Ministry of
Fisheries
Te Tautiaki i nga tini a Tangaroa

Operational Management Plan for Albacore Tuna

2010–2015

New Zealand Government

Overall Goal for New Zealand fisheries

New Zealanders maximising benefits from the use of fisheries within environmental limits

Outcomes

Use Outcome: Fisheries resources are used in a manner that provides greatest overall economic, social, and cultural benefit

Environment Outcome: The capacity and integrity of the aquatic environment, habitats and species are sustained at levels that provide for future and current use.

Governance Conditions: Sound governance arrangements that are well specified, transparent, and which support cost-effective and accountable decision-making

Management objectives for fisheries for Highly Migratory Species

Use Outcome	1	Promote a viable and profitable tuna fishery in New Zealand
	2	Maintain / enhance world class gamefisheries in New Zealand fisheries waters
	3	Deliver fair opportunities for access to HMS fisheries
	4	Minimise wastage and promote humane treatment
	5	Maori interests (including customary, commercial, recreational and environmental) are enhanced

Environment Outcome	6	Maintain a sustainable fishery for HMS within environmental standards
	7	Implement an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, taking into account associated and dependent species
	8	Protect, maintain, and enhance fisheries habitat
	9	Allow for HMS aquaculture development while ensuring the ecosystem and wild fisheries are protected

Governance conditions	10	Recognise and provide for Deed of Settlement obligations
	11	Influence international fora and ensure New Zealand interests are taken into account
	12	Maintain an effective fisheries management regime

Operational objectives for albacore—this document

List of Abbreviations

B_{MSY}	The biomass level that can produce the maximum sustainable yield from a fish stock.
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FFA	Forum Fisheries Agency, a pan-Pacific body that provides expertise, technical assistance and other support to its members on tuna resources and their management.
HMS	Highly migratory species
MCS	Monitoring, control and surveillance
MFish	Ministry of Fisheries
MSC	Marine Stewardship Council, an independent organisation that operates a fishery certification programme providing seafood ecolabelling
QMS	Quota Management System
TAC	Total Allowable Catch
TACC	Total Allowable Commercial Catch
WCPFC	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

Introduction

This operational management plan for albacore establishes operational objectives and performance criteria for the period 2010-2015 for albacore fisheries including:

- Commercial troll fisheries within New Zealand fisheries waters; and
- Recreational fisheries for albacore

Management issues relating to catches of albacore in the longline fishery are generally covered in the plan on large pelagic fisheries.

This plan consists of the following sections:

1. Overview of the fishery for albacore tuna
2. Overview of fish and non-fish bycatch in albacore fisheries
3. Operational objectives and performance criteria for the albacore fishery

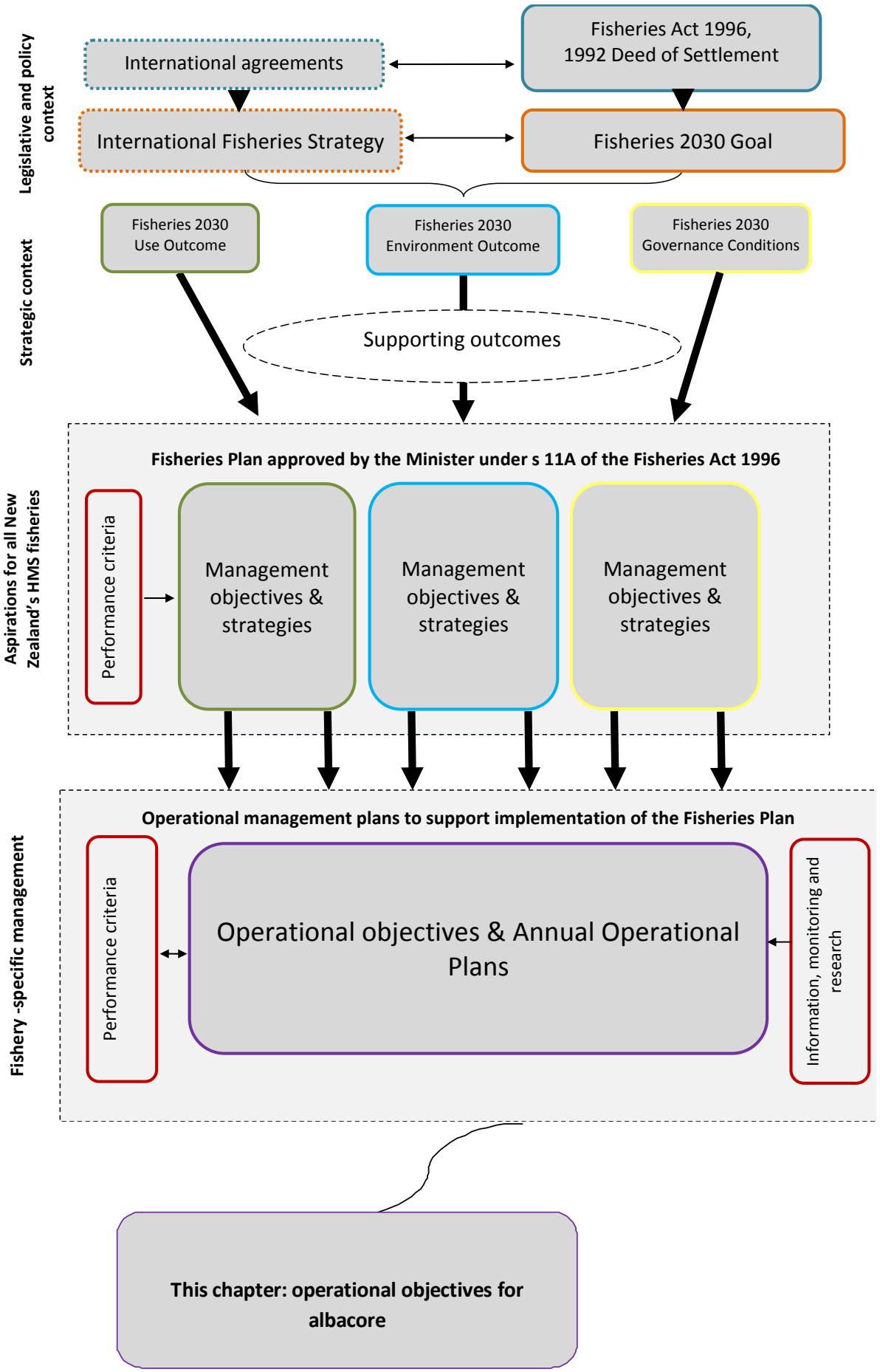
The operational objectives in this plan provide greater detail on how the management objectives for highly migratory species will be implemented in relation to albacore, as outlined in the diagram on the following page. Management objectives for highly migratory species are outlined in the National Fisheries Plan for Highly Migratory Species, which has been approved by the Minister of Fisheries under section 11A of the Fisheries Act.

This document addresses management of key target commercial and recreational fisheries for albacore, as well as the management of any adverse environmental effects caused by fishing activity for albacore. Such environmental impacts are fairly limited in the albacore fishery.

An overview of the operational objectives and the actions proposed to meet the objectives is provided on page 3. The numbering used for the operational objectives outlined in this plan follows on from the management objectives outlined in the national fisheries plan. For example, management objective 1— to promote a viable and profitable tuna fishery in New Zealand has the following contributing objectives:

- Management objective 1.1—Reduce administrative barriers to profitability in the HMS fishery;
- Management objective 1.2—Negotiate favourable country allocations for New Zealand fishers;
    - *Operational objective 1.3 (large pelagic species)— Ensure catch limits are not exceeded and annual catch entitlements are readily available and are used to cover catches*
    - *Operational objective 1.4 (large pelagic species)— Ensure fair allocation of levy costs for quota owners in HMS fishstocks*
    - *Operational objective 1.5 (skipjack)— Regularly monitor the need for more active management of skipjack, based on utilisation criteria*
    - *Operational objective 1.6 (skipjack)— Maintain catch-based attribution of cost recovery levies*
    - *Operational objective 1.7 (skipjack)— Devise incentives to add value to and/or reduce wastage in the skipjack fishery*
    - *Operational objective 1.8 (skipjack)— Manage the impacts of any fishing in New Zealand waters under provisions of the US Tuna Treaty*
    - **Operational objective 1.9 (albacore)— Regularly monitor the need for more active management of albacore, based on utilisation criteria**
    - **Operational objective 1.10 (albacore)— Maintain catch-based attribution of cost-recovery levies**
    - **Operational objective 1.11 (albacore)— Devise incentives to add value to the albacore fishery**

Structure of the National Fisheries Plan for Highly Migratory Species and the operational management plans for large pelagic species, skipjack, and albacore



Summary of objectives and actions over timeline of plan (for further description of the priority ratings see page 8)

Operational objectives for albacore fisheries	Response	Five year prioritisation				
		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Use Outcome						
1 Promote a viable and profitable tuna fishery in New Zealand						
1.9 Regularly monitor the need for more active management of albacore, based on utilisation criteria	Assess albacore against QMS introduction standard and/or the need for alternative management arrangements as and when required.	*As and when required (P2)*				
1.10 Maintain catch-based attribution of cost-recovery levies	Review or contribute to review of cost recovery levies that promotes equitable approach for HMS fisheries as relevant (depends on timing of any QMS introduction process).	*As and when required (P2)*				
1.11 Devise incentives to add value to the albacore fishery	MFish to support certification application as appropriate (**P1)**. Industry to investigate options for adding value to catch as desired e.g. certification, alternative methods etc. (**P4**)	**P1** (certification)				**P4** (other initiatives)
Environment Outcome						
6 Maintain a sustainable fishery for HMS within environmental standards						
6.8 Promote sustainable management of the South Pacific albacore stock including allocation of rights in the fishery	Identify and advocate for stock size targets in cooperation with Pacific Island countries and advocate for allocation of rights that provide for responsible development of New Zealand and Pacific fisheries. Actively participate in scientific process for stock assessment of albacore.	**P3**				
6.9 Review management of the New Zealand fishery to achieve regional goals for stock-wide management	Annually assess the need for further management of New Zealand fishery to support Te Vaka Moana agreements and/or WCPFC measures. Develop preferred means to implement stock-wide management approach, taking into account circumstances of the New Zealand fishery.		**P2**			
6.10 Monitor the New Zealand albacore fishery to contribute into WCPFC science processes	Continue with port sampling programme that monitors New Zealand troll fishery; monitor fishery characteristics and bycatch using observer coverage, and monitor trends in longline catches of albacore	**P1**				

1. Overview of the fishery for albacore

Biological overview

Two albacore stocks (North and South Pacific) are recognised in the Pacific Ocean, although there is some movement of fish between the two stocks. For the South Pacific stock, most catches occur in longline fisheries in the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of other South Pacific states and territories, in high seas areas, and in a New Zealand-based troll fishery.

Adult albacore spawn in tropical and sub-tropical waters between latitudes 10°S and 25°S during the austral summer, with juveniles recruiting to surface fisheries in New Zealand coastal waters about two years later. Albacore tuna are found in most waters around New Zealand. From this region, albacore appear to gradually disperse to the north, but may make seasonal migrations between tropical and sub-tropical waters.

Fisheries Management overview

Management of albacore tuna throughout the Western and Central Pacific Ocean is the responsibility of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). As a signatory to the Western and Central Pacific Convention, New Zealand is responsible for ensuring the management measures applied within New Zealand fisheries waters are compatible with those of the Commission. Equally, the Commission must ensure its measures are compatible with those of coastal states.

Albacore is not managed as a quota management species and no total allowable catch (TAC) applies in New Zealand fisheries waters or on the high seas. However, conservation and management measures set by WCPFC do place binding effort controls on the albacore fishery in New Zealand fisheries waters.

A troll fishery for juvenile albacore has operated in New Zealand's coastal waters since the 1960s and in the central Pacific (in the region of the subtropical convergence zone) since the mid-1980s. Various distant-water longline fleets (including Japan, Korea, and Chinese Taipei) and domestic longline fleets of several Pacific Island countries catch adult albacore over a large proportion of their geographic range. In recent years, the longline catch has increased considerably with the development (or expansion) of small-scale longline fisheries targeting albacore in several Pacific Island countries.

New Zealand fishery

Albacore is caught in commercial fisheries both as a target and a bycatch species. Albacore is also an important recreational target species.

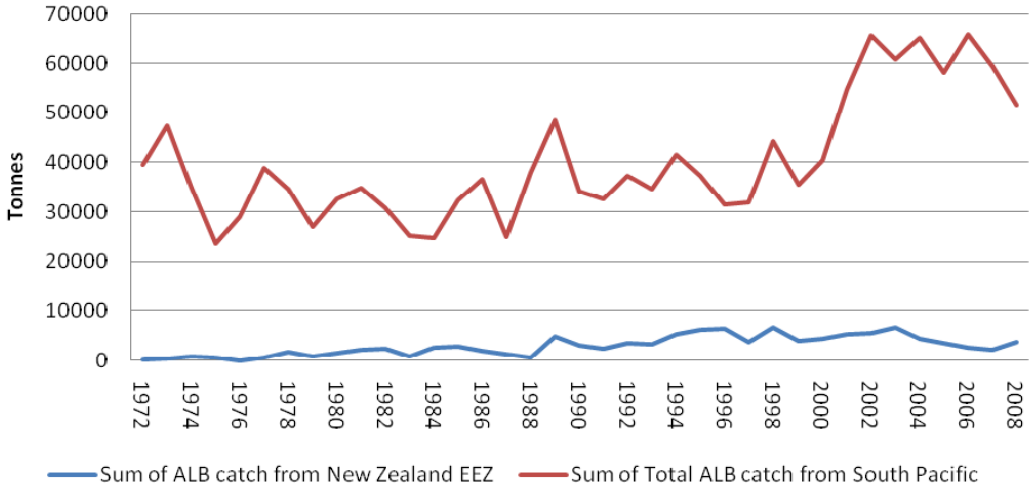
The commercial albacore troll fishery operates between December and May each year. The troll fishery catching juvenile albacore accounts for a large and increasing proportion of New Zealand's albacore landings (90% in 2008). Albacore are occasionally caught by troll fishing in high seas areas, but catches have been infrequent and are only a minor component of the New Zealand fishery.

Albacore are also caught incidentally during commercial longline sets for bigeye and southern bluefin tuna or as a longline target species. Longline fleets typically catch larger albacore over a broader size range. Between 1999 and 2004 catches in longline fisheries were a more substantial component of albacore fisheries, representing 30–50% of domestic albacore landings by calendar year. Since 2004 the percentage of New Zealand's albacore catch from longlining has dropped from 30% in 2004 to just 10% in 2008. Less than 1% of New Zealand albacore catches are by other methods such as handline, pole and line, and purse seining.

The New Zealand albacore fishery, especially the troll fishery, has been characterised by periodic poor years that have been linked to poor weather or colder than average summer seasons. Catches in recent years have also been affected by a general decline in vessel numbers, linked to rationalisation of the longline fleet in particular.

Total annual landings from New Zealand vessels have averaged 4,443 t over the past 10 years. Since 2001 catches from within New Zealand fisheries waters have generally been less than 10% of those from the greater stock inhabiting the South Pacific Ocean (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Reported total landings of albacore tuna from New Zealand fisheries waters and the South Pacific Ocean, 1972-2008



Source: Lawson, T.A. 2008. Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Tuna Fishery Yearbook 2007; New Zealand catches: Licensed fish receiver and monthly harvest returns for most recent years.

Approximately 170 domestically owned and operated vessels fished for albacore in 2008. Overall commercial landings of the longline and troll caught species, including albacore, have declined each year between 2002 and 2007, with some upturn since then. This trend is consistent with a decline in number of vessels operating in these fisheries.

The recreational fishery is based on targeting large albacore (10-20kg in weight) with trolled lures. Albacore are pursued both for food and sport. Albacore are taken on the west coast of both the North and South Islands, as well as off the east coast of the North Island from the Bay of Plenty to Wairarapa and the northern east coast of the South Island. Small albacore are commonly caught for bait or as a bycatch off the northern coast of the North Island. These are predominantly juvenile fish of 1-3kg.

The recreational season for albacore is from November to May, with peak catches in February and March according to New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (NZSFC) records. Numerically, the recreational catch of small tunas i.e. albacore and skipjack may be greater than all other gamefish species in New Zealand. Combined catch records of clubs affiliated to NZSFC show relatively stable annual catches of albacore at around 700-800 fish per year. Anecdotal information also suggests that many more albacore are landed but not weighed at clubs.

For further information see the 'Characterisation of the New Zealand Recreational Gamefish Fishery,' REC2004/02. J. Holdsworth, K. Walshe & T. Sippel (2005).

WCPFC fisheries

Total South Pacific albacore landings have fluctuated between 25–65,000t since 1960. The 2008 total regional South Pacific catch (51,672t) is lower than the average catch (54,672t) over the past 10 years from the South Pacific (Figure 1).

The key conclusions of the 2009 stock assessment of the South Pacific albacore stock are that overfishing is not occurring and that the stock is not in an overfished state. However, current levels of fishing mortality may be affecting longline catch rates of adult albacore, which is of concern to Pacific Island countries. Recent catches are also close to the base case estimate of maximum sustainable yield (64,000t).

A WCPFC conservation and management measure (CMM 2005-02) prevents any increase in the number of fishing vessels actively fishing for South Pacific albacore in the Convention Area south of 20°S from recent historical (2000-2004 or 2005) levels. For New Zealand, this equates to 445 vessels based on the number of vessels reporting albacore tuna landings in 2001. This conservation and management measure mirrors a similar measure in place for northern albacore within the WCPFC area, and was partly established to ensure there was no displacement of effort from the northern fishery into the south. Effort controls such as this limit on vessel numbers are however rarely effective in limiting catch.

Environmental overview

Albacore is an 'apex' or 'top' predator when fully grown. Albacore prey on fish and squid, particularly lancetfish and lantern fish, as well as crustaceans. Adult albacore have few natural predators themselves. Nonetheless, smaller albacore are probably an important food source for other pelagic species including blue and mako sharks.

Economic overview

Approximately 3,500t of albacore were exported in 2008, with a total value of around NZ$10.5 million. Most albacore tuna caught in New Zealand waters is exported frozen, either whole or headed and gutted, with only a small amount sold domestically. Both troll and longline catches of albacore are sent to canneries in a variety of markets, including Spain, France, Thailand and American Samoa.

The albacore fishery has initiated an assessment to achieve Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. An assessment meeting took place in July 2009 and the assessment is expected to take 12-14 months. Achieving third party certification is an acknowledgement that the fisheries management regime in place for a stock can successfully meet international standards. The financial return from MSC certification, particularly in terms of increased market prices, remains uncertain. It is however becoming a minimum standard for entry into certain markets.

Compliance overview

The main drivers for fishing offences involving HMS include the high value and high demand in international markets, and the extensive and remote areas where these stocks can be found. There is limited information about compliance levels in HMS fisheries.

With regard to albacore, which is a relatively low value species where catch limits are not in place, these drivers may not apply. There is some incentive to underreport catches to save on levy payments (for species managed outside the quota management system – QMS – levies are based on landed catch) but there is a strong counter-incentive in that there is separate reporting of landed catch by fishers and by licensed fish receivers. Discrepancy reporting provides a method to monitor for this activity.

No bag or size limits apply to the recreational fishery.

Social overview

New Zealand's close cooperation with other Polynesian countries (Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau and Tonga) on fisheries management and development has recently been formalised through an arrangement called Te Vaka Moana. Albacore and swordfish are a particular focus of Te Vaka Moana discussions on developing regional management approaches that reflect coastal state interests in HMS fisheries. Te Vaka Moana's future activities include further development of management frameworks for Polynesian longline fisheries, as well as cooperative work on monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS), and a Polynesian Fisheries Development Package.

The albacore fishery is an important seasonal component for many commercial fishing operations. The albacore troll fishery is more accessible than other tuna fisheries, being nearshore and requiring little capital investment. As a non-QMS species it is also currently open access. In previous discussions about introducing albacore into the QMS, concerns were raised about the basis for future cost recovery (currently based on average catches but generally based on quota for QMS species – see objective 1.10); and which years would be used for attributing catch history. A decision on catch history years would need to be made as part of any QMS introduction process (see objective 1.9).

Recreational fishers value albacore both for sport and for food. Maori have past, present, and future interests in the albacore fishery, including an interest in future QMS management. More information is required on contemporary Maori interests in these fisheries, as outlined in the national fisheries plan for HMS (see management objective 5).

2. Overview of fish and non-fish bycatch in albacore fisheries

Main bycatch species

When albacore is targeted by trolling in New Zealand waters it makes up over 99% of the total catch, with bycatch accounting for less than 1%. Of this limited bycatch, the main species include skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna, bigeye tuna, Ray's bream, kahawai, and several species of shark. Various other species are also caught from time to time, but in small quantities.

As noted previously, albacore are also caught during longline sets for bigeye and southern bluefin tuna or as a target species. More information regarding the non-target interactions from longline fishing can be found in the large pelagic fishery plan.

Incidental interactions with endangered, threatened and protected species

Troll fishing has limited or no incidental interactions with seabirds, marine mammals, and marine reptiles.

Exploratory observer coverage has occurred on several troll vessels between 2006 and 2009. The observer reports have noted birds were seen occasionally, always in low numbers, and showed very little interest in the fishing gear. In most cases it is likely that the birds are attracted to the vessel itself rather than the fishing gear. It was noted that on occasion birds were seen diving into the wake of vessel, and possibly chasing a lure, but no birds have ever been observed caught. Observer reports have also noted dolphins and fur seals in close proximity to vessels but again, no direct interactions with the vessel or its fishing gear were observed.

Observer coverage in the albacore troll fishery has been increased over the past few years. A single troll trip was observed in both 2006-07 and 2007-08 (for 11 and 9 days respectively). In 2008-09 two separate troll trips were observed (a total of 49 days), and in 2009-10 6 troll trips were observed, totalling 70 days.

3. Operational objectives for albacore fisheries

The operational objectives in this document provide greater detail on how the management objectives for highly migratory species will be implemented in relation to albacore. This section provides the following information for the operational objectives identified:

- **Assessment**: What is the current status of the fishery in relation to the objective
- **Risk**: What is likelihood that current management will not achieve the objective?
- **Priority**: What is the priority associated with achieving the objective?
- **Performance criteria**: How will performance be measured?
- **Actions**: what actions would be required in order to achieve the objective over time, bearing in mind the priority of the objective, and the cost-effectiveness of actions required to achieve it?

The priorities are based on the following criteria:

Priority	Description
P1	Management objectives that are considered a high priority for delivery. The focus in the early years of the National Fisheries Plan for Highly Migratory Species will be to deliver services and complete the tasks for the fishery-specific operational objectives that underpin P1 management objectives.
P2	High priority but longer term management objectives. Typically this is because the successful completion of more than one fishery-specific operational objective is required before the management objective can be achieved.
P3	Management objectives that have a high priority but successful implementation is influenced by external factors. The influence of external factors can mean that despite a priority focus, these objectives may not be achieved during the initial five year timeframe.
P4	Management objectives where the timeframe for the delivery will be during the latter part of the five year period. In some instances the management objectives may be achieved before the five year period has elapsed but in others successfully achieving the management objective will not occur until the second five year period.

Management and operational objectives to support Use Outcome

Fisheries resources are used in a manner that provides greatest overall economic, social and cultural benefit

Management Objective 1	Promote a viable and profitable tuna fishery in New Zealand

Operational objective 1.9	Regularly monitor the need for more active management of albacore, based on utilisation criteria

Assessment:

The New Zealand albacore fishery is open access, with no catch limits. Catches vary depending on the availability of albacore within New Zealand waters. The Fisheries Act 1996 establishes both sustainability and utilisation criteria for determining whether or not to manage a stock under the QMS. In relation to the utilisation criteria, the existing management framework may not be ideal to promote orderly development of the fishery. For example, uncertainty in relation to future allocation of rights may hinder investment in the fishery.

The Government's preference is for the QMS as a long-term management arrangement. Other stakeholders have a range of views. QMS management is likely to be supported by iwi because Maori will receive an allocation of 20% of the total allowable commercial catch (TACC) on introduction to the QMS. MFish is aware of industry views that further management measures for albacore should not be implemented until regional agreement is reached on management measures, and in particular national allocations (specific legislation to this effect applies to the application of the QMS to albacore outside of New Zealand fisheries waters).

However, as outlined under objective 6.9, setting a national catch limit in conjunction with other Pacific nations (whether through the QMS or other means e.g. by competitive catch limit) may well be an initial step towards improved regional management of the fishery. Such a catch limit could be set in a way that takes into account aspirations for development as well as past catches. Any proposal to include albacore in the QMS would be subject to consultation with stakeholders.

Risk: Medium

Performance criteria

- Relevant statutory considerations as to whether a stock or species may be introduced to the QMS are contained in the QMS Introduction standard and include whether existing management provides for utilisation that enables social, cultural, and economic well-being. Any alternative management arrangement would need a similar focus.

Priority: P2

Actions

- Assess albacore against the QMS standard and/or the need for alternative management arrangements as and when required

Operational objective 1.10	Maintain catch-based attribution of cost recovery levies

Assessment:

Ministry of Fisheries levies are charged for all key target and bycatch species, including albacore. Levies cover directed services such as research and generic services such as compliance and registry services. Generic levy charges are derived from a combination of total allowable commercial catch (TACC; for QMS species) or recent catches (for non-QMS species) and port price. Because of its highly migratory nature, albacore catches are variable from year to year and a system of basing cost recovery on actual catch rather than on catch limit or TACC is considered by industry to be fairer. The policy preference is generally to use TACC for QMS stocks, so any change for albacore (and any other HMS stock) would require close consideration. However, there is a strategic advantage in maintaining high TACs for HMS stocks until national allocations

are determined, so ways of minimising unintended effects of a high TAC on cost recovery levies should be sought.

Risk: Medium

Performance criteria

- Generic cost recovery levies not disproportionately high for albacore

Priority: P2

Actions

- Review or contribute to review of cost recovery levies that promotes an equitable approach for HMS fisheries (links to action 1.1 of National Fisheries Plan for HMS)

Operational objective 1.11	Devise incentives to add value to the albacore fishery

Assessment:

Almost all of New Zealand's albacore catch is currently exported to canneries. Some fish (particularly longline-caught fish) might also be suited to other, higher-value uses including as fresh product in domestic or export markets. Recent prices for sashimi-grade albacore have been equivalent to or higher than the price for yellowfin and bigeye tuna in the United States market.[1] Small-scale local developments include bottling of albacore.

Compared to other fishing methods, trolling has a limited environmental impact. Seafood markets are beginning to value more highly product from fisheries that are fished sustainably (including using methods with a low environmental impact), especially if this can be documented through certification. Drawing on consumer interest in sustainable fishing methods, the albacore fishery has initiated an assessment to achieve Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification.

Risk: Medium

Performance criteria

- Increased value of landed catch
- New Zealand-caught albacore achieves environmental certification

Priority: P1 (MSC certification) and **P4** (other options for adding value)

Actions

- Provide support as necessary for MSC certification process
- Industry to investigate options for adding value to catch as desired e.g. certification, alternative markets

Management and operational objectives to support Environment Outcome

The capacity and integrity of the aquatic environment, habitats and species are sustained at levels that provide for current and future use.

Management Objective 6	Maintain a sustainable fishery for HMS within environmental standards

Operational objective 6.8	Promote sustainable management of the South Pacific albacore stock including allocation of rights in the fishery

Assessment:

New Zealand has been working with Pacific Island countries to develop shared strategies for achieving sustainable management of the albacore fishery. This work has occurred particularly through the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and more recently an alliance of Polynesian countries,

[1] Source: FFA Fisheries Trade News Volume 3: Issue 4. April 2010.

Te Vaka Moana. Discussion has focussed on developing zone-based catch limits that could allow for coastal states' aspirations to further develop their fisheries. Allocation of rights in this way is seen as an important step for overall sustainable management, and necessary for moving from the current catch split, whereby a substantial portion of albacore is taken by distant water fishing nations on the high seas. There is concern that the current conservation and management measure for the stock, which places limits on vessel numbers, is not sufficient to prevent escalation in fishing effort.

Another rationale for looking closely at cooperative management of albacore at this time is that allocating rights is likely to be more straight-forward in the context of a fishery where existing catches can be maintained or increased (rather than in a depleted fishery where cuts are required). In addition, developing a collaborative approach to within-zone management will provide a solid platform to advocate for WCPFC to adopt complementary management measures on the high seas.

Maintaining the stock size of albacore in the western and central Pacific Ocean above that required to support the maximum sustainable yield is likely to be in the best interest of New Zealand and other Polynesian countries. There is a significant risk that stocks retract their range as they decline, so a smaller stock size could reduce availability in the waters of Te Vaka Moana countries including New Zealand. Other Te Vaka Moana countries also have an interest in maintaining reasonable catch rates for large albacore that are the basis of target longline fisheries. In general, as stocks are fished down, the average size of fish also declines.

Given the importance of these regional and sub-regional management initiatives to New Zealand stakeholders, it will be important to ensure stakeholders are well-informed and able to participate in developing New Zealand's negotiating position as appropriate.

Risk: Medium-High— albacore is not currently overfished, but the existing controls on the fishery in the Western and Central Pacific may not be adequate for meeting the aspirations of Pacific Island countries and/or limiting fishing effort to sustainable levels.

Performance criteria

- Management targets for albacore are consistent with the New Zealand harvest strategy standard (see www.fish.govt.nz)
- WCPFC identifies reference points and targets

Priority: P3

Actions

- Identify and advocate for targets and/or limits for albacore within the Western and Central Pacific Convention area by 2012 in cooperation with Pacific Island countries
- Advocacy for allocation of rights that provide for responsible development of New Zealand and Pacific fisheries
- Actively participate in stock assessment reviews for South Pacific albacore

Operational objective 6.9	Review management of the New Zealand fishery to achieve regional goals for stock-wide management

Assessment:

The regional approach to management of South Pacific albacore is likely to lead to adoption of within-zone controls on catches in the Te Vaka Moana countries. Such controls would not necessarily constrain catches to historical levels, since they could take account of development aspirations of coastal states (while remaining within overall sustainable limits for the fishery as a whole).

Within New Zealand, such controls could be implemented in a number of ways, including through competitive catch limits or through the QMS. As outlined under objective 1.7, the QMS is the Government's preferred management regime for albacore in New Zealand fisheries waters in the long term, but it may not be the best way of implementing regional management in the short term. Section 17B of the Fisheries Act 1996 outlines that for HMS outside New Zealand fisheries waters, the Minister may make such stocks subject to the QMS only to give effect to a national

allocation or other management measure by an international fisheries organisation in relation to that stock (see 17B(6)). Any management review would incorporate consultation with stakeholders.

Risk: Medium-high— While there are currently no sustainability concerns for albacore, there is a move towards a coordinated approach to management of the fishery to avoid sustainability concerns in the future. New Zealand would need to reflect this approach in its domestic management.

Performance criteria

- New Zealand implements regional agreements on albacore management in a way that reflects the characteristics and aspirations of the New Zealand fishery

Priority: P2

Actions

- Annually assess the need for further management within New Zealand fisheries waters required to support Te Vaka Moana agreements and/or WCPFC conservation and management measures
- Develop preferred means of implementing stock-wide management approach, taking into account the circumstances of the New Zealand fishery

Operational objective 6.10	Monitor the New Zealand albacore fishery to contribute into WCPFC science processes

Assessment:

The regional stock assessment undertaken for WCPFC incorporates monitoring information from the New Zealand fishery. This monitoring information (representative sampling of length composition, sex and maturity state and length-weight relationships) provides the only source of information on the juvenile portion of the stock, so is an important input into the stock assessment. It is proposed to continue to undertake this work as required, but to assess the appropriate frequency for sampling (currently annual). Periodic observer coverage has been used to better characterise the New Zealand portion of the fishery, including any bycatch of non-target species. Monitoring albacore catches in the longline fishery is also important for overall fishery monitoring.

Risk: Low— The research and monitoring likely to be required is relatively low cost, and has been well-supported to date.

Performance criteria

- As identified in specific research and observer coverage proposals (see annual operational plan)

Priority: P1

Actions

- Undertake stock monitoring of juvenile troll fishery
- Monitor fishery characteristics and bycatch with observer coverage
- Monitor trends in longline catches of albacore