

# Investigation Results on Japanese sardine's 3-alpha code

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[SSC JS01, 26-28 July 2026]

NPFC Secretariat

## In SC10 Recommendation



North Pacific Fisheries Commission

As recommended in paragraph 130 of the NPFC Scientific Committee's SC10 report:

*“The SC noted that there is currently **no FAO 3-alpha species code for Japanese sardine (Sardinops melanostictus)** and that the Secretariat has had to classify Japanese sardine under the FAO code for Pacific sardine (*Sardinops sagax*, **CHP**).*

**The SC agreed that Japanese sardine should have its own FAO 3-alpha species code.**

*The SC requested that the Chair make a formal request to the FAO to assign a species code to Japanese sardine. The SC suggested that the Chair could cite*

*<https://doi.org/10.1111/mec.17561>, among other studies, as part of the rationale.”*



# Following the SC10 Recommendation



North Pacific Fisheries Commission

The **NPFC-SC Chair** asked FAO whether a new 3-alpha code could be assigned to Japanese sardine (*Sardinops melanostictus*).



## **FAO responded that:**

- Japanese sardine is not a new species in ASFIS.
- 3-alpha code for Japanese sardine remains “**JAP.**”
- A new code for Japanese sardine cannot be assigned, therefore the existing code “**JAP**” should be retained to ensure consistency with the historical dataset.



# A History of the ASFIS List (1987–2020)



The ASFIS list was adopted in **1987** as the primary taxonomic reference, based on *Eschmeyer's Catalog of Fishes*.

**Until 2020:** three separate codes existed for *Sardinops*:

**JAP**

Japanese sardine  
*Sardinops melanostictus*

**CHP**

Pacific sardine  
*Sardinops sagax*

**PAI**

South African sardine  
*Sardinops ocellatus*

Treated as different species and recorded separately in fisheries statistics.



# A History of the ASFIS List (2021- )



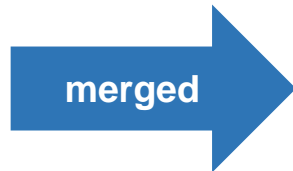
North Pacific Fisheries Commission

**2021 revision:** three codes merged into one.

**JAP**  
*Sardinops melanostictus*

**CHP**  
*Sardinops sagax*

**PAI**  
*Sardinops ocellatus*



**CHP**  
*Sardinops sagax*

## WHAT CHANGED IN 2021?

*Sardinops melanostictus* (JAP) and *Sardinops ocellatus* (PAI) were reclassified as **synonyms of *Sardinops sagax* (CHP)**, based on the scientific evidence available at the time.

However, in *Eschmeyer's Catalog of Fishes*, which serves as the primary taxonomic reference for the ASFIS list, the above two species are still listed separately.

<https://researcharchive.calacademy.org/research/ichthyology/catalog/fishcatmain.asp>



# Handling of the ASFIS List 2021 to Spring 2026



North Pacific Fisheries Commission

In the 2025 version: two separate codes existed for *Sardinops*:

**JNX**

*Sardinops spp.*

**CHP**

Pacific sardine

*Sardinops sagax*

**JAP**

Japanese sardine

*Sardinops melanostictus*

**PAI**

South African sardine

*Sardinops ocellatus*

Since **CHP** includes *Sardinops melanostictus* and *Sardinops ocellatus*, all Members (including Japan, China, and Russia) report these species under **CHP**, not **JNX**.

# The latest ASFIS List



North Pacific Fisheries Commission

In response to the interest from NPFC, FAO decided the taxonomic change implemented in ASFIS in 2021 will revert to the previous status **starting in the ASFIS 2026 version.**

However, to avoid confusion with historical data, no new code will be assigned to Japanese sardine. Instead, the previously used codes: JAP and PAI will be reinstated.

**In the 2026 version:** four separate codes will exist for *Sardinops*:

**JNX**  
*Sardinops spp.*

**JAP**  
Japanese sardine  
*Sardinops melanostictus*

**CHP**  
Pacific sardine  
*Sardinops sagax*

**PAI**  
*Sardinops ocellatus*



# Options to be considered going forward



North Pacific Fisheries Commission

Based on the discussions at FAO, we need to consider the following options for reporting

Japanese sardine:

## **Option 1: Continue using JAP**

Pros: Enables clear distinction between Pacific sardine and Japanese sardine and does not require any changes in the NPFC databases.

JAP is used for compliance reporting (e.g., transshipment).

Cons: May be not appropriate for some Members.

## **Option 2: Use CHP**

Cons: Does not distinguish between Japanese sardine and Pacific sardine

## **Option 3: Others**