



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture

Senator the Hon. Ursula Stephens
Chair
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Stephens

Thank you for your letter of 4 April 2014 to the Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP and the invitation to make a written submission to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee inquiring into Australia's future activities and responsibilities in the Southern Ocean and Antarctic waters.

Minister Joyce has asked me to respond on his behalf. Please find attached the submission of the Department of Agriculture.

Should you like any further clarification please contact me on telephone or email

Yours sincerely

Ian Thompson
First Assistant Secretary
Sustainable Resource Management

3 June 2014

Australia's future activities and responsibilities in the Southern Ocean and Antarctic waters

(b) Cooperation with international partners on fisheries management and research under international treaties and agreements.

Australia's cooperation with international partners on fisheries management and research under international treaties and agreements is largely undertaken through engagement in regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs). Engagement in these organisations is underpinned by our obligations under the 1982 *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)* and the 1995 *Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks* (UN Fish Stocks Agreement) to cooperate with other countries in the management of highly migratory, straddling and shared fisheries resources.

The Australian Government Department of Agriculture leads Australia's engagement in three RFMOs that operate in the Southern Ocean or Antarctic waters: the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna; the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement; and the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation. The attached map illustrates the areas of competence of these RFMOs.

The Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) Fishery is one of Australia's most valuable fisheries, with exports valued at \$150.8 million in 2011–12. The fishery is largely based in Port Lincoln on the Eyre Peninsula, South Australia and is regulated through catch quota limits allocated to individuals in the form of statutory fishing rights. Australia's National Allocation of 5 151 tonnes in 2014 represents 41.4% of the global Total Allowable Catch of 12 449 tonnes. Other Australian fisheries targeting tuna include the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery and the Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery.

The Department also provides fisheries expertise to meetings of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources which is a conservation organisation with attributes of an RFMO, particularly evident in relation to its management of toothfish. Australian fisheries targeting toothfish include the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery and the Macquarie Island Fishery. Australia's engagement in this forum is led by the Australian Antarctic Division of the Department of the Environment.

Engagement in these organisations is undertaken consistent with the following overarching priorities:

- to protect and enhance our fisheries interests and seek to ensure the long-term sustainability of the fisheries resources that form the basis of domestic fisheries
- to cooperate internationally, as required, in the management of highly migratory, straddling and shared fisheries resources
- to protect our sovereign rights to explore, exploit, manage and conserve the natural living resources of the water column within our exclusive economic zone and our sovereign rights to explore and exploit the natural living resources on the continental shelf (that is, sedentary species), including Australia's extended continental shelf
- to combat IUU fishing ensuring Australian industry is competing on equitable terms.

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- to influence the adoption of conservation and management arrangements internationally that are consistent with the high standards of conservation and management implemented domestically by Australia.

A series of meetings occurs annually for each RFMO, usually including a scientific committee meeting, a compliance meeting and the annual commission negotiations. Australia participates in these meetings to protect Australia's interests and ensure appropriate scientific methods and compliance measures are implemented. These meetings may be supported by meetings of specialised working groups on particular aspects such as stock assessment or bycatch management. Conservation and management measures agreed at annual commission negotiations, including those relating to monitoring, control and surveillance activities, are binding on Australia as a party to the treaty establishing that particular RFMO.

Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)

The CCSBT was established in 1994 upon the entry into force of the CCST Convention to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of the global southern bluefin tuna (SBT) stock.

The six members of the Extended Commission¹ and three cooperating non-members² achieve this by (i) setting and allocating an annual Total Allowable Catch (ii) developing conservation and management measures, including in relation to ecologically related species, that support, implement and ensure ongoing compliance with commission objectives (iii) coordinating a program of scientific research and (iv) engaging with other RFMOs as required.

Future activities and responsibilities will continue to focus upon implementation of, and ongoing compliance with, national quota allocations and other management measures. Australia will also continue its substantial research work, individually and in partnership with other CCSBT parties, aimed at monitoring the status of the stock, as well as catch and reporting methodology.

Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)

SIOFA entered into force in 2012. The objective of the Agreement is to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of non-highly migratory fish stocks in the high seas of the southern Indian Ocean. The work of the six parties to SIOFA³ will be underpinned by the principles set out in the Agreement including sustainable use, long-term conservation, ecosystem based fisheries management, the precautionary approach and effective monitoring, control and surveillance in fulfilling this objective.

Australia hosted the first Meeting of Parties to SIOFA in October 2013. Unlike with other RFMOs, SIOFA does not automatically establish a Secretariat. This has meant that prior to the entry into force of the Agreement, there was no Interim Secretariat established to organise Preparatory Conferences to make arrangements for the smooth entry into force of the Agreement. SIOFA is now focussing on agreeing the foundation documents that will guide the future work of the organisation. Australia's priorities for conservation and management measures in this RFMO will focus upon those species of interest to our domestic commercial industry, including alfonsino, orange roughy, oreo dories and blue-eye trevalla. Fisheries research under the direct auspices of SIOFA is yet to be conducted.

¹ Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand and the Fishing Entity of Taiwan.

² The Philippines, South Africa and the European Union.

³ Australia, Cooks Islands, European Union, France, Mauritius and the Seychelles.

South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO)

The Convention establishing SPRFMO entered into force in 2012. Its objective is to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of straddling and non-highly migratory fisheries resources in the south Pacific Ocean. The work of the 13 members⁴ and six cooperating non-Contracting Parties⁵ of SPRFMO is underpinned by the principles set out in the Convention including the precautionary approach and an ecosystem based approach to fisheries management in pursuing this objective.

The first meeting of the SPRFMO Commission took place in Auckland, New Zealand in January 2013. The second meeting of the SPRFMO Commission took place in January 2014 in Manta, Ecuador. The most significant outcome for Australia was the adoption of its proposed conservation and management measure for the management of bottom fishing in the SPRFMO Convention Area, submitted jointly with New Zealand. This is a significant step in promoting responsible and sustainable fishing and the conservation of the marine environment, including vulnerable marine ecosystems. Australia is now working to further articulate the objectives of SPRFMO, in particular those of priority to our domestic industry, through conservation and management measures underpinned by scientific research.

There is a general trend toward, and increased emphasis upon, greater harmonisation of conservation and management measures and monitoring and compliance activities across RFMOs. In particular, newer RFMOs are building upon the management arrangements and experiences of more established RFMOs to execute their agendas. Australia continues to cooperate with all parties to the aforementioned RFMOs to achieve this aim in the Southern Ocean and Antarctic waters.

Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)

The CCAMLR Convention entered into force in 1982, and forms part of the Antarctic Treaty System pursuant to the provisions of Article IX(f) of the Antarctic Treaty which calls on Antarctic Treaty Parties to cooperate to preserve and conserve the living resources in Antarctica. The objective of the CCAMLR Convention is the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources, where conservation includes rational use. The work of the 25 Members⁶ and 11 acceding States⁷ (who are party to the Convention but not Members of the Commission) is underpinned by an ecosystem based approach, which provides that fish, krill and all other living resources of the Southern Ocean are treated as an integrated system, where decisions on sustainable harvest levels take into account trophic linkages.

Australia's current highest priorities for CCAMLR are the adoption of a representative system of Marine Protected Areas in East Antarctica and to seek endorsement of a toothfish stock assessment for the Heard Island and McDonald Island (HIMI) Fishery. Related to the latter is ensuring continued access for Australian trawl fishing vessels to the HIMI Fishery. An ongoing priority is to support continuing action to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

⁴ Australia, Belize, Chile, People's Republic of China, , Cook Islands, Cuba, , the European Union, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands), Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Chinese Taipei and Vanuatu.

⁵ Colombia, Ecuador, Liberia, Panama, Peru and the United States of America.

⁶ Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, People's Republic of China, European Union, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Namibia, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay.

⁷ Bulgaria, Canada, Cook Islands, Finland, Greece, Mauritius, Netherlands, Pakistan, Panama, Peru and Vanuatu.

Indian and Pacific Ocean Regional Fisheries Bodies

Australian Government
Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences

