working Group indicated that the biological status of the Chilean jack mackerel stock in the South Pacific is very bad. There is a continued decline in 2011 of reported total catches for the entire SE Pacific stock of 522,440 tonnes in 2011 (11% in comparison with the highest peak of 4.9 million tonnes in 1995). Moreover, reproductive total biomass of jack mackerel has dropped by 90% , well under its limit reference point.
- **Concerns with lack of Fisheries Governance in the South Pacific.** Since the adoption of the SP RFMO Convention, fishing measures in international waters only depend on “voluntary agreements” between different Nations. However, binding regulations are needed to combat overfishing and protect vulnerable species such as the Chilean jack mackerel stock.
- **Insufficient Interim Measures and Compliance:** In 2011, participants agreed on interim measures to reduce annual catches of Chilean jack mackerel by 60% compared to 2010 (750,000 tonnes). For 2012, participants discussed whether to limit their annual by 40% compared to 2010. Issues about non-compliance with interim catch measures were also discussed during the meeting.

The outcome

The Third Preparatory Conference of the SP RFMO reached the following agreements:

- **Scientific recommendations 2012:** Based on the status of the Jack mackerel stock and reported catch from 2011, the Scientific Working Group recommended to reduce the total catch quota for 2012 to a max of 350,000 tonnes to allow recovery of the stock. This allows the reproductive biomass to be maintained at the current level, but it is not sufficient to ensure that the Jack mackerel fish stock recovers to a sustainable level.
- **2012 interim measures and compliance issues:** There has been an inability and unwillingness from certain participants such as Peru and Ecuador to reach consensus on taking sufficient conservation measures. Participants agreed to reduce annual catches of *Trachurus* species by 60% (compared to 2010 levels in 2012. Peru opted not apply the interim measure in its jurisdictional waters and Ecuador was not present at the meeting.
- **Fisheries Governance in the South Pacific.** Most likely the Convention will enter into force during the first half of 2012 after ratification by some remaining countries including Chile, Colombia and Australia that agreed they would ratify, accept or approve the Convention over the next coming months.

WWF key recommendations

WWF believes that the interim measures agreed at the Third Preparatory Conference of the SP RFMO are insufficient to allow recovery of the currently endangered Chilean jack mackerel stock (*Trachurus murphyi*), a migratory fishery species of extreme important for the Southern Pacific region.

WWF recommends that all concerned parties in the SP RFMO:

- Ratify the SP RFMO Convention as a matter of urgency. Once the Convention enters into force, the fishing activities on Chilean jack mackerel that undermine the SP RFMO resolutions can be considered as Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) activities, and measures will become legally binding instead of just on a voluntary basis.
- Comply and enforce 2012 Chilean jack mackerel catch interim measures both in the High Seas as well as in the EEZ with a clear commitment from countries as Peru, Chile and Ecuador, including Asian and European players
- Adopt and put in place a long-term and comprehensive management plan for the Chilean jack mackerel, including a more adequate catch reductions, fishing grounds closures, and other measures that will enable full recovery of the Jack mackerel spawning biomass at safe biological levels.

Our Smart Fishing Vision and Goals:

Vision: The world's oceans are healthy, well-managed and full of life, providing valuable resources for the welfare of humanity.

2020 Goals: The responsible management and trade of four key fishery populations results in recovering and resilient marine eco-systems, improved livelihoods for coastal communities and strengthened food security for the Planet.



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

panda.org

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