

13th MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

8 to 13 September 2025, Wellington, New Zealand

SC13 - DW 04

Proposal to hold Toothfish workshop at SC14

Australia

Proposal to hold Toothfish workshop at SC 14 (2026)

Purpose

The purpose of the workshop is to develop the necessary scientific advice to transition exploratory toothfish fisheries into a single established management regime prior to the 10 year limit being reached.

Need

There are currently four exploratory fisheries for toothfish in SPRFMO being conducted by Australia, the EU, Korea and New Zealand. A previous exploratory fisheries was conducted by New Zealand in areas that now partially overlap with the Korean exploratory fishery. Most of the southern area of SPRFMO where toothfish are thought to occur are covered by exploratory fisheries.

The objective of the SPRFMO exploratory fisheries regime CMM13-2024 is to *ensure that sufficient information is available to evaluate the long term potential of new and exploratory fisheries, to assist the formulation of management advice, to evaluate the possible impacts on target stocks and non-target and associated and dependent species, to ensure new and exploratory fishery resources are developed on a precautionary and gradual basis and to promote the sustainable management of new and exploratory fisheries.*

CMM13-2024 also outlines that after 10 years of exploratory fishing, further fishing should only occur under a CMM for an established fishery. The process of moving a fishery from a new and exploratory phase to an established fishery is anticipated to be relatively complex and take several years. There are no examples of this being undertaken in SPRFMO since the introduction of the current exploratory fishing regime.

Exploratory fishing for toothfish by New Zealand vessels commenced in SPRFMO in 2016. New Zealand's current exploratory fishery occurs further west than these initial fishing grounds, but some of the areas subject to exploratory fishing are now within the Korean exploratory fishery.

Depending on the interpretation of CMM13-2024, exploratory fisheries for toothfish will need to be transitioned to an established fishery over in the next few years.

Discussion

Currently, each of the current four exploratory fisheries are managed through separate CMMs, and none of these fisheries overlap in area. Each CMM spells out the requirements for data collection, management and monitoring and there is considerable scope to standardise requirements for tagging, reporting, observer coverage and other requirements for scientific assessment.

The transition to an established fishery will need to consider spatial management and catch setting processes, and arguably priority access rights in recognition of the efforts by the nations conducting these exploratory fisheries. It will be necessary to evaluate the current areas defined within exploratory fishery CMMs to determine if they are appropriate for ongoing management. The workshop should also provide advice on the spatial separation between the two *Dissostichus* species.

Establishing the amount of fishable area within each proposed zone will be important. As highlighted in some proposals, the use of GEBCO in establishing this would be a good starting point.

SPRFMO will also need to develop a regime for setting catch limits. Given the proximity of most of the SPRMFO fisheries to CCAMLR, it is likely that SPRFMO will need to consider a regime that aligns with CCAMLR for example;

- Conducting joint assessments where appropriate (including the non-CCAMLR Macquarie Island fishery) and catch sharing
- Conducting stock assessments within SPRFMO where the data exists and applying CCAMLR decision rules
- Using consistent decision rules (e.g. trend analysis of CPUE-by-seabed area method and Chapman mark recapture method) where there is not enough data for a stock assessment.

Allocation of any future catch limits is out of scope for the Scientific Committee process, and it is recognized that the Commission will need to develop their position on this.

Recommendation

It is recommended that SC;

- **Agree** to hold a workshop immediately prior to SC14 to initiate the process of developing a framework that would assist with the transitioning of exploratory toothfish fisheries to established fisheries, once the 10-year limit has been reached.
- **Comment on and Agree** to the draft terms of reference (Attachment 1).

Attachment 1 - Draft Terms of Reference

The workshop will be held in person immediately prior to SC14. The workshop shall be facilitated by the [DWWG Chair/independent facilitator].

The workshop will review all available information on exploratory toothfish fisheries up until 2025. To facilitate this, each exploratory toothfish fishery proponent will be requested to provide a summary of their exploratory fishing activities prior to 31 December 2025 and submit it by [30 April/ 31 May /30 June 2026]. The DWWG Chair will consolidate this information into a single background paper outlining the history of exploratory toothfish fishing and data available. This paper, in collaboration with all proponents, shall be submitted as an SC14 paper.

The workshop shall consider and make recommendations for consistent provisions for;

- Catch and effort reporting
- Observer coverage and reports
- Tagging rates
- Bycatch limits
- Seabird mitigation measures (by method)
- Any other provisions considered relevant

The workshop shall consider the most appropriate spatial areas for management [possibly provide map of current areas].

The workshop shall recommend an appropriate framework or workplan to develop a SPRFMO regime for setting toothfish catch limits. Where possible this should be consistent with existing arrangements in established toothfish fisheries elsewhere (adjacent or otherwise).

Future allocation of catch limits is out of scope for this workshop.

The workshop will be open to all Scientific Committee participants including observers.