

NPFC and global marine expertise reviews measures around bottom fish & marine ecosystems, and Pacific saury stock assessment

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The NPFC Scientific Committee (SC) and its subsidiary bodies met in December 2023 in association with the NPFC Members from Canada, China, the European Union, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Chinese Taipei, the United States of America and Vanuatu, and other observers from inter- and non-governmental organizations as well as invited experts.

Two subsidiary body meetings were held before the SC meeting and discussed bottom fish and marine ecosystems, and stock assessment of Pacific saury, respectively.

- The Small Scientific Committee on Bottom Fish and Marine Ecosystems proposed revisions of the conservation and management measures for bottom fisheries and protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems (VME), discussed stock assessment and management of North Pacific armorhead, splendid alfonsino and sablefish, and reviewed the progress in VME identification and assessment of the impact of bottom fisheries on VMEs.
- The Small Scientific Committee on Pacific Saury (SSC PS) updated stock assessment of Pacific saury using Bayesian state-space production models, discussed plans for developing age-structured models, and provided scientific advice for the management of Pacific saury stock. The SSC PS also supported the development of an interim harvest control rule for Pacific saury. In addition, the Technical Working Group on Chub Mackerel Stock Assessment (TWG CMSA) presented to the SC the outputs.
- The TWG CMSA evaluated the performance of four candidate models and selected a stock assessment model for chub mackerel. The TWG CMSA will have a data preparation meeting in January 2024 and aims to complete its first stock assessment in 2024.

The Scientific Committee reviewed recommendations from the subsidiary body meetings and provided scientific advice to the Commission with respect to the management of fisheries resources and protection of marine ecosystems in the NPFC Convention Area. The SC reviewed the progress of four small working groups for other priority species (neon flying squid, Japanese flying squid, Japanese sardine, blue mackerel) which worked intersessionally on data collation and species summaries. The SC established a new SSC on Neon Flying Squid to focus on conducting stock assessment and providing scientific advice on this species. The SC updated its 5-year Research and Work Plans, addressed issues related to data collection, management and security, and discussed recent and future cooperation with other organizations to facilitate the implementation of the Work Plan. The next SC meeting is tentatively scheduled to take place in Tokyo, Japan from 17-20 December 2024.