

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Scientific Committee

Port Vila, Vanuatu  
28 September - 3 October 2015

#### SC-03-DW-01

#### Summary of New Zealand's potential exploratory bottom longlining proposal *New Zealand*

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New Zealand is considering putting forward, for the Scientific Committee's consideration, a proposal for the fishing vessel *San Aspiring*, operated by Sanford Ltd, to be authorised to undertake exploratory bottom longlining in the SPRFMO area. The purpose of the proposal is to ensure that New Zealand fully meets its SPRFMO obligations in CMM 2.03 to comprehensively assess the potential impacts of new bottom fishing activity in areas outside of its current footprint.

The proposal being considered is to undertake a stepwise research programme of ground location, ground observation for fishing feasibility, and, if suitable grounds are found, test fishing. If such tests are successful New Zealand would ultimately propose to the Committee the commencement of commercial-scale fishing in these areas. It is envisaged that the first three steps would take place when occasions permit.

Fishing operations during any of these instances would take place over no more than a 7 to 10 day period but most likely over a shorter period. In an ideal situation on good sea-bottom, approximately five lines a day totalling about 20,000 hooks could be set and hauled.

In the event that a large enough area of fishable ground with economic catch rates is identified, more extensive fishing operations could be conducted sometime during a period bounded by August and early November 2016 following the Committee's agreement.

The main target species is likely to be **Patagonian toothfish** *Dissostichus eleginoides*. There is also potential for some catch of **Antarctic toothfish** *Dissostichus mawsoni* although given the more southerly distribution of that species, this is considered less likely.

By way of background, two New Zealand vessels reported bottom longline fishing for toothfish in the SPRFMO Area in the reference years 2002–2006. That fishing targeted Patagonian toothfish (*Dissostichus eleginoides*) and about 4 tonnes of toothfish was reported from SPRFMO General Fishing Areas known as the Hjort Trench and the Southwest Pacific Basin.