

**2nd joint meeting of the Small Working Groups on JFS, JS, and BM**

**November 6, 2024 (9 am – 1 pm Tokyo time)**

**WebEx**

**Summary**

**Agenda Item 1. Opening of the Meeting**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> joint meeting of the Small Working Groups on JFS, JS, and BM in 2024 commenced at 9am on 6 November 2024 Tokyo time in the format of video conferencing via WebEx. The meeting was attended by Members from Canada, China, Japan, Russia, and the USA as well as the Secretariat. The list of participants is attached.

The meeting was opened by Dr. Janelle Curtis (SC Chair, Canada) who served as the Chair of this joint meeting and was supported by the Leads of the SWGs: Dr. Hajime Matsui (Japan), Dr. Chris Rooper (Canada) and Dr. Kazunari Higashiguchi (Japan).

**Agenda Item 2. Adoption of Agenda**

There were no amendments to the agenda.

In preparation for discussions on a Regional Observer Program (ROP), the Chair outlined a few paragraphs from the NPFC's Convention that are relevant to the Scientific Committee's scientific objectives for a ROP:

**Article 3 General Principles**

(d) assessing the impacts of fishing activities on species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent upon or associated with the target stocks and adopting, where necessary, conservation and management measures for such species with a view to maintaining or restoring the populations of such species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened;

(f): Preventing or eliminating overfishing and excess fishing capacity, and ensuring that levels of fishing effort or harvest levels are based on the best scientific information available and do not exceed those commensurate with the sustainable use of the fisheries resources;

(g): Ensuring that complete and accurate data concerning fishing activities, including with respect to all target and non-target species within the Convention Area, are collected and shared in a timely and appropriate manner;

## Article 10: Functions of Scientific Committee

(d): assess the impacts of fishing activities on fisheries resources and species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent upon or associated with the target stocks.

### Agenda Item 3. Japanese Flying Squid

Dr. Hajime Matsui led discussions of the SWG JFS. The presentation from the Lead is available on the Collaboration website under SC / [Japanese Flying Squid](#).

#### 3.1 Report from China on availability of more biological information from the nursery area for Japan's domestic stock assessment.

The Lead invited China to provide an update on the availability of biological information from the JFS nursery area for Japan's domestic stock assessment.

China (Libin Dai) responded that there is no additional biological information available for this area.

#### 3.2 Identifying scientific objectives of a regional observer program (ROP)

#### 3.3 Discussing data that would need to be collected and the level of observer coverage needed on fishing vessels to achieve the scientific objectives of a ROP

The Lead presented a time series of the ratio of JFS catch in the Convention Area (CA) and Members' Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) in 1995-2023. He pointed out that the catch of JFS in the CA was very small and did not exceed 3%. Most of the catch came from squid jigging fisheries which have very small bycatch of other species. Based on these observations, the Lead concluded that there may be no need for an ROP in the Convention Area.

In response to the question about the distribution of JFS, the Lead explained that JFS is mainly distributed in Members' national waters and much less abundant in the CA.

The SWG JFS **agreed** that there is no need for an ROP in the Convention Area to collect data on JFS and/or bycatch species from squid jigging fisheries.

#### 3.4 Observing domestic stock assessment of JFS, inter alia, Japan's standardized CPUEs

The Lead informed participants that the results of Japan's domestic stock assessment for JFS will be presented to SC09 in December. At this meeting, the Lead gave a presentation on CPUE standardization for the winter spawning stock of JFS which is distributed in the CA and the EEZs of Japan and Russia. He presented the method for estimation of JFS biomass, data used for standardizing CPUE from coastal squid jigging fisheries, and CPUE standardization process and results.

The SWG JFS noted the standardized CPUE for the winter spawning stock of JFS and thanked the lead for his informative presentation.

### 3.5 Updating the species summary documents

The Lead presented updates for the species summary of JFS including Japan's updated domestic stock assessment, catch and effort statistics, data availability table and references. He will upload the updated species summary on the Collaboration site for review by Members.

On the question about oceanographic variables, the Lead responded that they were not included directly in the assessment but were used to explain annual variation in JFS biomass.

Participants discussed cannibalism in JFS stocks and noted that there is limited evidence of cannibalism in JFS, therefore the effect of cannibalism can be ignored in the stock assessment of JFS.

## Agenda Item 4. Japanese Sardine

Dr. Chris Rooper led discussions of the SWG JS. The presentation from the Lead is available on the Collaboration website under SC / [Japanese Sardine](#).

### 4.1 Report from Russia on availability of size composition data up to 2023 in accordance with the data template.

Russia (Oleg Katugin) reported that the requested data were prepared by Dr. Antonenko and after the final check will be shared with the group. The data set covers the period from 2015 to 2024.

### 4.2 Identifying scientific objectives of a regional observer program (ROP)

### 4.3 Discussing data that would need to be collected and the level of observer coverage needed on fishing vessels to achieve the scientific objectives of a ROP

The Lead presented a summary table of data available from Members regarding Japanese sardine and invited Members to share their views on whether or not there are any data gaps which may require an ROP.

Japan (Kazuhiro Oshima) reported that Japan updated its domestic stock assessment of JS in August using its own data and data from China. Japan thanked China for providing the data that helped improve their domestic stock assessment, which will ultimately inform the NPFC. Japan requested that China continue collection and sharing of length, weight, age and maturity data. Japan plans to incorporate Russian data into the stock assessment next year.

The SWG JS **agreed** that, thanks to collaborative efforts of China, Japan and Russia, there is no need for additional data for the stock assessment of JS. Therefore, there is no data needed for this species from a ROP.

China (Libin Dai) pointed out that data sharing requires an approval from fisheries authorities and suggested that SC09 make a recommendation to the Commission requesting Members to provide data on JS for the stock assessment conducted by Japan. The Lead suggested that such a recommendation should also express the value of this data and the domestic stock assessment for the SC and Commission.

Participants noted that SC09 will discuss whether or not it needs an ROP to monitor impact of fisheries on species belonging to same ecosystem or dependent/associated with target stocks. They also noted that JS, BM and CM are often caught together as target species or bycatch in different types of fishing gear (e.g. purse seines, trawls).

#### 4.4 Observing domestic stock assessment of JS, *inter alia*, Japan's standardized CPUEs

Japan (Kazunari Higashiguchi) gave a presentation on CPUE standardization conducted by Japan as part of its domestic stock assessment. He presented the methods and results of CPUE standardizations for three abundance indices from the egg abundance survey for spawning stock biomass, autumn survey for age 0 and summer survey for ages 0 and 1.

The SWG JS noted the standardized CPUE for JS and thanked the lead for his informative presentation.

There was a question regarding whether Japan had considered calculating CPUE using 3 dimensions rather than 2 dimensions (e.g. volume filtered rather than area swept). Japan responded that the distribution of JS is only in surface waters to 40 m depth, and as such a 2 dimensional estimate of effort for each tow is adequate.

On the question of if there was a discrepancy between acoustic surveys and trawling, Japan responded that they would explain this at SC09.

On the question of the occurrence of sardine from the Northeast Pacific Ocean in the western Pacific Ocean, Japan explained that no mixture between the two stocks was assumed.

Japan informed participants that the results of Japan's domestic stock assessment for JS will be presented to SC09 in December.

#### 4.5 Updating the species summary documents

The Lead presented the updated species summary for JS. Japan will provide the results of its domestic SA to the Lead. The draft version of the species summary will be uploaded on the Collaboration site for review by Members.

#### Agenda Item 5. Blue Mackerel

Dr. Kazunari Higashiguchi led discussions of the SWG BM. The presentation from the Lead is available on the Collaboration website under SC / [Blue Mackerel](#).

##### 5.1 Update from China and Russia on information on the ratio of CM and BM in their mackerel catches.

The Lead presented a summary of the ratio of BM and CM in the mackerel catch by China, Japan and Russia.

Russia (Oleg Katugin) confirmed that BM bycatch in its CM fisheries is negligible, and fishermen do not separate these two species.

The Lead requested China to consult their authorities to allow using the BM/CM ratio from Chinese fisheries in Japan's domestic stock assessment. Japan also underscored the value of this information for stock assessment of CM.

The Chair suggested that SC may recommend to COM that all Members share this information with Japan.

##### 5.2 Update from China on availability of data in accordance with the template from SWG BM and, if needed, other templates developed by the Lead.

The Lead reported that Japan was not able to receive BM data from China and expressed hope that China's authorities will authorize sharing data from Chinese fisheries for Japan's domestic stock assessment for the next year.

##### 5.3 Identifying scientific objectives of a regional observer program (ROP)

##### 5.4 Discussing data that would need to be collected and the level of observer coverage needed on fishing vessels to achieve the scientific objectives of a ROP

The Lead expressed his view that, to reduce uncertainties in stock assessment, it would be helpful to collect more biological data (length-weight relationship, catch-at-length, age-length key, etc) and data on the CM/BM ratio in mackerel catches.

China (Heng Zhang) noted that BM ratio is lower in trawl fisheries in comparison with purse seine fisheries. He added that it is difficult for China to collect data on the CM/BM ratio every month and suggested to collect such data quarterly.

Japan (Kazuhiro Oshima) highlighted the importance of data on CM/BM ratio for stock assessment and expressed intention to further work on this issue.

#### 5.5 Observing domestic stock assessment of BM, inter alia, Japan's standardized CPUEs

The Lead presented CPUE standardization for two indices used in stock assessment by Japan, stick-held dip net for age 1 fish and egg survey for spawning stock biomass. He explained the methods used and presented the results of CPUE standardization.

The SWG BM noted the standardized CPUE for MB and thanked the lead for his informative presentation.

On the question about the dip net fisheries operated by Japan in Shizuoka, the Lead responded that there are two fisheries: one is stick-held dip net fishery targeting BM and another one is normal dip net fishery targeting CM.

Japan informed participants that the results of Japan's domestic stock assessment for BM will be presented to SC09 in December.

#### 5.6 Updating the species summary documents

The Lead informed participants that he will update the species summary for BM as follows: data (catch, data availability table, stock assessment results, etc) will be updated; description in relation to Russian catch will be deleted; the information that Russian BM catch is 0 will be added.

China (Libin Dai) made a general suggestion for all three species, JFS, JS and BM, that SC recommend to COM that all Members' data used for Japan's domestic stock assessments should be made publicly available.

Participants agreed to further discuss this recommendation at SC09.

#### Agenda Item 6. Outstanding SWG JFS, SWG JS, and SWG BM tasks.

The Chair thanked the SWGs for making good progress. The outcomes of the intersessional work of the SWGs JFS, JS & BM will be reviewed by SC09 in December.

#### Agenda Item 7. Close of the Meeting

The meeting closed at 11:45pm on 6 November 2024 Tokyo time.



**List of Participants****CHAIR**

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