



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



# Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery



## STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN



2021- 2025

Version 1.0

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# Introduction

The Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery Strategic Research Plan provides a framework that identifies the key strategic research needs in these fisheries for the five-year period 2021-2025 inclusive.

This document aims to assist the Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Advisory Committee (SBTMAC) to identify and support research that will help achieve the management goals for the fishery.

In conjunction with this document annual research priorities will be developed to detail the specific research topics of focus for the upcoming financial year that have been identified by SBTMAC.

It should be noted that due to the international nature of the SBTF the majority of research priorities relating to the stock are set by the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) Scientific Committee. As such there is no requirement for a resource assessment group as is used in other Commonwealth fisheries.

## AFMA Corporate goals and strategies

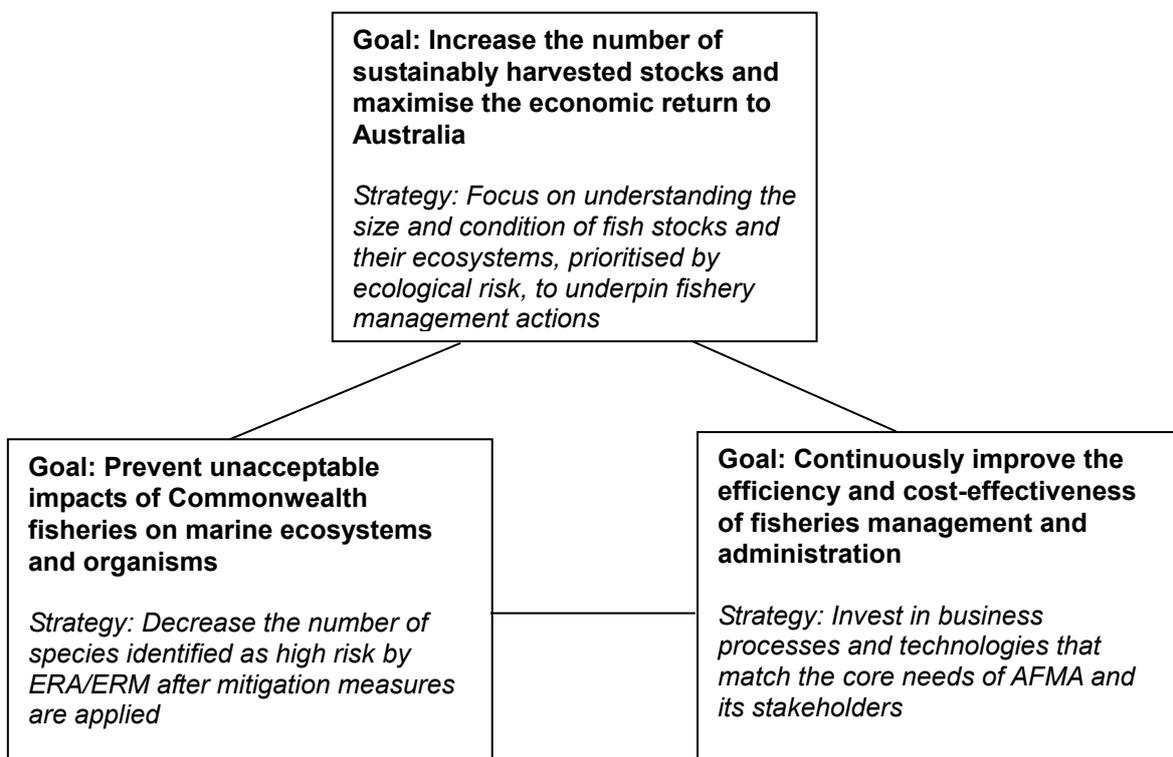
Research activities funded by AFMA must focus on attaining AFMA's primary management objectives, which are:

- i) to ensure the ecological sustainability of the fishery; and
- ii) to maximise the economic efficiency of the fishery.

AFMA has developed three research goals to assist in achieving these management objectives, which are outlined in Figure 1.

These research goals should act as a guide for SBTMAC in developing research plans, identifying research priorities for the annual call for research and assessing research proposals.

**Figure 1. AFMA's corporate goals and strategies 2021-2025**



## Identifying research needs

Research activities must be consistent with AFMA's corporate goals and strategies, although the drivers of research can be considered to fall into five categories:

- **Biological**

Biological fisheries information is essential to adequately assess the stocks and estimate the size of sustainable harvests from those stocks.

- **Environmental**

Information about the impact of fisheries on the marine ecosystem is essential to assist AFMA achieve our objective of ensuring Commonwealth fisheries are ecologically sustainable. Ecological risk assessments (ERAs) are a central component of the Ecological Risk Management (ERM) framework and are conducted on all Commonwealth fisheries. The results of ERAs assist in identifying and prioritising research needs regarding fishery impacts on the marine ecosystem, and in guiding research investment, data collection, monitoring, and future management decisions.

The latest ERA for the fishery was developed in 2020.

- **Legislative**

There are a range of legislative and international requirements which influence research activities in the SBTF. Research priorities must be consistent with AFMA's other research programs, International obligations under the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) and obligations under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

- **Economic**

Many factors influence the overall economic performance of the fishery. AFMA requires an understanding of the effects of economic changes in the SBTF to manage the fishery to maximise economic efficiency.

- **Social**

Research into the social aspects of the fishery is important to maximise the social benefits of the fishery to the community. Social research aspects may include resource allocation issues.

The success of fisheries management in the SBTF should be monitored and measured through appropriate performance indicators. These performance indicators, together with appropriate reference points, must relate to the management objectives and have identified actions associated with them.

# Research Priority Areas and Needs

The following research areas have been identified as high priority needs for the next five years by AFMA. These are consistent with AFMA's strategic goals and priorities and are not listed in order of priority.

## Provision of Data

- *Provision of biological data to support relevant projects (Stock assessments)*
- *Provision of economic data to support relevant projects*

## Biological Research Priorities

- *Stock assessments*
  - Ensure stock assessments are conducted every three years as mandated by CCSBT
- *Connectivity*
  - Improve understanding of the stock structure of SBT

## Environmental Research Priorities

- *Bycatch, Byproduct TEP*
  - Investigate measures to improve bycatch mitigation in fishing operations
  - Investigate measures to improve TEP mitigation in fishing operations
  - Investigate the affects of fishing in the SBTF on byproduct species
- *Climate impacts*
  - Measure the effects of climate change on key species and ecosystems in the SBTF
  - Investigate oceanographic and environmental factors impacting on the SBTF

## Legislative Research Priorities

- *Harvest Strategies (CCSBT Management Procedure)*
  - Continue to support and evaluate the effectiveness of the Management Procedure as developed by CCSBT
- *Ecological Risk Assessment*
  - Review the Ecological Risk Assessment for the SBTF as required

## **Economic and Social Research Priorities**

- *Spatial Management measures*
  - Monitor the agreed resource sharing arrangements in the fishery to ensure they remain consistent with the intent of the original agreement.
- *Economic viability*
  - Determine trends in the economic performance of the SBTF

## **Conclusion**

This research plan provides a framework for identifying the key research priorities in the SBTF for 2021-2015 that will help achieve the management goals for the fishery and ensure that endorsed research projects fit within a strategic framework.