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WEBINAR

STRENGTHENING GLOBAL CAPACITY:

NEW ELEARNING SERIES ON MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

COMMON
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Tuna project

Strengthening Global Capacity: New eLearning Series on Management Procedures

11 February 2026

Questions and Answers

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1) For small island developing states (SIDS) with limited technical modelling capacity, what are the most practical first steps for initiating the adoption of management procedures in tuna fisheries?

A critical first step is capacity building to ensure that SIDS officials can engage meaningfully in the development process. In the Pacific Islands region, the Pacific Community (SPC) scientists provided scientific and technical modelling expertise that served as an important foundation for getting started. This was supplemented by four Management Options Workshops (MOWs) for WCPFC (Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission) members that were focused on building awareness and capacity around the MP concepts and approaches. These MOWs did not have any decision-making capacity and allowed for less formal discussions to support officials to develop a common understanding and approach such that by the time the Commission adopted a measure to commit to MP development, significant capacity development work had already taken place. There are also stakeholders other than members with knowledge and expertise that can be leveraged to support MP development in regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs). Organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) and Pew provided critical resources to WCPFC SIDS members in the early stages of MP development (e.g., www.HarvestStrategies.org). Resources are available to support SIDS that may not have the technical modelling capacity, and it is a matter of organizing and targeting those resources to support both capacity building and then implementation of MPs to ensure those investments are sustainable well into the future.

2) How can data generated by the private sector—such as processors, exporters, and electronic monitoring systems—be effectively integrated into management procedures to support more responsive decision-making?

This is a very important question. Much of the timeliest fisheries data comes from the private sector, for example, Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE), which is fundamental both for stock assessment and for MPs.

Private-sector data can improve MP responsiveness if integrated in a structured and transparent way. The key is to agree in advance on:

- What data will be used (e.g., CPUE, processor records, export data, electronic monitoring);
- How it will be validated;
- How it feeds into the MP and pre-agreed harvest control rules (HCRs).

Because these data streams are often high-frequency, they can:

- Update stock indicators in near real-time;
- Trigger timely management responses;
- Help evaluate whether the MP is functioning as expected (including via Exceptional Circumstance protocols).

However, independent scientific oversight and strong data governance are essential to preserve credibility and trust. When those conditions are met, private-sector data can strengthen MPs without compromising scientific robustness.

To that end, it is of primary importance to guarantee that this sector is fully engaged, aware of the outcomes, and supportive of the development of the management strategy evaluation (MSE) from its outset.



3) Are there examples where management procedures have been successfully implemented in data-limited fisheries, and what lessons would be most relevant for countries in the Indian Ocean tuna region? How effective MPs and MSEs are when applied to data-poor fisheries (are there "real-world" implementation examples)?

We are not aware of any MPs in place for data-limited international fisheries. However, there are data-limited MSE tools that can evaluate MPs for fisheries with fewer data. Data availability can even be used as one of the uncertainties in the MSE, testing the impact of missing data on the MP's performance.

MPs often use simplified data-processing methods (e.g., surplus production model rather than age-structured model) to reduce computational burden, even for data-rich fisheries. Further, empirical rules that use one or more abundance indices to directly set fishing opportunities can be viable options for data-poor fisheries, as long as there is at least one reliable index.

A [demonstration MSE was conducted for longtail tuna at IOTC](#) but has not yet been used for management of the data-limited stock.

4) How do management procedures ensure fair resource allocation among distant-water fishing nations, coastal states (like the Philippines), small island developing states, and developing countries? Could they unintentionally favor fleets with better data or monitoring capacity?

Allocation is a critical element of management procedure success since MPs cannot be implemented effectively if the MP output, such as a catch or effort limit, isn't allocated among parties. Allocation discussions can be informed and facilitated by MPs since a) MPs provide a better idea of what fishing opportunities will be over a longer period of time, and thus how much an allocation share will amount to in the future, and b) MSE can test potential impacts of allocation (e.g., to certain gear types) on allowable fishing levels. Because MPs can include diverse management objectives, fisheries may opt to ensure fairness by including specific objectives that direct socioeconomic benefits to developing countries. For example, the tropical tuna purse seine fishery in the Western and Central Pacific includes the following objectives:

- i. Increase fisheries-based development within developing states (SIDS) economies, especially on-shore processing capacity.
- ii. Maximise SIDS revenues from resource rents
- iii. Food security in developing states (import replacement)
- iv. Avoid adverse impacts on small scale fishers

We're unaware of any situations or potential scenarios where MPs could unintentionally favor fleets with better data or monitoring capacity. One caveat is that in WCPFC, provision was made for increased bigeye tuna catch quotas commensurate with increased monitoring coverage. In an MP scenario, we could envision a party receiving more allocation that can be easily monitored as a way to incentivize better data collection and monitoring, overall.



5) Are there risks that MPs could disproportionately affect artisanal or small-scale fishers compared to large industrial fleets?

This question gets to the heart of why Management Procedures must be designed not only to be scientifically robust, but also fair, transparent, and workable across very different national capacities. MPs cannot by themselves solve political allocation questions—but they can create a more predictable and equitable basis for negotiating those decisions.

First, MPs promote fairness because they apply the same pre-agreed rule to all fishing nations, regardless of fleet size or economic power. Everyone signs onto the same decision framework before the outcomes are known, which helps level the playing field and reduces last-minute bargaining. This transparency is especially important for developing coastal States and SIDS, who often face asymmetries in negotiation strength.

Second, MPs can—and should—be designed around indicators that all parties can reasonably collect, not just those with sophisticated monitoring systems. Many data-poor fisheries already rely on simple indicators such as effort limits, catch triggers, size structure, or spatial/seasonal closures. These types of measures have proven effective in coastal and community-based management systems, which often emphasize legitimacy and voluntary compliance to overcome limited enforcement capacity. Designing MPs around such realistic data streams helps ensure that no country is disadvantaged because its monitoring system is less technologically advanced.

Third, there is always a risk that rules could disproportionately affect groups with less political influence—particularly artisanal or small-scale fishers. This is why the governance context matters as much as the technical design. If MPs are developed through inclusive, co-design processes, they tend to better reflect the realities of small-scale fleets, and can incorporate safeguards such as separate effort pools, spatial exemptions, or community-managed measures.

6) How is the FAO utilizing SNP chips or eDNA to distinguish between sub populations of Tuna in the Indian ocean, and are these markers integrated into the management practices?

FAO and its partners are supporting SNP-based and emerging eDNA research to better understand Indian Ocean tuna population structure. Today, these tools inform the science behind MPs, but they are not yet operational indicators within management procedures. Over time, as genetic monitoring becomes cheaper and more standardized, it could play a larger role in defining stocks and improving future MPs, as in the case of Southern bluefin tuna where genetic tools are inputs to the current MP.



7) How sustainable are the FADs for Small Scale Fisheries? We are supporting a NGO that would like Small Scale Fishermen at the Coastal area in Jalisco, México.

That's an excellent question, because the sustainability of fish aggregating devices (FADs) really depends on how they're designed, where they're used, and how they're governed. For small-scale fisheries—especially in coastal developing States and SIDS—FADs can be a highly positive tool, but only under the right conditions.

First, when FADs are anchored nearshore and built with non-entangling and biodegradable materials, they can be very sustainable. They reduce fuel costs, improve safety, and shift effort away from fragile reef ecosystems. Many community-based fisheries rely on FADs to diversify catches and stabilize food supply, which can be especially important where coastal resources are already under pressure.

Second, FADs work best for small-scale fishers when they are part of a co-managed system. When communities help decide how many FADs are deployed, who can use them, and how they're maintained, compliance improves and conflicts decrease. This mirrors broader lessons about voluntary compliance and legitimacy in coastal fisheries management—when the rules feel fair and locally grounded, people tend to follow them.

8) Leaders, what impact does the lack of political will and adequate technical expertise among decision-makers have on the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of effective public policies that promote food availability, stability, utilization, and—most importantly—access to safe and quality food for the most vulnerable?

It's true that a lack of political will can sometimes delay policy progress, including at the RFMOs, thereby compromising food security. Because MPs are pre-agreed frameworks for fishery management decision-making, they can help safeguard against political roadblocks. Once the MP is adopted and implemented, the management action is clear. This is one of the primary benefits of MPs. Importantly, political will be committed to the outcomes of MPs, provided that managers are well informed and given an opportunity to provide strong feedback to the MSE process to ensure that the pre-agreed framework corresponds to the risks and opportunities that scientists and managers together can identify, administrate, and decide upon.

9) What do you think of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF)? Is it a separate topic or is it also a multidisciplinary approach?

EAF is indeed related to management procedures since MPs and MSE are tools that can help to implement EAF on the water, including through the use of ecosystem management objectives, indicators and reference points, multi-species MPs, and bycatch considerations. To learn more, [click here](#).



10) Countries like Somalia have significant potential for marine resources, particularly in tuna and similar species. How can we implement MPs, and what other management plans would be suitable for effectively managing our marine resources.

Thanks for this question. It's wonderful that Somalia would like to improve the management of its fisheries using MPs. As a member of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), Somalia already has MPs in place for its bigeye, skipjack and swordfish fisheries. Efforts to improve monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) programs regionally and domestically are important for successful MP implementation. By increasing engagement in the MP development process at IOTC, including through participation in the [dialogue meetings on MPs](#), Somalia can build capacity on both the science and management sides. We would be happy to organize an online capacity building session for your ministry as a customized training to build on the [new eLearning course](#). Please contact info@harveststrategies.org, if you're interested.

11) MPs are only effective when they are properly implemented. How do we make sure that management authorities implement the limits required by these rules, even when they call for a decrease in catch of a valuable stock, especially after years of increases and industry investment?

This is an important and timely question. Management procedures are a way to agree on the rules for fishing before fishing begins, and as we heard from our panelists, they have proven to provide increasing fishing opportunities even while rebuilding depleted stocks. But to be effective and perform as expected, those rules must be followed when a catch reduction is required. If decision-makers fail to implement an MP-dictated catch decrease, they jeopardize the MP's success and can no longer claim it is setting limits. Managers should commit to full implementation of the rules that have been scientifically tested or risk losing the benefits of having an MP in place, such as Marine Stewardship Council certification. They should trust in the MP approach resulting from the commitment of the participants in the fisheries (managers, scientists, fishers and industries), prioritizing the longer-term benefits (e.g., increased catches and profits) that will be secured by adjusting fishing opportunities up or down based on the established rules.

12) Climate change is drastically affecting the management of various fisheries. Science is lagging behind these changes due to their rapid pace. How should we proceed?

As a science-based, adaptive approach, MSE-tested management procedures can plan for, detect, and respond to climate change. MSE testing helps identify the MP that is most likely to meet objectives across a range of uncertainties, including those related to climate change (e.g., productivity and distribution). The MP feedback loop can detect climate impacts through monitoring data and assessment steps, and the harvest control rule can respond to any detected impacts in a timely manner. For more extreme situations, most MPs include so-called Exceptional Circumstance Protocols that guide how to proceed in rare or unforeseen scenarios. Fisheries should incorporate testing for climate change resilience into their MP development processes. To learn more, [click here](#).



13) Why do many tuna RFMOs still experience delays or missed deadlines in adopting and fully implementing management procedures for key stocks? What are the main political, technical, or capacity-related barriers? How can we speed up the transition from traditional year-by-year negotiations to pre-agreed MPs, especially when some member countries oppose automatic rules that might reduce short-term catches?

Balancing a broad spectrum of priorities and interests across an equally broad spectrum of members in multi-gear, multi-species and sometimes multi-stock fisheries takes time. In WCPFC, members did not “adopt” management objectives; they “recorded” them. This was an essential first step in the process and, by recording (not adopting) objectives, it allowed members to move forward sooner rather than later. It would have taken many years to get agreement among all members on objectives that captured the vast range of interests. This is an example of why this process takes time.

That said, the process is aided each year by ongoing capacity building and strengthening of understanding among officials (including managers and scientists) on how MPs work. At the same time, annual improvements in data—both in abundance and quality—provide stronger foundations that build members’ confidence in MP adoption and application. A key component of steady progress lies also in the relationships between members, where trust and open communication are essential to getting agreement on MPs that might reduce fishing opportunities for some but not all parties.

14) I am interested in attending both the online and in-person training. How do I go about doing that?

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