

**Summary of the ongoing review of WCPFC CMM 2018-03 –
Conservation and Management Measure to mitigate the impact of
fishing for highly migratory fish stocks on seabirds**

New Zealand

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Summary

New Zealand is currently leading the review of the Conservation and Management Measure to mitigate the impact of fishing for highly migratory fish stocks on seabirds (CMM 2018-03) of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). The purpose of the review is to ensure that effective mitigation methods are required and applied across the WCPFC Convention Area where there is bycatch risk to vulnerable seabirds from longline fishing. The process thus far has included the collation of relevant evidence published in papers and two informal online intersessional meetings. Following the conclusion of the intersessional meetings, New Zealand will collate the feedback and expert input and draft a revised CMM 2018-03 with the aim of having it approved at the 21st Regular Session of the Commission, following the appropriate discussions at both the 20th Meeting of the Scientific Committee and the 20th Meeting of the Technical and Compliance Committee of WCPFC. Relevant documents, including presentations, can be found on the WCPFC website under separate pages for the [first](#) and [second](#) informal intersessional meeting.

Background

The 19th Regular Session the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) noted a global decline in specific Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) seabird population trends, which are vulnerable to threats posed by longline fisheries in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) and the importance of seabird bycatch mitigation measures. WCPFC19 consequently recommended a review of the Conservation and Management Measure to mitigate the impact of fishing for highly migratory fish stocks on seabirds (CMM 2018-03), whereby new bycatch mitigation studies would be evaluated with respect to bycatch mitigation effectiveness and compared against current ACAP Best Practice. This review was proposed to be led by New Zealand across 2023 and 2024.

At the 19th Regular Session of the Scientific Committee (SC), New Zealand presented the proposed purpose, scope, and process for the review of CMM 2018-03 (see [WCPFC-SC-19-2023/be-IP-16](#)). Specifically, the proposed purpose of the review of was *“to ensure that effective mitigation methods are required and applied across the Convention Area where there is bycatch risk to vulnerable seabirds from longline fishing”*. The proposed key elements of the review included:

- 1) The spatial extent of the required mitigation methods;
- 2) The Southern Hemisphere mitigation options and specifications; and
- 3) The Northern Hemisphere mitigation options and specifications.

To ensure a meaningful and collaborative review of CMM 2018-03, New Zealand offered to establish and lead informal intersessional meetings with interested CCMs to review the latest scientific evidence on seabird bycatch mitigation and gather views on the review of CMM 2018-03. New Zealand would aim to draft a revision of CMM 2018-03 for submission to SC20, TCC20, and WCPFC21. SC19 supported this approach to the review of CMM 2018-03 (see paragraph 265 of the [WCPFC SC19 Summary Report](#)).

At the 20th Regular Session of the Commission, WCPFC noted that New Zealand will lead two informal intersessional meetings with interested CCMs to review the

latest scientific evidence on seabird bycatch mitigation and gather views on the review of CMM 2018-03 with an aim to draft a revision of CMM 2018-03 for submission to SC20, TCC20 (Technical and Compliance Committee), and WCPFC21 (see paragraph 718-727 of the [WCPFC20 Summary Record](#)).

Process

To compile the necessary scientific information for a meaningful review of CMM 2018-03 on, New Zealand first compiled all the relevant publications containing scientific evidence on seabird bycatch mitigation methods, seabird distribution, seabird population dynamics, and seabird-fishery risk assessments. Publications were selected based on an existing, independent review on seabird bycatch mitigation effectiveness (see [WCPFC-SC-19-2023/EB-IP-15](#)), which was then followed by conventional scientific search engine searches. All identified publications were compiled in a SharePoint Folder, access to which was shared with all interested review participants¹. All review participants were then invited to share any additional publications for inclusion.

First informal intersessional meeting

The [first informal intersessional meeting](#) to review WCPFC CMM 2018-03 took place online on 20 February 2024 (NZST). The purpose of the meeting was: *“To discuss research and scientific evidence on mitigation methods and share knowledge and experiences of their use, with the aim to feed into the process for drafting “a revision of CMM 2018-03 for submission to SC20, TCC20, and WCPFC21” and ultimately “to ensure that effective mitigation methods are required and applied across the Convention Area where there is bycatch risk to vulnerable seabird from longline fishing” as per WCPFC20.*” The meeting was attended by representatives from 13 Members, the WCPFC Secretariat, and nine Observers. To accommodate time zone challenges faced by some Members, a follow-up informal intersessional meeting, covering the exact same points as the 20 February meeting, took place on 19 March 2024 (NZST) between the European Union and New Zealand.

¹ Access to the SharePoint folder containing these papers may be gained by requesting permission from Dr. Johannes Fischer via jfischer@doc.govt.nz.

Presentations and discussions covered during this first informal intersessional meeting included:

- An overview of impacts of longline fishing on seabird populations;
- Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certifications and how the CMM 2018-03 and any revisions thereof may relate to these;
- An overview of different seabird mitigation methods;
- Mitigation methods not considered to be best practice (e.g., blue-dyed bait and line shooters);
- Detailed specifications of tori lines, branch line weighting, and night setting, and their efficacy in different fleets and fisheries; and
- Novel mitigation methods (e.g., underwater bait setters and hook shielding devices).

Summary Notes, presentations, and other meeting documents relevant to this first informal intersessional meeting for the review of WCPFC CMM 2018-03 can be found [here](#).

Second informal intersessional meeting

The second informal intersessional meeting to review WCPFC CMM 2018-03 took place online on 7 May 2024 (NZST). The purpose of the meeting mirrored the purpose of the first informal intersessional meeting.

Presentations and discussions covered during this first informal intersessional meeting included:

- An overview of the main points covered during the first informal intersessional meeting;
- New Zealand's large-scale seabird tracking and monitoring programme, including seabird-fisheries overlap analyses and population trajectories;
- Seabird diving ecology, including new insights from key species groups;

- Seabird bycatch mitigation experiments in the Hawaiian deep-set fishery;
- The effectiveness of combinations of different mitigation methods;
- The implementation of Southern Hemisphere mitigation options through a New Zealand industry perspective;
- The implementation of Northern Hemisphere mitigation options through a United States of America industry perspective;
- Monitoring, Compliance, and Surveillance tools, and a New Zealand perspective on data collection; and
- Suggestions for further data requests for SPC and further work to be submitted to SC20 TCC20).

Summary Notes, presentations, and other meeting documents relevant to this second informal intersessional meeting for the review of WCPFC CMM 2018-03 can be found [here](#).

Following the conclusion of these two informal intersessional meetings, New Zealand will collate the shared insights, feedback, and expert input and draft a revised CMM 2018-03 for submission to SC20, TCC20, and ultimately for approval at the 21st Regular Session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.