

**Echebatar Sustainability Working Group**  
**Tuesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024. 10.00 am (CET)**  
**Minute**

**Participants: Ane Iriondo, Pablo González, Jose Luis Jauregui, Ian Scott (ECHEBASTAR), Marga Andrés (AZTI)**

1. The Final Draft Report for the MSC recertification of the Echebatar fishery has been published on the web sites of both MSC and Echebatar on March 11. If no objections are received, it is anticipated that the process will be complete in early May with a recertified fishery valid until May 2029.
2. Both ISSF and CTF had commented on the draft PCDR, and the CAB had responded in full to the various points made before confirming that Echebatar meets the MSC Standard.
3. Four conditions are defined, to performance indicators 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 3.2.2 and 3.2.3. The first three essentially refer to the same issue, the need for agreement on the allocation of global skipjack quotas, while the latter relates to the use of AIS. In addition, one recommendation is made.
4. The IOTC made proposals on management strategies and harvest control tools.
5. In relation to the issue of the use of AIS, it was noted that the threat from Houthi in the Red Sea and the Northern Indian Ocean, was growing (March 15 – [“Houthis vow to expand attacks against shipping into the Indian Ocean \(seatrade-maritime.com\)”](https://www.seatrade-maritime.com/news/houthi-vow-to-expand-attacks-against-shipping-into-the-indian-ocean)).
6. In a meeting held in Brussels on March 7 that was attended virtually by Iriondo and Scott, discussion included consideration of the significance of Appendix SE of the Standard v 3.0, and the implications for the certification of Indian Ocean tuna fisheries.
7. It was noted that the recommended global catch limit for Skipjack in the period 2024 – 2026 is 628,606 mt. This is an increase from the level of the previous 3 years that was set at 513,572 mt. [https://iotc.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024/03/Circular\\_2024-11 - Skipjack tuna catch limit E.pdf](https://iotc.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024/03/Circular_2024-11_-_Skipjack_tuna_catch_limit_E.pdf)
8. SIOTI is in the process of contracting a PMT coordinator. Jauregui and Iriondo will make contact with him at the forthcoming meeting of the IOTC in Bangkok.
9. The contribution of SIOTI to the maintenance costs of the Seychelles vessel contributing to FADWATCH, Saya de Malha, was discussed.
10. Oceanika’s collection of data of derelict dFADs was considered.
11. Scott and Iriondo will participate virtually in meetings on March 20 and April 4 convened by the SFA to validate the draft Seychelles Tuna Fishery Management Plan and the draft Tuna Industry Development Framework, respectively.
12. Prior to the IOTC Commission meeting there will be a preparatory one on April 18 that Echebatar will observe if possible.
13. April 13 is the closing date for the receipt of written submissions to the IOTC Commission meeting. Echebatar will not prepare anything, preferring to support whatever action by SIOTI.
14. The ESWG Work Plan May 2024 – April 2029 will be completed once the SIOTI Action Plan is confirmed.
15. Issues have been identified in the reporting of observer data. This is under investigation and probably an improved reporting protocol with the Seychelles based operatives will be required.
16. Regarding to the data on landings provided by Echebatar, there is a need to improve the breakdown of “other species” caught as evidence to the Seychelles authorities that no yellowfin is included.
17. Scott is finalizing his socio-economic report and is modifying the report on the implications of using MSC v3.0 to take account of the procedures relating to the application of Appendix SE.
18. The next meeting of ESWG is scheduled for April 26, 2024.