Pelagic Longline Fishery Targeting Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (Sicily)

MSC Fishery Improvement Action Plan

Introduction and Instructions

This template details the information required from Improvement Program Project Managers when creating an MSC Fishery Improvement Action Plan. The template is designed to be used by any fisheries engaged in a FIP, but in particular, fisheries in the MSC Improvement Program.

The purpose of this template is to ensure quality and consistency in Improvement Action Plans (IAPs) for fisheries working towards meeting the MSC Fisheries Standard and achieving MSC certification.

The Improvement Program Project Manager shall develop the IAP no later than 3 years after the fishery has undergone an MSC Pre-Assessment using the relevant version of the 'MSC Pre-Assessment Reporting Template', or within 3 years of the completion of any MSC "Full Assessment Report", including: Announcement Comment Draft Report (ACDR); Client and Peer Review Draft Report (CPRDR); Public Comment Draft Report (PCDR); Final Draft Report (FDR); Public Certification Report (PCR), Surveillance Report or Expedited Audit Report.

The purpose of the IAP is to detail the actions and tasks which, when implemented, should improve the score of the UoA(s) against the requirements of the MSC Fisheries Standard to the point where it meets the scoring requirements for certification (FCP v2.3, 7.15.12 & 7.15.13, FCP v3.1, 7.15.13 and 7.15.14). To this end, the Improvement Program Project Manager shall include in the IAP actions and tasks for each Performance Indicator which did not achieve a draft scoring range of ≥80 in the Pre-Assessment Report or "Full Assessment Report". The Improvement Program Project Manager shall ensure the actions and tasks will lead to increases in draft scoring ranges.

If the fishery is part of an existing Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP) and has already started implementing improvement actions before entering the MSC Improvement Program, the Improvement Program Project Manager may include these actions in the MSC Fishery Improvement Action Plan as long as any actions and tasks completed prior to the MSC Improvement Program start date are clearly stated.

The IAP provides information for completing 'MSC's Benchmarking and Tracking Tool' (BMT) and 'MSC Improvement Program Progress Reports'.

The IAP will be verified by a Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) prior to entering the MSC Improvement Program and at regular progress verifications throughout the MSC Improvement Program duration.

Please rename the document so that the file name includes the fishery name and any other relevant information e.g. Fishery Name_Improvement Action Plan_Date_Version Number.

Please complete all unshaded fields where information is available. Please delete all instructions, notes and guidance text in italics, and replace with information specific to the fishery and UoA(s) where relevant. E.g. this 'Introduction' section.

For any queries relating to this template or its use please visit [msc.org](msc.org) or contact us at: fisheries@msc.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY — MSC ACTION PLAN

Pelagic Longline Fishery Targeting Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (Sicily)

This Action Plan outlines the steps required for the Sicily pelagic longline fishery targeting Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (Thunnus thynnus) to achieve conformance with the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Fisheries Standard v3.1.

The plan is based on the CAB pre-assessment, the Benchmarking and Tracking Tool (BMT), and stakeholder consultation coordinated by FederOP Ami e Palangari.

Overall Pre-assessment Outcome

The pre-assessment concluded that the fishery demonstrates strong performance in several areas, particularly those governed by ICCAT (stock status, harvest strategy, legal framework).

However, several Performance Indicators (PIs) under Principles 1 and 2 were identified as below SG80 due to limited fishery-specific monitoring, documentation, and evidence.

Six improvement actions (A1–A5) have been defined to address all gaps identified by the CAB.

Summary of Key Improvement Actions:

Documentation and Validation Programme for Primary and Retained Bycatch Species

ETP Interaction Risk Assessment and Onboard Handling/Release Protocol

Observer Programme for Verification of ETP Interactions, Bycatch and Gear Use

Characterisation of Pelagic Gear Depth and Vertical Interaction Profile

A1 – Longline Logbook Enhancement and Data Standardisation Protocol

Addresses PI 1.2.3 – Information and Monitoring, PI 3.2.3 – Compliance and enforcement

Develops a standardised logbook that captures essential operational, biological, and environmental data.

A2 – Documentation and Validation Programme for Primary and Retained Bycatch Species

Addresses PI 2.1.3 – Primary species information, PI 2.2.1 Secondary species outcome; PI 2.3.1 ETP outcome

Introduces mandatory species-level reporting and validation through observer comparison.

A3 – ETP Interaction Risk Assessment and Onboard Handling/Release Protocol

Addresses PI 2.2.2 – Secondary species management strategy, PI 2.3.2 ETP species management strategy

Implements a Productivity–Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) to estimate interaction risk based on best available data and also provide a handling-release protocol for the management the secondary and ETP species.

A4 – Observer Programme for Verification of ETP Interactions, Bycatch and Gear Use

Addresses PI 2.2.3 – Secondary species information, PI 2.3.3 ETP species information

Implements a scientifically credible observer programme to verify interactions and gear behaviour.

A5 – Characterisation of Pelagic Gear Depth and Vertical Interaction Profile

Addresses PI 2.4.3 – Habitat information.

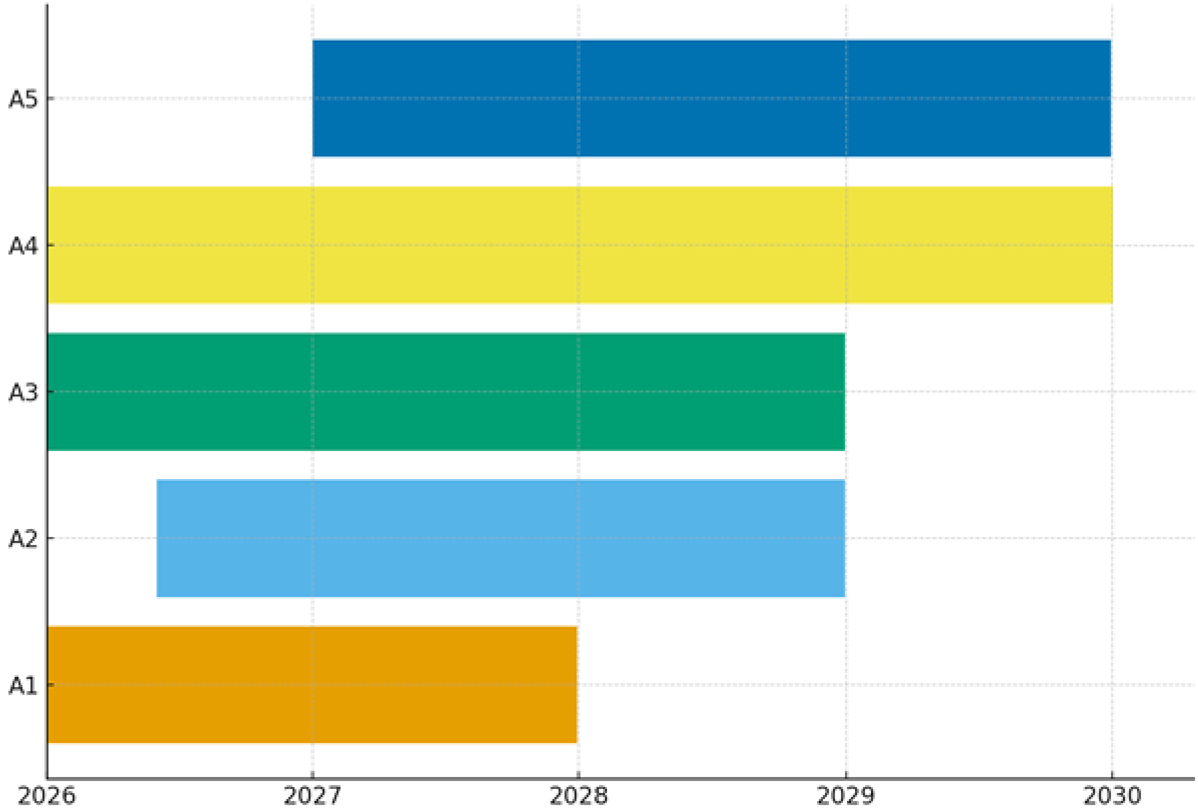
Confirms the fishery's pelagic nature and absence of seabed interaction.

Implementation Timeline

The Action Plan is structured over five years (2026–2030), with annual verification points.

All actions are designed to be achievable, scientifically robust, and cost-effective for the fleet.

A detailed Gantt chart visualising the sequence and duration of all actions is provided below.



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Glossary

View the MSC-MSCI Vocabulary. Insert an optional glossary or list of acronyms used. Note that any terms defined here shall not contradict terms used in the MSC-MSCI Vocabulary.

AIS - Automatic Identification System. AIS is an automatic vessel-tracking system that uses VHF radio signals

BFT – Bluefin Tuna Thunnus thynnus, the target species of this fishery.

BMT – Benchmarking and Tracking Tool - MSC Excel-based tool used to track preliminary PI scores and expected improvements.

CAB – Conformity Assessment Body - Independent accredited body responsible for verifying progress and conducting MSC assessments.

DCF – Data Collection Framework. The EU Data Collection Framework (DCF) is the legal framework that requires EU Member States to systematically collect biological, environmental, and socio-economic data on fisheries.

EMS - Electronic Monitoring System

ETP – Endangered, Threatened, and Protected species - Species protected under international/national law; scored under Principle 2.

FIP – Fishery Improvement Project

HCR - Harvest Control Rule

IAP – Improvement Action Plan - A structured, time-bound plan for improving fishery performance toward MSC certification.

ICCAT – International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas

RFMO responsible for the management of BFT in the Atlantic and Mediterranean.

MSFD – Marine Strategy Framework Directive - European monitoring framework used for ecosystem and habitat data.

MSC – Marine Stewardship Council - Standard-setter for sustainable wild fisheries certification.

PSA – Productivity Suscectivity Analysis that is a risk assessment method used when data are limited

PI – Performance Indicator- The scoring unit within the MSC Fisheries Standard. Each PI is evaluated at SG60, SG80, and SG100.

SI – Scoring Issue - Sub-elements within a PI explaining how the PI is scored.

SG – Scoring Guidepost - MSC scoring levels:

SG60: Minimum acceptable performance

SG80: Best practice and certification threshold

SG100: State-of-the-art performance

UoA – Unit of Assessment - Fishing unit being assessed: species, gear, vessels, and area.

VMS – Vessel Monitoring System - Satellite tracking system used for verifying vessel position and compliance.

1 Improvement Action Plan Overview

This Improvement Action Plan (IAP) has been developed for the Sicily Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (Thunnus thynnus) Longline Fishery operating in FAO 37.2.2 (Mediterranean Sea). The Plan follows the MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1 and is based on the findings of the MSC Pre-Assessment completed in 2024. The pre-assessment concluded that the fishery performs strongly under Principle 1 (Target Stock) and Principle 3 (Management System) given its integration within the ICCAT regulatory framework and the EU management system. However, several Performance Indicators (PIs) under Principle 2 — Ecosystem Interactions and one PI under Principle 1 require targeted improvements before entering MSC Full Assessment. This Action Plan addresses these PIs through a structured programme of improvements aimed at:

- strengthening monitoring and information (P1 and P2)
- documenting bycatch and ETP interactions
- improving evidence of habitat interactions

The Plan has been developed following the structure and requirements of the MSC IAP template (v2.01), with detailed Action Sheets for each improvement area, including tasks, responsibilities, resources, outputs, and deadlines.

The overall objective of the IAP is to ensure that by the completion date (31/12/2030), the fishery is able to demonstrate MSC scoring ranges ≥80 for all PIs identified as requiring improvement, enabling entry into MSC Full Assessment under Standard v2.01.

Specific objectives per Principle include:

Principle 1

Improve completeness and quality of longline-specific monitoring, including bait type, hook characteristics, set depth, discard recording, and electronic traceability.

Principle 2

Document and quantitatively assess interactions with primary bycatch species, ETP species, habitats, and the broader ecosystem.

Provide the CAB with robust and independently verified datasets demonstrating low risk to ecosystem components.

Principle 3

Maintain strong performance while improving internal roles and data flows, especially around observer/EMS integration and reporting channels.

Table 1. Improvement Action Plan overview

Fishery name or Unit/s of Assessment (UoA/s):	Sicily Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Longline Fishery (Thunnus thynnus)	**Fishery location:**	FAO 37.2.2 (Mediterranean, Sicily)
Fishing gear type(s):	Pelagic longline	**Fishery in MSC Improvement Program?** (Applicant/Yes/No):	Applicant
Does the fishery client intend to enter the UoA(s) into MSC full assessment (or in the case of a suspended MSC certificate enter the reinstatement process)?		*Yes/No*	

If yes, please indicate which version of the MSC Fisheries Standard will be used for Full Assessment *(delete as appropriate).*	V2.01
IAP Start date (expected): *DD/MM/YYYY*	**MSC Improvement Program Completion Date** (The expected date on which an Improvement Action Plan is completed, whereby the UoA(s) has/have achieved a draft scoring range equivalent to an MSC pass and a CAB has uploaded either an ACDR or a Surveillance Report to the MSC database as a means to 'complete' the MSC Improvement Program process)
01/01/2026	31/12/2030
Project leaders (organisation/individual responsible for IAP)**:**	**IAP and improvements supported by** (stakeholder groups, organisations, or meetings that supported the development of the IAP)**:**
FederOP Ami e Palangari	ICCAT scientists, MASAF, Guardia Costiera, COISPA Foundation,
FIP Coordinator / Improvement Program Project Manager (name, affiliation, and position if applicable):	**Improvement Program Project Manager commits to:** • Serve as the key contact between the CAB and the Applicant Fishery. • Coordinate the implementation of the Improvement Action Plan. • Collate all information necessary for Progress Verification, including compiling the Progress Reports and updating the IAP and BMT as relevant
Improvement Action Plan developed by (entity, consultant, or person):	**Date when this Improvement Action Plan was created**:
Summary of the Improvement Action Plan (*Provide an overview of the IAP including a summary of the improvements to be made under each Principle. If the IAP has been updated, highlight key changes here*.) *(Add/delete Principles as appropriate):*	

Principle 1: Improvements center on enhancing longline-specific information and monitoring under PI 1.2.3. Principle 2: Actions focus on documenting primary/secondary species, ETP species, habitats, and broader ecosystem interactions under PIs 2.1.3, 2.2.1, 2.2.3, 2.3.3, and 2.4.3. Principle 3: No improvements required for scoring; minor enhancements support implementation of P2 actions.
Stakeholder inputs into the Improvement Action Plan (Optional). If the IAP has been updated, include stakeholder updates if relevant.
The fishery is managed under an established multi-level governance system including: ICCAT (international stock and ecosystem management) European Union (CFP, technical measures, monitoring obligations) Italy (MASAF) (national implementation, quota allocation, licensing) Coast Guard (Guardia Costiera) (compliance & enforcement) Producer Organisation FederOP Ami e Palangari (fleet management, data coordination) Scientific institutions (Fondazione COISPA, CNR–IRBIM, University of Messina)
References *(document/s on which the **IAP is** based):*
Pre-Assessment Report / "Full Assessment Report" *(delete/amend as necessary).* BMT *MSC Pre-Assessment Report (2024)* *MSC Benchmarking and Tracking Tool (BMT)* *ICCAT Recommendations 21-08 and associated guidelines*

EU Control Regulation (Council Regulation 1224/2009) *National logbook and reporting obligations (MASAF)* *Scientific publications and MSFD monitoring datasets*	
Date/s of updated versions of this Improvement Action Plan:	

1.1 Improvement Action Plan overview by Performance Indicator

The Improvement Program Project Manager shall only include Improvement Actions for PIs that score <60 or 60-79. Please delete Performance Indicators (PIs) that score ≥80 and do not have any improvement actions associated with them. Please ensure each action has a unique ID, though note that one action could apply to multiple PIs. In this case, please ensure that any action that applies to multiple PIs has the same ID.

This template has two versions of the Improvement Action Plan Overview by Performance Indicator table: one for MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1 PIs and one for MSC Fisheries Standard v2.01 PIs. Please use the appropriate table and delete the one that is not applicable. If there are multiple UoAs, please specify which improvement actions and deadlines relate to which UoA.

Table 2. Improvement Action Plan Overview by Performance Indicator – MSC Fisheries Standard v2.01

Performance Indicator	Action ID and Name	Deadline
1.1.1 – Stock status	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80 based on ICCAT stock assessment and robust quota management.*	
1.1.2 – Stock rebuilding	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80 based on ICCAT stock assessment and robust quota management.*	
1.2.1 – Harvest Strategy	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80 based on ICCAT stock assessment and robust quota management.*	
1.2.2 – Harvest control rules and tools	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80 based on ICCAT stock assessment and robust quota management.*	
1.2.3 – Information and monitoring	A1 – Longline Logbook Enhancement and Data Standardisation Protocol	31/12/2027
1.2.4 – Assessment of stock status	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80 based on ICCAT stock assessment and robust quota management.*	
2.1.1 – Primary species outcome	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80 based on ICCAT stock assessment and robust quota management.*	
2.1.2 – Primary species management strategy	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80 based on ICCAT stock assessment and robust quota management.*	

2.1.3 – Primary species information	A2 – Documentation and Validation Programme for Primary and Retained Bycatch Species	31/12/2028
2.2.1 – Secondary species outcome	A2 – Documentation and Validation Programme for Primary and Retained Bycatch Species	30/06/2028
2.2.2 – Secondary species management strategy	A3 - ETP Interaction Risk Assessment and Onboard Handling/Release Protocol	
2.2.3 – Secondary species information	A4 - Observer Programme for Verification of ETP Interactions, Bycatch and Gear Use	31/12/2029
2.3.1 – ETP species outcome	A2 – Documentation and Validation Programme for Primary and Retained Bycatch Species	31/12/2028
2.3.2 – ETP species management strategy	A3 - ETP Interaction Risk Assessment and Onboard Handling/Release Protocol	30/06/2028
2.3.3 – ETP species information	A4 - Observer Programme for Verification of ETP Interactions, Bycatch and Gear Use	31/12/2029
2.4.1 – Habitats outcome	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80*	
2.4.2 – Habitats management strategy	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80*	
2.4.3 – Habitats information	A5 – Characterisation of Pelagic Gear Depth and Vertical Interaction Profile	31/12/2029
2.5.1 – Ecosystems outcome	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80*	
2.5.2 – Ecosystems management strategy	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80*	
2.5.3 – Ecosystems information	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80*	
3.1.1 – Legal and customary framework	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80*	

3.1.2 – Consultation, roles and responsibilities	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80*	
3.1.3 – Long term objectives	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80*	
3.2.1 – Fishery specific objectives	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80*	
3.2.2 – Decision making processes	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80*	
3.2.3 – Compliance and enforcement	A1 – Longline Logbook Enhancement and Data Standardisation Protocol	31/12/2027
3.2.4 – Monitoring and management performance evaluation	*No action required. Pre-assessment scored ≥80*	

2 Improvement actions and tasks at Performance Indicator and / or Scoring Issue level

Complete a separate copy of the table for each Improvement Action. Where multiple UoAs are considered, please clearly specify which improvement actions and deadlines relate to which UoAs. Where the Improvement Action Plan is being revised as part of the MSC Improvement Program, update all relevant tables and specify the new deadlines, noting the changes and original deadlines under Section 3.

Table 3. Performance Indicator Action Plan table for Action *XX (Replace with Action ID no., name and UoA(s))*

Action ID no	A1					
Action name	Longline Logbook Enhancement and Data Standardisation Protocol					
Action summary	This action aims to establish a fully standardised, paper and/or digital longline logbook system capable of capturing all operational, biological, and environmental data required by MSC v2.01. It will ensure the consistent recording of bait type, hook characteristics, GPS positions, depth profiles, soak time, and all retained/discarded species. The action includes designing the digital/paper form, delivering skipper training, validating data through cross-checks with AIS and data from embark, and try to integrate the data collection in the framework of the DCF/ICCAT data collection.					
Performance Indicator(s) and/or Scoring Issue(s)	PI 1.2.3 – Information and monitoring PI 3.2.3 – Compliance and enforcement					
Deadline	31/12/2027					
Task No.	**Responsible – Action lead**	**Responsible – Action partners**	**Resources – Cost**	**Resources - Time**	**Deadline**	**Evidence of implementation**
A1-1	FederOP Ami e Palangari	Fondazione COISPA	€15,000 for logbook development and testing	20–30 staff days	30/06/2026	Prototype paper digital and/or logbook module delivered
A1-2	FederOP Ami e Palangari	Fondazione COISPA	€3,000 for training materials and meetings	10 staff days	31/12/2026	Training records; attendance sheets
A1-3	FederOP Ami e Palangari	Fondazione COISPA; ICCAT national scientists	Included in annual reporting activities	10 staff days/year	31/12/2027	confirmation; validated dataset

Action ID no	A2					
Action name	Documentation and Validation Programme for Primary and Retained Bycatch Species					
Action summary	This action aims to produce complete, accurate, and validated information on all primary and retained bycatch species caught by the Sicily BFT longline fleet. It addresses gaps identified in the pre-assessment regarding missing species-level reporting, inconsistent identification of bycatch species, and lack of validation mechanisms. The action includes compiling a comprehensive species list, producing an identification guide for onboard use, integrating mandatory species reporting into the logbook system developed under A1, and validating the accuracy of species identification through observer/EMS data cross-checks. The outputs will support robust scoring for MSC PI 2.1.3 2.2.1and 2.3.1					
Performance Indicator(s) and/or Scoring Issue(s)	2.1.3 – Primary species information 2.2.1 – Secondary species outcome 2.3.1 – ETP species outcome					
Deadline	31/12/2027					
Task No.	**Responsible – Action lead**	**Responsible – Action partners**	**Resources – Cost**	**Resources - Time**	**Deadline**	**Evidence of implementation**
A2-1	Fondazione COISPA	FederOP Ami e Palangari; Fondazione COISPA	€4,000 for data compilation, literature review, and expert workshops	15 staff days	30/06/2026	Comprehensive list of primary/bycatch species
A2-2	FederOP Ami e Palangari	Fondazione COISPA	€6,000 for development/printing of species ID handbook	20 staff days	31/12/2026	Published species identification guide for onboard use
A2-3	Fondazione COISPA	Observer/EMS contractors; FederOP	€10,000 for EMS/observer validation sampling	25 staff days	30/06/2028	Validation report comparing logbook data with observer/EMS records
A2-5	FederOP Ami e Palangari		No additional cost beyond routine activities	Ongoing	31/12/2028	Annually bycatch data summaries and quality review reports

Action ID no	A3					
Action name	ETP Interaction Risk Assessment and Onboard Handling/Release Protocol					
Action summary	This action will conduct a structured Productivity–Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) to estimate the potential risk of interaction between the Sicily BFT longline fishery and ETP species. The pre-assessment identified that evidence on the likelihood and severity of interactions is limited, but actual interactions are expected to be low. The PSA process provides a scientifically recognised method endorsed by MSC to estimate risk even when empirical data are limited. The analysis will use species-specific productivity attributes (e.g., lifespan, fecundity) and susceptibility attributes (e.g., overlap with fishing operations, behaviour, gear selectivity). The outcome will provide a defensible, transparent, and efficient risk characterisation that supports MSC PI 2.2.2 and 2.3.2 without requiring costly mitigation trials. A3 also includes the implementation of onboard safe-handling and release procedures (Task A3-5) for any incidentally caught ETP species. This ensures proper de-hooking, line-cutting, and revival techniques, the provision of ETP release kits on all vessels, and annual crew training aligned with ICCAT/FAO guidelines. Observer data will verify correct implementation.					
Performance Indicator(s) and/or Scoring Issue(s)	2.2.2 – Secondary species management strategy 2.3.2 – ETP species management strategy					
Deadline	31/12/2028					
Task No.	**Responsible – Action lead**	**Responsible – Action partners**	**Resources – Cost**	**Resources - Time**	**Deadline**	**Evidence of implementation**
A3-1	Fondazione COISPA	FederOP Ami e Palangari;	€5,000 for PSA framework and data compilation	10–12 days	31/12/2026	PSA methodological protocol
A3-2	Fondazione COISPA	FederOP Ami e Palangari;	€7,500 for productivity and susceptibility scoring for the species identified into A2	15–20 days	30/09/2027	Completed PSA scoring tables for each ETP species
A3-3	Fondazione COISPA	FederOP Ami e Palangari;	€1,500 for stakeholder workshop	5 days	31/12/2027	Stakeholder-reviewed PSA matrix
A3-4	Fondazione COISPA	FederOP Ami e Palangari;	Included in normal activities	5 days	30/06/2028	Final PSA Report with risk categories and conclusions
A3-5	Fondazione COISPA	FederOP Ami e Palangari;	€4,000 for equipment kits, training materials, and development of protocol	10–15 staff days	31/12/2028	Safe-handling protocol document; crew training records; photos/video of onboard tools; observer verification

Action ID no	A4					
Action name	Observer Programme for Verification of ETP Interactions, Bycatch and Gear Use					
Action summary	This action establishes a structured human observer programme to independently document interactions with ETP species, retained and discarded bycatch, gear configuration, and fishing operations. The pre-assessment identified that the fishery lacks empirical monitoring data under PI 2.2.3 and 2.3.3, preventing verification of low interaction rates with ETP species and limiting confidence in logbook data. This action introduces a formal observer system covering at least 10% of the fleet by 2029 following several strategy: observer on board, observer at landing site, logbook. This action includes feasibility analysis, vessel selection, trip planning, observer training, standardised data sheets, and annual reporting. This action provides essential evidence to demonstrate compliance with MSC v2.01 requirements for P2 species, habitats, and discard documentation.					
Performance Indicator(s) and/or Scoring Issue(s)	PI 2.2.3 – Secondary species information PI 2.3.3 – ETP species information					
Deadline	31/12/2030					
Task No.	**Responsible – Action lead**	**Responsible – Action partners**	**Resources – Cost**	**Resources - Time**	**Deadline**	**Evidence of implementation**
A4-1	FederOP Ami e Palangari	Fondazione COISPA	€4,000 for feasibility study (operational planning, vessel selection, safety requirements)	8–10 staff days	31/12/2026	Observer Programme Feasibility Report
A4-2	FederOP Ami e Palangari	Fondazione COISPA; selected volunteer vessels	€18,000 for observer recruitment, training, and initial deployment	20–25 staff days	30/06/2026	Observer training records; observer deployment plan
A4-3	FederOP Ami e Palangari	Fondazione COISPA	€15,000 per year for observer trips, data forms, and equipment	20 staff days/year	31/12/2026	First dataset of observer trip reports (ETP, bycatch, discards, gear use)
A4-4	FederOP Ami e Palangari	Fondazione COISPA	€10,000 for data analysis, reporting, and audits	20 staff days/year	31/12/2030	Annual Observer Monitoring Report for MSC submission confirming ≥1% coverage of the total fishing days (FD) carried out

Action ID no	A5					
Action name	Characterisation of Pelagic Gear Depth and Vertical Interaction Profile					
Action summary	This action aims to provide clear, verifiable information demonstrating that the Sicily BFT longline fishery operates exclusively in the pelagic zone and does not interact with seabed habitats. The pre-assessment identified a need for documented evidence on the vertical deployment profile of longline gear and the at-sea operational distribution of the fleet. The action focuses on recording depth of gear deployment, analysing the horizontal distribution of pelagic effort (without implying a benthic footprint), and verifying the absence of seabed contact through observer records and scientific review. The objective is to satisfy MSC PI 2.4.3 by demonstrating that habitat impacts from this pelagic gear are highly unlikely.					
Performance Indicator(s) and/or Scoring Issue(s)	PI 2.4.3 – Habitats information					
Deadline	31/12/2029					
Task No.	**Responsible – Action lead**	**Responsible – Action partners**	**Resources – Cost**	**Resources - Time**	**Deadline**	**Evidence of implementation**
A5-1	FederOP Ami e Palangari	Fondazione COISPA	€2,500 for development of depth-recording protocol and onboard sheets	10 staff days	30/06/2027	Standardised depth recording form incorporated into longline logbook
A5-2	FederOP Ami e Palangari	Fondazione COISPA	€7,500 for analysis of horizontal distribution of pelagic effort (longline set locations)	20 staff days	31/12/2027	Pelagic operation distribution maps based on logbook/embark
A5-3	FederOP Ami e Palangari	Fondazione COISPA	€5,000 for environmental data analysis (e.g., bathymetry, water column characteristics)	15 staff days	30/06/2028	Analysis showing depth of gear vs. depth of water column
A5-4	FederOP Ami e Palangari	Fondazione COISPA	Covered by observer programme budget	10 staff days/year	31/12/2030	Observer reports confirming mid-water operation and no seabed contact

3 Summary of changes to Improvement Action Plan deadlines

This table should only be completed if revisions have been made to the original Improvement Action Plan. The table should only include improvement actions where the deadline has been revised.

Table 4. Summary of Changes to Improvement Action Timelines

Action ID, Name and UoA(s)	**Original deadline**	**Revised deadline** *(only to be completed if a revised IAP is produced and action deadlines change)*	**Justification for revised deadline** *(only to be completed if deadline has been revised. If exceptional circumstances apply, please note these here)*

4 Progress verification schedule

The improvement Program Project Manager should complete this table to summarise the anticipated progress verification schedule. An Improvement Program fishery is subject to regular progress verification. The Improvement Program Project Manager should align progress verification dates with the deadlines of actions and ensure that the progress verification schedule is such that the duration between consecutive Progress Verification Reports being uploaded to the MSC database by the CAB does not exceed 2 years.

For each progress verification, please provide a list of the improvement actions that are due to be implemented by the date of the progress verification and provide a list of the Performance Indicators which are projected to have improved draft scoring ranges as a result of the completed improvement actions. Each progress verification should verify improvements on at least one Action.

For fisheries with an IAP longer than 2 years, the Improvement Program Project Manager should schedule a minimum of one onsite progress verification around the midway mark of the Improvement Program duration. The CAB may decide to conduct additional onsite progress verification site visits. This table should propose whether an onsite or offsite progress verification is needed and the CAB shall make the final decision on which is most appropriate.

Table 5. Progress Verification Schedule

Progress verification	**Proposed date** ***(DD/MM/YYYY)***	**Onsite or offsite?**	**Improvement actions to be verified** **(*List action IDs, name and UoAs)***	**Performance Indicators with improved draft scoring range**
1	31/12/2026	Offsite	A1 – Longline Logbook Enhancement (prototype, training completed) A3 – PSA Phase 1 (Methodology established)	PI 1.2.3 – initial improvement PI 2.2.2, 2.3.2 – PSA framework established
2	31/12/2027	Onsite	A1 – Full implementation of logbook A2 – Species ID guide completed A3 – PSA scoring completed	PI 1.2.3 – mid-progress PI 2.1.3, 2.2.1, 2.3.1 – improving PI 2.2.2, 2.3.2 – improved management basis
3	31/12/2028	Offsite	A2 – Species Reporting Validation A4 – Observer Programme operational (Year 1) A5 – Pelagic Gear Depth (Phase 1)	PI 2.1.3, 2.2.1, 2.3.1 – near SG80 PI 2.2.3, 2.3.3 – initial observer evidence PI 2.4.3 – improving via depth-profile documentation
4	31/12/2030	Onsite	A4 – ≥10% observer coverage achieved A5 – Full vertical profile analysis & observer confirmation of no seabed interaction	PI 2.2.3, 2.3.3 – near SG80 PI 2.4.3 – strong evidence base for SG80

5 Performance Indicator draft score changes (Benchmarking and Tracking Tool)

Please copy and paste the tables from the Benchmarking and Tracking Tool (BMT) here. Where multiple UoAs are considered please clearly specify how each BMT table relates to each UoA.

Performance Indicator	Draft Score Range (BMT)	Notes
Principle 1 – Sustainable Fish Stocks		
1.1.1 – Stock status	60–79	Below SG80 – improvement not required (ICCAT-led stock assessment)
1.1.2 – Stock rebuilding	≥80	ICCAT rebuilding plan successfully delivered
1.2.1 – Harvest strategy	≥80	Robust ICCAT harvest strategy
1.2.2 – Harvest control rules	≥80	HCRs implemented and effective
1.2.3 – Information and monitoring	60–79	Improvement required (Action A1)
1.2.4 – Assessment of stock status	≥80	ICCAT assessment covers all necessary parameters
Principle 2 – Ecosystem Interaction		
2.1.1 – Primary species outcome	≥80	Species within safe biological limits
2.1.2 – Primary species management strategy	60–79	Near SG80; strengthened via A2
2.1.3 – Primary species information	<60	Improved through A2 (species documentation and validation)
2.2.1 – Secondary species outcome	60	Improved through A2
2.2.2 – Secondary species management strategy	<60	To be supported through A3
2.2.3 – Secondary species information	<60	Improved by observer programme (A4)
2.3.1 – ETP species outcome	60	Acceptable but strengthened by A2 & A3
2.3.2 – ETP species management strategy	<60	Strengthened through A3 (risk assessment + handling protocol)
2.3.3 – ETP species information	<60	Improved through A4 (observer program)
2.4.1 – Habitats outcome	≥80	Pelagic gear – low risk
2.4.2 – Habitats management strategy	≥80	Existing spatial management adequate
2.4.3 – Habitats information	60–79	Strengthened by A5 (vertical profile)
2.5.1 – Ecosystem outcome	≥80	No significant trophic impacts identified
2.5.2 – Ecosystem management strategy	≥80	Strong ICCAT ecosystem framework
2.5.3 – Ecosystem information	≥80	MSFD + ICCAT ecosystem datasets available
Principle 3 – Management System		
3.1.1 – Legal & customary framework	≥80	Strong EU/ICCAT governance
3.1.2 – Consultation, roles & responsibilities	≥80	Multi-level consultation system
3.1.3 – Long-term objectives	≥80	ICCAT long-term sustainability objectives

3.2.1 – Fishery-specific objectives	≥80	Aligned with EU/ICCAT framework
3.2.2 – Decision-making processes	≥80	Responsive and transparent
3.2.3 – Compliance & enforcement	60–79	Strong enforcement; no improvement action needed
3.2.4 – Monitoring & performance evaluation	≥80	ICCAT + EU reporting obligations fully met

6 Stakeholder Action Plans (optional)

*This section is **Optional**. The Improvement Program Project Manager may include a summary of stakeholder responsibilities for each stakeholder that is responsible for the implementation of actions and tasks. The Improvement Program Project Manager may also include signed agreements from the stakeholders that have been assigned a responsibility for a particular action.*

Please complete a separate stakeholder responsibilities table for each stakeholder group.

Table 6. Stakeholder responsibilities

Stakeholder	*[Insert stakeholder name and contact information here]*
Responsibility	*[Insert type of responsibility / role e.g. Leading implementation / contributing to implementation]*
Actions	*[Insert the Action IDs for which the stakeholder is responsible]*
Tasks	*[Insert tasks for which the stakeholder is responsible]*
Date of completion	*[Insert date that the tasks should be completed by]*

6.1 Stakeholder agreement or commitment to undertake Improvement Actions

Include any supporting documents such as signed agreements, Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) in support of commitments made.

7 Traceability Improvement Actions (optional)

*The use of the traceability improvement actions section is **optional** and traceability improvement actions will not be part of the MSC Improvement Program progress verification and progress determination.*

For MSC Improvement Product Eligibility, and any future MSC full assessment, the fishery client is required to consider the tracking, tracing, and segregation systems within the fishery and how these systems will allow any products sold as "MSC Improvement Product" and eventually MSC certified, to be traced back to the individual Unit of Assessment (UoA) for the Improvement Program, or Unit of Certification (UoC) once the fishery is MSC certified. This includes a description of the factors that may lead to risks of non-Improvement Program/ non-certified seafood being mixed with "MSC Improvement products" prior to entering Chain of Custody as set out in the MSC Improvement Program Requirements and Guidance v3.0 Section 4) and the MSC Fisheries Certification Process (FCP v.2.3, 7.5.9, FCP v3.1, 7.5.10).

It is useful to consider the presence of potential traceability risks within the Unit of Assessment (UoA) in relation to other catches handled by the UoA, and what implications it might have for those fishers that are interested in gaining Improvement Program Chain of Custody eligibility and eventual MSC certification.

For each traceability risk factor, the Project Manager should provide a description of the relevant actions that could be taken to mitigate the risks identified. Some risk factors may link to actions identified against specific parts of the Fisheries Standard (e.g., P3 – Effective Management).

Table 7. Overview of traceability improvement action plan

Traceability risk/traceability gap	Action ID and Name	Deadline
Traceability systems do not track and trace to individual UoA.		*DD/MM/YYYY* *DD/MM/YYYY* *DD/MM/YYYY*
Appropriate records that demonstrate traceability are not maintained		
Movement of fish and fish product between harvest and landing is not known.		
Movement of fish and fish products between landing and the first sale/ change of product legal ownership is not known.		
Process of segregation is not known / there is no segregation of fish and fish product at critical tracking events.		

Traceability risk/traceability gap	Action ID and Name	Deadline
Lack of key data elements (the data or documents to identify the UoA such as species, catch area, gear, vessel, harvest date).		
Missing information on traceability systems (Relevant monitoring, oversight or regulatory controls which assure the traceability to each individual UoA)		
Fishery uses gears that are not part of the UoA.		
Vessels in the UoA also fish outside the UoA geographic area.		
Vessels from outside the UoA and/or client group member fish on the same stock.		
Fishery (client group members) handles Improvement Program (non-certified) product at the same time as MSC certified and/ or other non-certified products during any of the activities covered by the UoA.		
Transhipment occurs within the fishery.		
Other risks of mixing or substitution between the Improvement Program UoA(s) and other MSC-certified and/or non-certified product.		

Table 8. Traceability improvement actions and tasks ***(repeat table for each action)***

Action ID no	*[Insert action ID no. e.g. T1]*					
Action name	*[Insert action name]*					
Action summary	*[This should be a summary of the overall goal of achieving this Action and the Tasks that are listed below]*					
Traceability risk/gap	*[Insert traceability risk/gap that the action is aiming to address/mitigate]*					
Deadline	*[Insert date that the final task that makes up an action will be completed]*					
Task No.	**Responsible – Action lead**	**Responsible – Action partners**	**Resources – Cost**	**Resources - Time**	**Deadline**	**Evidence of implementation**
[Insert a list of tasks that need to be undertaken to complete an action in order of priority. Add more rows as necessary] *e.g.* *T1-1*	*[Insert stakeholder(s) that are responsible for leading the implementation of the specific task]*	*[Insert stakeholder(s) that are responsible for the implementation of the specific task]*	*[Insert resources that are required to complete task, including total budget and items with cost breakdown and currency. This may be budget or resources in terms of people days – see next column]*	*[Time: XX days of staff time where applicable]*	*[Insert the date that the task will be completed]*	*[Insert the means of evidence or metrics used to determine whether or not the task has been successfully implemented]*
T1-2						
T1-3 *Etc.*						

8 Template information and copyright

Delete the table below.

Table 9. Template Version Control

Version	Date of publication	Document name	Description of amendment
1.0	07/10/2009	msc-fishery-improvement-action-plan-template.xlsx	– N/A – new document
1.0	2013	msc-fishery-improvement-action-plan-overview-template.docx	– N/A – new document
1.0	22/11/2013	Fisheries Improvement Action Plan Template.docx	– N/A – new document
2.0	30/09/2019	ITM Fisheries Improvement Action Plan Template.docx	– Combination of v1.0 overview and reporting templates in single document, specifically for ITM
2.1	23/07/2020	MSC Fisheries Improvement Action Plan Template.docx	– Template updated to be applicable to all FIPs not just ITM. – Contact email changed from standards@msc.org to fisheries@msc.org – BMT hyperlink updated. – Introduction and Overview updated – Version tracker added. – Added additional scheme document table.
2.2	25/02/2021	msc-fishery-improvement-action-plan-template-v2.2-2021.docx	– Some edits to Introduction and modified guidance below. – Added fields for Date of Action Plan creation and updates. – Moved version tracker and scheme document table to end of document. – Edit to note in Table 2 relating to PI 1.1.1(a) – Added example draft scoring ranges with coloured fill to tables 4a, b, c. – Other minor edits to stakeholder action plan section – Added Traceability action plan section.
3.0	01/05/2023	MSC Fishery Improvement Action Plan Reporting Template v3.0.docx	– Updated to align with MSC ITM Program Requirements and Guidance – Pilot v2.0 and Fisheries Certification Process 2.3/3.0. Performance indicators for MSC Fisheries Standard v3.0 added.

Version	Date of publication	Document name	Description of amendment
4.0	29/10/2024	MSC Fishery Improvement Action Plan Reporting Template v4.0.docx	– Updated to align with MSC Improvement Program Requirements and Guidance v3.0, Fisheries Standard v3.1 and traceability has been added.

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