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COMMON OCEAN TUNA PROJECT

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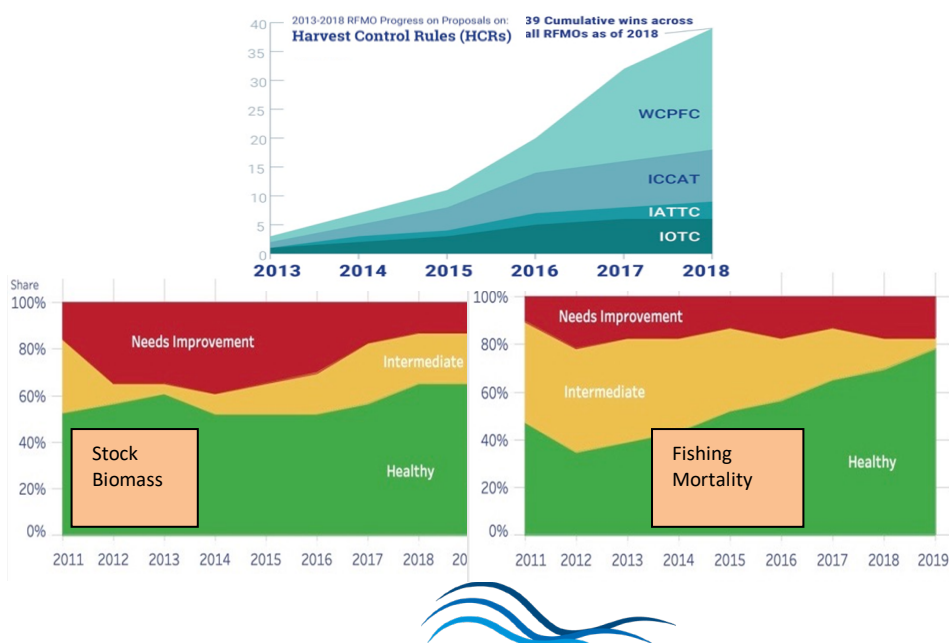
by FAO's Tuna II Team

The initial Common Oceans ABNJ Tuna Project (Tuna I) aimed at supporting sustainable and efficient tuna fisheries production and biodiversity conservation through the systematic application of an ecosystem approach. Tuna I was a five-year project (2014-20) supported by a GEF grant of about 27 million USD, and it drew together a large and diverse group of stakeholders – from consumers and industry to all tuna RFMOs, NGOs and international organizations – that play important roles in tuna fisheries.

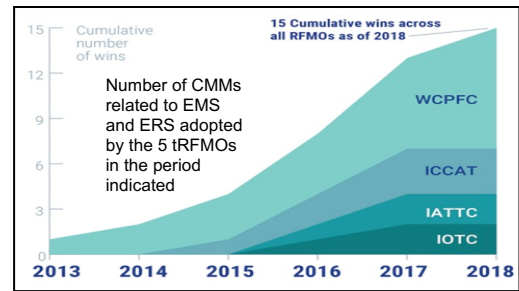
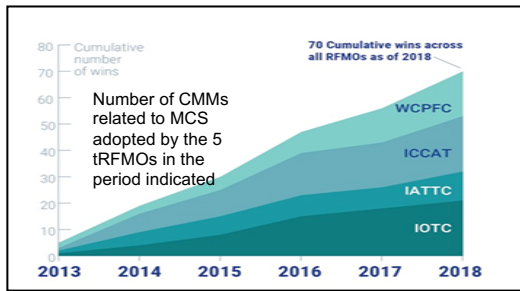
Tuna I contributed to the strengthening of the tuna management process by supporting tuna RFMOs member countries through 23 different activities, covering diverse areas such as technical support and training to improve the process for decision making via the development and adoption of harvest strategies and the implementation of the EAFM; strengthening compliance and the ability of RFMO member countries to combat IUU fishing; and working with the private sector to mitigate negative impacts of tuna fishing on the environment. Support was also provided to foster cooperation, exchange of experiences and lessons learned across tuna RFMOs through different mechanisms like joint meetings on bycatch, FADs, technical aspects of the implementation of the precautionary approach, EAFM and the establishment of a Tuna Compliance Network.

The final independent evaluation of Tuna I was highly positive in its assessment of the project's results, some of which were described as transformative. The evaluation considered that the large and diverse partnership was one of the strengths of the project, contributing significantly to the delivery and co-financing of project outputs. The advancement of tuna fisheries management in these years has been significant, even though it is not always possible to precisely assess how much of this progress can be attributed to the project itself. However, through collaboration with partners, including t-RFMOs, industry, and civil society, the project had a catalytic effect helping to disseminate and to showcase the benefits of innovative approaches, to boost compliance improvement efforts and demonstrated some of the results that can ensue from the use of good bycatch management practices.

For instance, during the implementation of the Tuna I the number of stocks managed under a harvest strategy (HS) or having a HS being developed increased from 1 to 14. Also during Tuna I, the number of overfished stocks decreased by more than 60%, while the percentage of healthy stocks almost doubled, increasing from 43% to 78%.



during Project implementation, clearly showing a much stronger commitment to MCS by contracting parties. And the number of initiatives related to electronic monitoring systems- EMS and electronic reporting systems- ERS, quintupled



Additionally, data on sharks, sea turtles and seabirds in t-RFMOs were not only integrated in various ways in Tuna I, but greatly enhanced, including by the collection of new information.

While successes in Tuna I were significant, there remains much to be done in terms of consolidating these gains, upscaling proven approaches and tools leading to sustainable management of tuna stocks and supporting emerging technologies. Recognizing this opportunity, in June 2020, the GEF Council approved a second phase of the project (Tuna II) with a total GEF grant of 14.4 million USD.

The objectives of the Tuna II are consistent with the goals described in a Theory of Change, developed in consultation with the partners, that describes how the Project is expected to address issues still affecting tuna fisheries management.

In consultation with tuna RFMOs and other partners, over the past year and a half, we have been developing the final Project proposed activities to be submitted for GEF endorsement by the end of the year. Tuna II focuses on four main components: 1) Strengthening management of tuna fisheries by fostering collaboration across RFMOs; 2) Strengthened Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) to improve fisheries data, compliance with CMMs and to tackle IUU fishing; 3) Better assessment and reduction, where needed, of environmental impacts of tuna fisheries; and 4) Knowledge Management, Communication and Monitoring and Evaluation. Our intent for Tuna II is to build upon successes and fill gaps identified at the end of Tuna I.

The overall strategies are based on promoting good practices through appropriate incentives, in particular, market incentives rewarding sustainability with support and participation of the private sector. Innovative approaches to data collection, monitoring and compliance and better bycatch mitigations will be demonstrated and business cases developed creating opportunities for further replication and uptake as future additional funding materializes. Capacity building, especially for officers in developing States, will be reinforced with the creation of online courses accessible in various languages, with possibility of complementing them with in- person activities as the pandemic concerns ease in the future.

Specific activities under Tuna II will include:

- Further capacity building for continuing development of harvest strategies through virtual workshops, and online documentation and e-learning.
- Supporting development of explicit EAFM objectives and implementation plans
- Assessment of climate change impacts on tuna fisheries
- Support for collaboration through joint tuna RFMO technical Working Groups on topics of global relevance
- Support for the development of Fishery Improvement Plans (FIPs) in Pacific SIDS
- Extension and up-scaling of MCS certification-based online and field training courses based on the successful Tuna I Certificate IV in Fisheries Enforcement and Compliance course
- Compliance support missions and PSMA training in the Atlantic Ocean
- Continued support for the Tuna Compliance Network established under Tuna I to develop recommendations and methodology for best practices for compliance assessments
- Extension of the ICCAT online data management system with an emphasis on development of extensions for automatic data interoperability for the potential benefit of all t-RFMOs
- Support to formalize standards and protocols for uptake of electronic monitoring (using cameras) and electronic reporting in tuna fishing fleets
- Support to developing coastal states face in the implementation of electronic monitoring for tuna fleets in the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans
- Case study on traceability to identify, study and evaluate the minimal CDS support mechanisms required for a forthcoming IOTC CDS as a compliance tool
- Piloting e-traceability systems in a small-scale tuna fisheries context to demonstrate feasibility in small-scale fisheries in eastern Africa
- Development and implementation of tools and processes for a regional shark fishery sampling program in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and South Western Atlantic
- Demonstrations of alternatives to gillnets and improvements to handline and/or pole-and-line tuna value chains in pilot locations in the Indian Ocean
- Scaling up of sub-surface setting of gillnets in the Indian Ocean to reduce bycatch
- Development of draft policies to mitigate FAD impacts on the environment and advocate for their adoption at t- RFMO
- Further development of mitigation techniques applying acoustic signals in FAD fishing
- Development of a draft policy on a holistic approach to bycatch management that considers existing knowledge about bycatch mitigation actions
- Educational outreach, capacity-building, and technical innovation to enhance implementation and improve management and monitoring systems for of seabird bycatch mitigation measures by CCSBT Members
- Develop and test innovative tools and approaches to monitor and manage address cetacean bycatch in tuna fisheries at the national and regional scale
- Continuation of and extension of skippers' workshops for purse seine, long line and pole and line fishers to promote and disseminate best practices for bycatch mitigation methods
- Fisheries stakeholder surveys to allow for global estimates of gear loss in tuna fisheries



The activities of the Project will be subject to the same principles that guided the Tuna I implementation: complement existing efforts and avoid duplication; implementation of activities will be in the hands of the executing partners; support collaboration between partners, especially across tuna RFMOs and south-south cooperation; the benefits of activities will extend globally when possible, even when activities are regional or national, focusing on developing States whenever possible; gender balance and equality will be promoted. The tuna RFMO Secretariats will participate in the Steering Committee for the project, bringing the concerns and guidance from their memberships as was the case in Tuna I, to guide Project activities and ensure the Project activities are supportive of tuna RFMO goals.

As it was the case during the Tuna I, the Tuna II will be part of a Program that involves three other projects: a project on deep-sea fisheries, a project on multi-sectoral cooperation in the ABNJ, and a project on multi-sectoral management in the Sargasso Sea. These four technical projects will produce lessons and experiences that will contribute to the future of the ABNJ sustainable utilization.

Partner co-financing, primarily as in-kind contributions, is an important ingredient in gaining GEF endorsement for Tuna II. For Tuna I, partner co-finance was substantial and contributed greatly to the successes achieved. For Tuna II, GEF will expect a co-finance ratio of 10:1, which equates to a 150 million USD co-finance projection over the 5-year project life span (2022-2027). For this reason, we are again soliciting co-finance commitment letters from our partners to secure GEF endorsement for the project. As in Tuna I, co-finance in the form of in-kind and direct cash contributions are being solicited. In-kind contributions may include normal, ongoing activities our partners undertake in support of the objectives of Tuna II (Strengthened management of tuna fisheries, strengthened MCS to improve fisheries data, compliance with CMMs and to tackle IUU fishing, Reduction of environmental impacts of tuna fisheries, and Communications and M&E on these topics).



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



The Common Oceans Program is a partnership for sustainability in the ABNJ

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