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The Jack Mackerel fishery and the future of fisheries management in the Southeast Pacific

Since the start of rounds of negotiation for the establishment of South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SP-RFMO), in 2006, in Wellington, New Zealand, it has been clear that the only way to ensure sustainability and the future of fishing in the South Pacific was to manage fisheries sustainably using the ecosystem approach.

Almost five years later, and after various consulting meetings, we are *ad portas* to the Second Preparatory Meeting in Cali, Colombia, which should give the opportunity to the creation of the “Convention on the Conservation and Management of the High Seas Fishery Resources of the South Pacific Ocean”.

Although it has progressed in political/administrative management for the creation of the convention recently mentioned, this effort seems to be faced up to a crucial dilemma: to manage resources that are at the edge of collapsing and to deal with a regime based on the emergency of measures to stop this situation.

In November 2009, at the meeting in Auckland, Greenpeace circulated a proposal for a 50% cut in jack mackerel fisheries. It is clear that call was valid then. Not only was that advice not followed, but no meaningful cuts were agreed. We risk seeing a fishery, and a RFMO, fail due to short term greed and nationalism.

Hardly three months ago, in October of 2010, the Scientific Sub-working Group about Jack Mackerel (*Trachurus picturatus murphy*) of SP-RFMO, met in Chile to analyze the results of diverse studies (Catching Statistical Model of age) which were developed during 2010 in Lima, Peru and Seattle, USA. These studies revised the current conditions of this fishery, which is the most important of Southeast Pacific and gave conclusions that are urgent for all sides and fisheries participants to act in an immediate way to ensure Jack Mackerel conservation.

The results gave by the sub-working group about Jack Mackerel, summarized in report of the Scientific Working Group of the 9th Meeting¹, details the population precarious situation which constantly has been reduced since 2006. Also indicates that total Jack Mackerel bio-mass has been reduced in a 79% since 2001, being in a historical lowest level of 2.1 million tons.

The analyzed models by scientific of 10 countries that participate in negotiations, note that the only hope to improve the current Jack Mackerel population conditions is reducing the current catching in a 50%. Any maintenance of the catching rate over the noted reduction makes worse the current crisis of the resource.

These recommendations were done in November of 2009 in Auckland, New Zealand, when the 8th Scientific Working Group Meeting noted that² “...*Fishing mortality (F) is*

1 <http://www.southpacificrfmo.org/assets/9th-SWG-and-8th-DIWG-Meetings-October-2010-Vina-del-Mar-Chile/SWG-IX/9th-SWG-Report-Final-Adopted-28Oct2010-corrected.pdf>

likely to have exceeded sustainable levels since at least 2002,” and insisted that “all indicate that further declines in stock status are likely unless fishing mortality is reduced, particularly if recruitment remains poor.” And insist that “To stop further declines and re-build this jack mackerel stock, urgent and adequate measures will be required to limit fishing mortality to sustainable levels. Indicators suggest that this will require a decrease in fishing mortality. Given current declines in estimated biomass, a decrease in fishing mortality will require a reduction in total removals.”

Meanwhile, members of the South Pacific Permanent Commission (SPPC), in a meeting in November in Quito, Ecuador, developed a declaration³ in which they pointed out that “*they share a permanent worry for the sustainable development in the fishery activity in high seas and the ordering and conservation of transboundary species and highly migratory*”. Also, “*they are confident in the course of the Second Session of the Preparatory Conference of the SP-RFMO, it is proceed to revise the current Internal Measures and to adopt efficient interim measures to the resources sustainability in a long term, with a base in the scientific information available*”, and “*to urge to the participant countries in the negotiations in the SP-RFMO to adequate the Jack Mackerel capture rates in the applicable convention area during 2011 and 2012, to levels that permit the recuperation of fishery, with reference to the Interim Scientific Working Group*” and finally “*the participant countries are exhort to be part of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of the High Seas Fishery Resources of the South Pacific Ocean*”.

What is needed to restore the sustainability of the Southeast Pacific Jack Mackerel?

With this background and taking into account that the South Pacific is one of the places that still remain without a regional fisheries management body in international waters, Greenpeace demands that:

1. Reduce at least the 60% of catches of jack mackerel, to take into account to the Jack Mackerel Scientific Sub-Working Group recommendations as well as the precautionary approach and inevitable compliance failures.
2. Take measures to ensure the sustainability for long term resources. That include access limitation, location verification, harvest reports and closure during spawning season *inter alia*.
3. To speed up the process of ratification of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of the High Seas Fishery Resources of the South Pacific Ocean.

The Southeast Pacific has become a new overexploited area in our oceans. It must not be destroyed as a fishery on our watch.

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2 <http://www.southpacificrfmo.org/assets/8th-Meeting-November-2009-New-Zealand/Plenary-VIII/8th-SWG-Report-Final-Adopted-6-Nov-09-JMA-ependicies-fixed-maps-fixed-24-Nov-09-5pm.pdf>

3 http://cpps.dyndns.info/asambleas/ix_asamblea/finales/Declaraci%C3%B3n%20Pa%C3%ADses%20CPPS%20a%20OROP.pdf