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# ACAP Position Statement

The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)

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<b>Abstract</b>	<p>Albatrosses and petrels remain among the most threatened seabirds globally, with incidental bycatch in high-seas fisheries representing their greatest conservation risk. In the SIOFA Convention Area current evidence indicates ongoing vulnerability for several species, highlighting the need to strengthen existing mitigation requirements. ACAP encourages SIOFA to enhance Conservation and Management Measure 13(2025) by adopting ACAP Best Practice Advice and Guidelines across all relevant fishing gears, including defined minimum standards for hookline weighting, bird-scaring devices, hook-shielding technologies, safe release practices, and mandatory trawl mitigation measures. Recent updates to seabird bycatch measures in other regional fisheries management organisations provide a timely opportunity for SIOFA to harmonise its specifications with emerging international best practice. Strengthened and consistent implementation of mitigation measures across related RFMOs will reduce bycatch risk, improve conservation outcomes for albatrosses and petrels, and support coherent management of high seas fisheries.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Restricted documents may contain confidential information. Please do not distribute restricted documents in any form without the explicit permission of the SIOFA Secretariat and the data owner(s)/provider(s).

<sup>2</sup> Documents available only to members invited to closed sessions.

# ACAP Position Statement

## Our position

ACAP calls on all Regional Fisheries Management and Conservation Organisations to implement uniform seabird conservation measures that are based on best practices for preventing, minimising or reducing the incidental mortality of albatrosses and petrels resulting from fishing activities.

ACAP calls on the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) to strengthen its seabird conservation efforts by reflecting ACAP Best Practice Advice and Guidelines in seabird bycatch mitigation measures. [CMM 13\(2025\) — Conservation and Management Measure on mitigation of seabird bycatch in fishing gear within the SIOFA Agreement Area](#) would be strengthened:

### **General provisions for all fishing gear**

- by ensuring widespread application of ACAP's [Hook Removal from Seabirds Guide](#) to maximise the chances of safe release of seabirds captured alive during fishing operations

### **Provisions applying to demersal longliners**

- by requiring minimum hookline weighting on demersal longliners  $\geq 25$  m of a minimum of 50 g/m on integrated weight (IW) longlines, or a minimum of 5 kg weights at 50 or 60 m intervals to non-IW longlines — because CMM 13(2025) currently only includes recommended hookline weighting configurations

### **Provisions applying to pelagic longliners**

- by revising the specification of the longline bird scaring lines for pelagic longliners, in light of recent changes to tori line specifications adopted recently by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission: [CMM 2025-05 - Conservation and Management Measure to Mitigate the Impact of Fishing on Seabirds](#)
- by revising the specification for line weighting to require minimum weighted branch line specifications to align with ACAP Best Practice Advice
- by allowing for the use of hook-shielding devices as an alternative to branch line weighting

### **Provisions applying to fishing trawlers**

- by making mandatory the existing hortatory provisions for fishing trawlers in CMM 13(2025).

### **Harmonisation and alignment with other Regional Fisheries Management and Conservation Organisations**

- by comparing the structure and specifications of CMM 13(2025) with recently endorsed changes to seabird bycatch mitigation conservation measures of other regional fisheries and conservation bodies (e.g. SPRFMO), and by identifying opportunities for harmonisation of international best practices across fishing areas.

## Basis for our position

### **ACAP's Best Practice Advice and Guidelines**

- reflect the best available scientific evidence on ways to avoid or minimise the incidental catch of seabirds during fishing operations

- are developed and refined from the results of extensive, robust scientific research on the technologies and techniques that are necessary to avoid or minimise the significant threat posed by fishing gears to seabirds
- are assessed against rigorous criteria to determine whether a particular technology or technique can be considered best practice to reduce the incidental mortality of albatrosses and petrels in fishing operations.

#### **The ACAP Best Practice Advice assessment criteria**

1. Individual fishing technologies and techniques should be selected from those shown by experimental research to significantly (in the statistical context) reduce the rate of seabird incidental mortality to the lowest achievable levels (determined by either a direct reduction in seabird mortality or by reduction in seabird attack rates, as a proxy).
2. Fishing technologies and techniques, or a combination thereof, should have clear and proven specifications and minimum performance standards for their deployment and use.
3. Fishing technologies and techniques should be demonstrated to be practical, cost effective and widely available.
4. Fishing technologies and techniques should, to the extent practicable, maintain catch rates of target species.
5. Fishing technologies and techniques should, to the extent practicable not increase the bycatch of other taxa.
6. Minimum performance standards and methods of ensuring compliance should be provided for fishing technologies and techniques and clearly specified in fishery regulations.

#### **ACAP Best Practice Advice**

The current (reviewed in 2024) ACAP Best Practice Advice documents applicable to SIOFA fisheries are available via the following links:

- [ACAP Review of Mitigation Measures and Best Practice Advice for Reducing the Impact of Pelagic and Demersal Trawl Fisheries on Seabirds.](#)
- [ACAP Review of Mitigation Measures and Best Practice Advice for Reducing the Impact of Demersal Longline Fisheries on Seabirds.](#)
- [ACAP Review of mitigation measures and Best Practice Advice for Reducing the Impact of Pelagic Longline Fisheries on Seabirds.](#)



#### **ACAP is committed to ongoing cooperation with SIOFA**

- we will continue to advocate for strengthened conservation and protection of albatrosses and petrels, and other seabirds
- our engagement in SIOFA forums shall be facilitative in nature
- we will continue to support efforts to minimise the incidental bycatch of albatrosses and petrels in the SIOFA Area of Application.

## Context

The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) is an international organisation that aims to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels, the most threatened group of seabirds globally.

In May 2025, the 8th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to ACAP recognised that albatrosses and petrels face a conservation crisis and adopted [Resolution 8.5](#). The Resolution urges Parties to make renewed efforts to review and where necessary improve their operational, management, and other measures to reduce or eliminate the incidental mortality of albatrosses and petrels from fishing activities, in particular by adopting and implementing ACAP's Best Practice Advice, and by collecting and monitoring of bycatch and mitigation use data. The Resolution also encourages Parties who are Contracting Parties or Cooperating non-Contracting Parties to regional fisheries management and conservation organisations, whose fisheries pose bycatch risks to albatrosses and petrels, to promote the adoption and implementation of ACAP's Best Practice Advice to minimise seabird bycatch. Currently, two ACAP Parties are also Parties to SIOFA, one ACAP Party is a European Union Member State, and one ACAP Party is a Signatory to SIOFA, and so are committed to implementing ACAP Resolution 8.5.

ACAP encourages international cooperative action to conserve and protect seabirds by all States and Fishing Entities whose fishing activities cause the incidental bycatch of seabirds.

Within the SIOFA Area of Application the best available scientific evidence:

- highlights that the conservation status of many seabirds is perilous, with some species heading towards extinction
- highlights that bycatch in fisheries is the key conservation threat to seabirds
- highlights that the most important habitat for endangered Southern Hemisphere seabirds is the high seas area south of 25° South.

There is a timely opportunity for harmonisation and alignment of SIOFA's CMM 13(2025) and CMM 02(2025) with international best practices across other regional fisheries management and conservation organisations:

- SPRFMO (March 2026) has adopted a significant number of changes to strengthen [CMM 09-2026 Conservation and Management Measure for minimising bycatch of seabirds in the SPRFMO Convention](#), and the updated CMM will be published in the near future.
- SEAFO is actively considering similar proposed changes to its [Conservation Measure 25/12: On Reducing Incidental By-catch of Seabirds in the SEAFO Convention Area](#) ahead of the next SEAFO Scientific Committee meeting (November 2026).

Widespread and harmonised application of ACAP Best Practice Advice and Guidelines will improve operational, management, and other measures to avoid or minimise the incidental mortality of albatrosses and petrels during fishing activities.

## For more information contact

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