

**TORRES STRAIT FINFISH
WORKING GROUP MEETING
20 March 2012
Venue: AFMA Office, THURSDAY ISLAND**

MEETING TIME:

Tuesday, 20 March 2012 – 9.30pm to 5pm

AGENDA

1. Meeting Administration
 - 1.1 Welcome Prayer and Apologies
 - 1.2 Declarations of Interest **For Noting**
 - 1.3 Review and Adoption of Agenda **For Decision**
 - 1.4 Acceptance of Minutes from previous FFWG meeting (31 March 2010) **For Decision**

2. Draft Finfish Management Plan
 - 2.1 Provisions for monitoring take of by-product species (AFMA) **For Noting**
 - 2.2 Public Comments (AFMA) **For Discussion**
 - 2.3 Timeline for Implementation (AFMA) **For Noting**

3. Strategic Assessment Report and Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO)
 - 3.1 Public Comment Period (AFMA) **For Noting**

4. Current fishery status
 - 4.1 2010 catch update (AFMA) **For Noting**
 - 4.2 2011 leasing update (TSRA) **For Noting**
 - 4.3 Opening of the western closure of the fishery (TSRA) **For Discussion**

5. Torres Strait Compliance Update (QB&FP) **For Noting**

6. Other Business
 - 6.1 Finfish Working Group membership

TORRES STRAIT FINFISH WORKING GROUP	Meeting # 2012.1 20 March 2012
MEETING ADMINISTRATION Welcome Prayer and Apologies	<i>Agenda Item No. 1.1</i> FOR ACTION

Agenda Item 1.1 Welcome and apologies

1. Prayer by IFAC Member to open meeting of the Torres Strait Finfish Working Group (TSFFWG).
2. Ms Mary Lack (Chair) convene the meeting open

Apologies

3. Apologies have been received from:

Recommendation

4. That the Group note the apologies and commence proceedings.

Executive Officer
March 2012

TORRES STRAIT FINFISH WORKING GROUP	Meeting # 2012.1 20 March 2012
MEETING ADMINISTRATION Declarations of Interest	Agenda Item No. 1.2 FOR ACTION

Recommendations:

1. That member's declare any pecuniary interest in the fishery, and advise of any changes to the details in Table 1.
2. That TSFFWG members and participants agree to declare any potential conflicts of interest they may have prior to the commencement of the meeting.
3. That Table 1 form the basis of these declarations and that members advise of any relevant changes to their standing declarations.
4. That the minutes record members' and observers' declarations and any other procedural decisions associated with circumstances where a conflict of interest is identified.

Background

5. As required by the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*, members are required to detail areas where they may have a conflict of interest in relation to issues on the agenda.
6. Fisheries Administration Paper No. 12 (Working Groups) requires that RAGs adopt a similar procedure for disclosure of direct or indirect financial interests to that of Management Advisory Committees (MACs).

Table 1:

Member	Declared interest
Ms Lack	
Ms Brown	
Dr Jones	
Mr Rayner	
Ms Cocking	
Dr Jacobsen	
Mr Fava	
Mr Hall	
Mr Nakata	
Mr Vass	
Mr Mosby	
Mr Gabey	
Mr Larry	
Mr Toby	
Mr Takai	
Mr Lui	
Mr Bann-Pearson	

FINFISH WORKING GROUP	Meeting # 2012.1 20 March 2012
MEETING ADMINISTRATION Review and Adoption of Agenda	<i>Agenda Item No. 1.3</i> FOR DECISION

Recommendation

1. That the final agenda for the 20th March meeting of TSFFWG be adopted (Attachment 1.3a).

Discussion

2. A draft agenda was circulated to TSFFWG members and interested parties in March 2012.

Executive Officer

March 2012

TORRES STRAIT FINFISH WORKING GROUP	Meeting # 2012.1 20 March 2012
MEETING ADMINISTRATION Acceptance of Minutes from Previous Meeting	<i>Agenda Item No. 1.4</i> FOR DECISION

Purpose

To confirm the minutes of the Finfish Working Group (FFWG) Meeting held at Thursday Island on the 31 March 2010 (Attachment 1.4a) as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Background

Minutes from the FFWG meeting held on 31 March 2010 were circulated to members for comment on 13 April 2010 with period for comment closing on 30 April 2010. No comments were received.

Recommendation

1.4 That FFWG **AGREE** to accept the minutes from the meeting held on 31 March 2010 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Executive Officer

March 2012

TORRES STRAIT FINFISH WORKING GROUP	Meeting # 2012.1 20 March 2012
Draft Finfish Management Plan Provisions for monitoring take of by-product species	Agenda Item No. 2.1 FOR NOTING

Recommendation

2.1 That the FFWG **NOTE** the provisions included in the draft Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Management Plan 2012 (the Plan) relevant to monitoring of by-catch species.

Background

The Finfish Working Group (FFWG) meeting in October 2006, raised concern that effort could move from Coral trout to other species under a coral trout only quota. It was recommended that the catch of other species be closely monitored. The FFWG also agreed that quota set for Coral trout and Spanish mackerel only was the most appropriate option for the fishery at that time.

AFMA developed the objectives for the draft Plan with stakeholders from 2007 through to 2010. These objectives included particular reference to sustainable fishing of by-catch with the final objectives agreed to by the FFWG during the meeting on 31 March 2010 (3.2.1). The three objectives that were agreed to at this meeting relevant to sustainable take of by-catch species are:

1. *To acknowledge and protect the traditional way of life and livelihood of Traditional Inhabitants, including their rights in relation to traditional fishing for finfish.*
2. *Harvest levels are at, or below levels that maintain biologically viable stocks of target and non-target species.*
3. *To provide for the use and conservation of Torres Strait Finfish resources in a way that minimises impact on the marine environment.*

The indicator identified in the draft Plan to measure if the management arrangements are meeting these objectives under the Plan includes:

- i) *Total commercial catch of target and non-target species or species groups*

The objectives are included in Part 1 of the draft Torres Strait Finfish Management Plan.

Discussion

Fisheries Management Notice No. 8 defines species allowed to be taken under a reef line entry in the fishery. Over 100 species of fish may be taken in the fishery under this definition, although the majority of fish caught is Coral trout. Barramundi Cod and Red emperor are important, high value by-catch species that may be taken under a reef-line entry.

Currently all Sunset licence operators and Traditional Inhabitant vessels >7m are required to submit logbooks (TSF01) including identification of species retained. AFMA collates and reports annually on catch of all finfish catch, including Barramundi Cod and Red Emperor as reported in agenda item 4.1.

Under the Plan the PZJA will determine reference points for all by-catch in the fishery as set out in the objectives in the Plan. These reference points will be considered triggers

that must be monitored and if triggered identified actions will be undertaken to address this issue.

AFMA will consult with fishery stakeholders in developing trigger reference points and actions required on reference points being reached following implementation of the plan.

Financial Impact

Any additional monitoring requirements for the fishery will require budgetary consideration and be appropriate for the fishery.

Executive Officer

March 2012

TORRES STRAIT FINFISH WORKING GROUP	Meeting # 2012.1 20 March 2012
Draft Finfish Management Plan Timeline for Implementation	Agenda Item No. 2.3 FOR NOTING

Recommendation

2.3 That the FFWG **NOTE** progress of the draft Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Management Plan 2012 and the proposed timeline for implementation.

Background

Task	Due Date ¹
Agreement on Plan outline (TSFMAC)	Completed
Draft Finfish Management Plan developed	Completed
Draft Management Plan considered by FFWG	Completed (2010)
Draft Management Plan approved by PZJA (OOS) for public consultation	Completed (2012)
Draft Management Plan released for public comment	Completed (1 February 2011 – 16 March 2011)
Public comments considered and amendments made to Management Plan where required	In Progress
Strategic Assessment Report and WTO	In Progress Ends 26 March 2012
PZJA approves final management plan	June 2012
Management Plan tabled in Parliament	June 2012
Management Plan commences	01 July 2012

In January 2012 the PZJA approved the release of the draft Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Management Plan 2012 for public comment. This was released on 1 February until 16 March 2012 following an extension of the public comment period from the original date of 9 March. During this period, AFMA conducted consultative meetings on Mer, Erub, Masig, Warraber, Poruma and Ugar Islands between 21-23 February 2012.

A Strategic Assessment Report (SAR) was submitted to SEWPaC for release for public comment. The SAR is currently open for public comment and ends on 26 March 2012. SEWPaC will also assess the Fishery to be declared an approved Wildlife Trade

¹ Dates are indicative and dependant on the progress of the previous steps.

Operation (WTO) and, therefore, able to export product. SEWPaC may recommend actions for the PZJA relevant to the fishery as part of the WTO accreditation. This process is dependant on the final implementation of the Plan.

All comments received by AFMA during the public comment period for the draft Plan have been collated and addressed by AFMA. All comments are tabled at FFWG Meeting 2012.1 (agenda item 2.2) for the group's consideration. This information and the recommendations of the FFWG will then be tabled at TSFMAC Meeting 12. The TSFMAC will make recommendations to the PZJA regarding the public comments and the actions of the AFMA in addressing the issues raised.

The public comments, TSFMAC recommendations and AFMA actions will be considered by the PZJA along with the final Management Plan. The PZJA will approve the Plan if they consider that AFMA have addressed the comments of the public appropriately.

Upon approval by the PZJA, the final Plan must be tabled in Federal Parliament where it is subject to scrutiny and if passed must be registered with the Federal Register for Legislative Instruments (FRLI).

It is planned that the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Management Plan 2012 will be ready for implementation at the beginning of the 2012/13 fishing season on 1 July 2012.

Financial Impact

Costs for amendments to the draft Plan, tabling in Parliament and registration on FRLI have been budgeted in the 2011/2012 financial year. Delays in implementing the Finfish Management Plan will require budget amendments for the 2011/2012 and 2012/13 financial years.

Executive Officer

March 2012

TORRES STRAIT FINFISH WORKING GROUP	Meeting # 2012.1 20 March 2012
Strategic Assessment Report and Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) Public Comment Period	<i>Agenda Item No. 3.1</i> FOR NOTING

Recommendation

- 3.1 That the FFWG **NOTE** the progress of the Strategic Assessment and Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) for Torres Strait Finfish Fishery.

Background

The export approval for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery was valid until 25 November 2011, however an extension was granted until mid 2012 pending the implementation of the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Management Plan 2012.

In February 2012, AFMA on behalf of the PZJA, submitted a report to the Department of the Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC) to have the fishery reassessed for continued export approval under the new Management Plan (discussed at agenda item 2.2). The public comment period closes on 26 March 2012 and AFMA will await a decision from SEWPaC to declare the fishery an approved WTO for a further three year period.

Financial Impact

Nil.

Executive Officer

March 2012

TORRES STRAIT FINFISH WORKING GROUP	Meeting # 2012.1 20 March 2012
Current Fishery Status 2010/2011 Season Update	Agenda Item No. 4.1 FOR NOTING

Recommendation

That the FFWG **NOTE** the 2010 and 2011 season updates for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery.

Background

Catch and effort in the Reef Line fishery has remained relatively constant since 2007, which was when 100% of the non-islander licences were removed from the fishery and leasing began. Catch of Spanish mackerel has been on a declining trend since 2009.

Catch

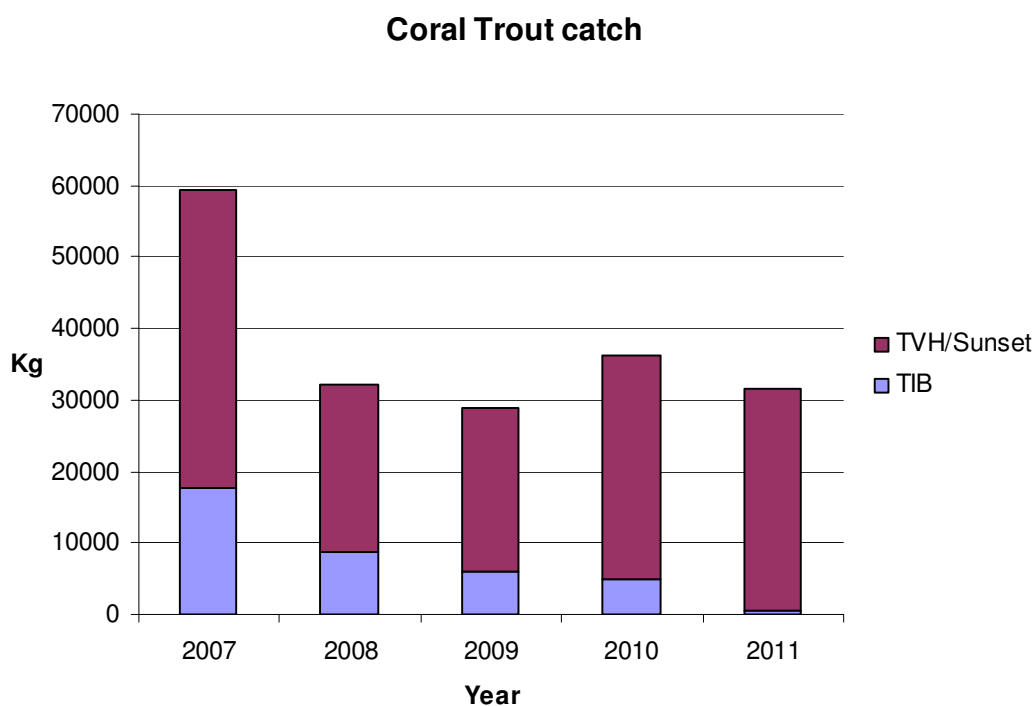


Figure 1: Catch of Coral trout in Australian waters by Australian fishers in whole weight.

Spanish mackerel catch

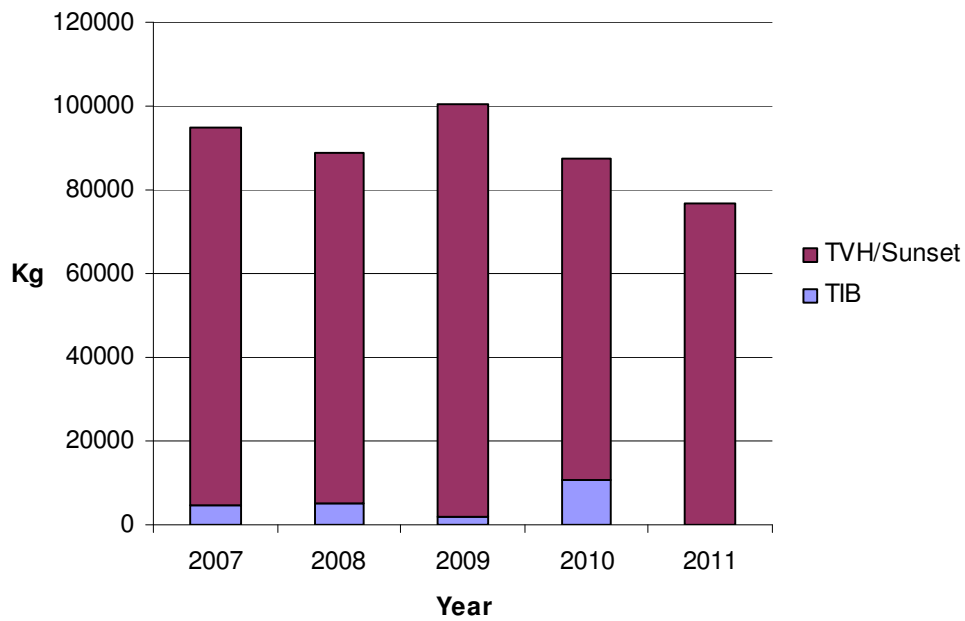


Figure 2: Catch of Spanish mackerel in Australian waters by Australian fishers in whole weight.

Catch Barramundi Cod

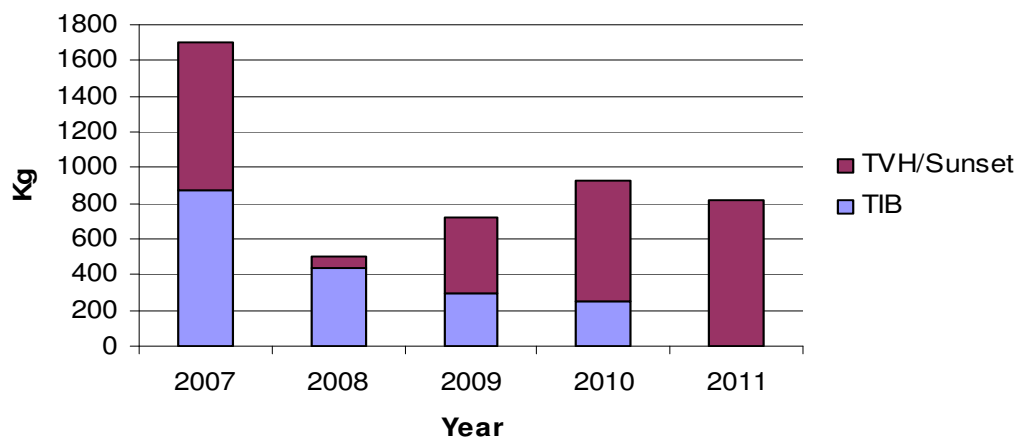


Figure 3: Catch of Barramundi Cod in Australian waters by Australian fishers in whole weight.

Catch Red Emperor

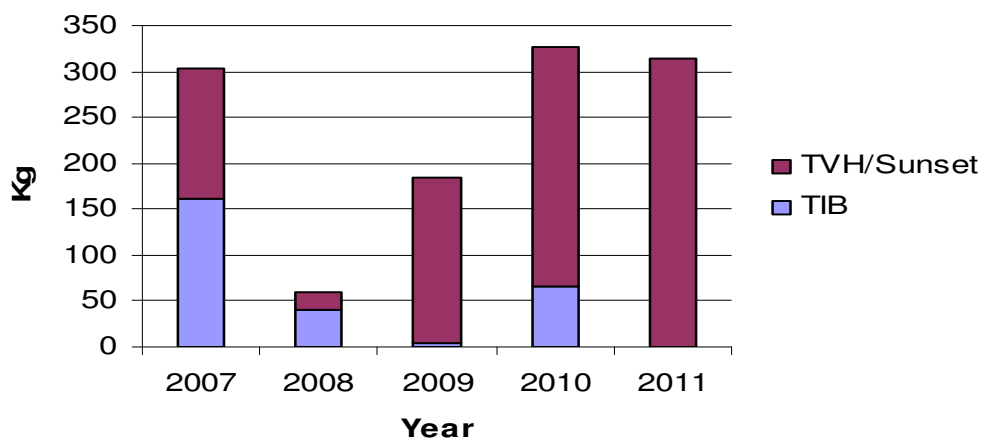


Figure 4: Catch of Barramundi Cod in Australian waters by Australian fishers in whole weight.

Catch of important by-catch species of barramundi cod and red emperor were low in 2011 at 816kg and 314kg respectively. These records were similar to catch from 2010. The reported catch for these species is low is compared to catch in 2005 of 2.9t of barramundi cod and 3.9t of red emperor.

Effort

Coral Trout effort (Operation Days)

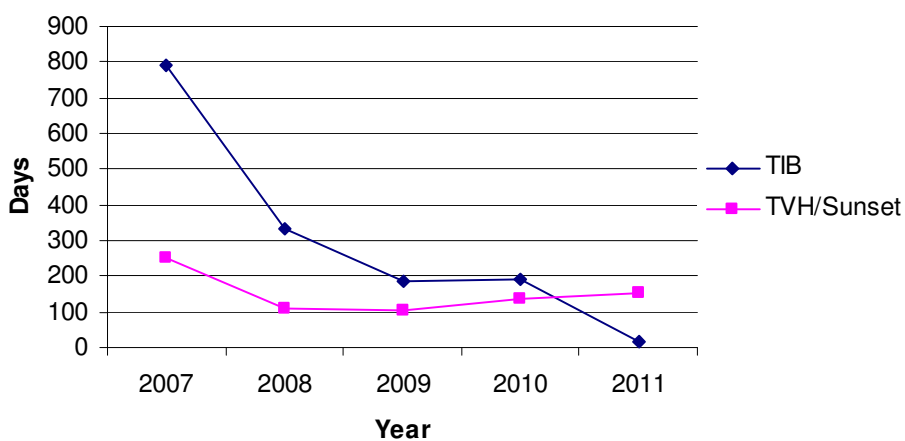


Figure 5: Effort (days fishing) for Coral trout in Australian waters by Australian fishers.

Spanish mackerel effort (Dory Days)

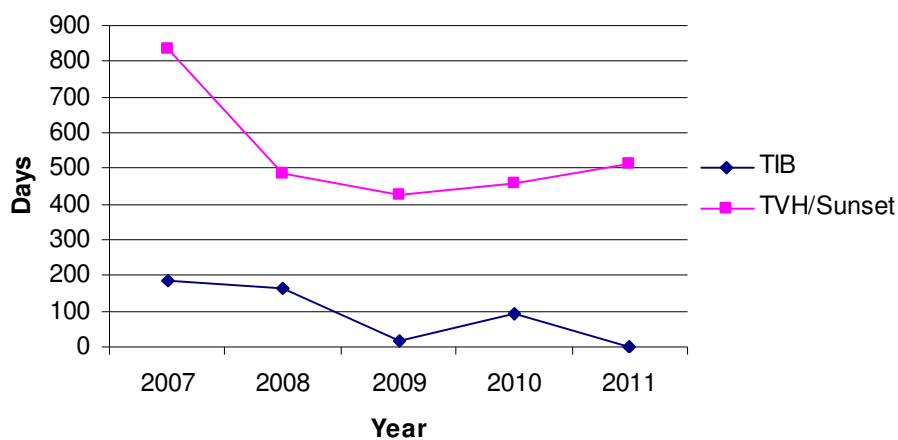


Figure 6: Effort (days fishing) for Spanish mackerel in Australian waters by Australian fishers.

Effort by TIB operators for coral trout and Spanish mackerel fishery have been declining since 2007, particularly for Spanish mackerel. The decline of effort for coral trout may be related to the closure of the Mer Is Freezer in 2010.

Effort in the TVH/Sunset licence holders is increasing marginally since the 2008, noting that catch of coral trout and Spanish mackerel has been capped for sunset licence holders since mid 2008 and this will constrain effort as well.

Financial Impact

Nil

Executive Officer

March 2012