



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
SIXTH REGULAR SESSION**

10-19 August 2010
Nuku'alofa, Tonga

Regional Observer Programme

WCPFC-SC6-2010/ST-WP-06

Prepared by the Secretariat

Introduction

The report for SC is a brief report on the WCPFC ROP which is the largest observer programme in the world, and a more comprehensive report will be available at TCC6. The regional observer programme (ROP) has developed minimum standards for most key aspects of an observer programme; Audit procedures have been developed to meet the Commission requirements for a full audit of all national observer programmes for certification as meeting ROP standards prior to 2012. This audit package was used for the first time this year on the Philippine Observer programme. The comprehensive list of Commission-approved data fields to be collected by ROP observers for scientific and monitoring purposes are now being collected by a number of national and sub regional observer programmes. Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) of the Commission are being monitored and thus have a direct influence on the mandate and duties of the observers when on board vessels. Debriefing of observers for monitoring compliance to CMMs and checking data quality is taking on a much more important and critical role when an observer returns from a trip. The debriefing task is being upgraded in most Pacific Observer landing ports. Monitoring of the fleets, to ensure 100% purse seine coverage between 20N and 20S continues to be an important role for the Secretariat. Regular observer placement information from Observer service providers and coastal states as well as sub-regional programmes is important.

A survey of Pacific Island national observer programmes in July 2010 indicates that there are 551 authorised observers available for ROP trips, the number will increase further with numerous training programme's being organized by the FFA and SPC. The selection and further professional training of debriefers to maximize the usefulness of the information from observers is an important

step that is being taken to overcome the extreme shortage of debriefers in most Pacific Island programmes. Programmes surveyed indicated that approximately 90 debriefers across all programmes would be required, with a majority operating in the busy landing ports.

All the elements now being required for the collection by the ROP has resulted in a number of operational and interpretational issues for which the ROP has not received Commission guidance, there is a need to resolve these issues through the mechanisms available to the Commission.

Following recent disturbing events, where murder charges were made against crew members of a purse seine vessel following the death of an observer while on duty, the safety and health of observers who are on board vessels collecting often sensitive data has also become a major concern to all programmes

ROP Collected Data

The WCPFC Regional Observer Programme (ROP) provides coverage by ROP observers as per the WCPFC Convention Article 28 Para 4 &5, This definition of the ROP observer trip was reinforced by the approval of CMM 2007-01 “Scope of the Commission ROP” Para 5 which states:

The Commission ROP shall apply to the following categories of fishing vessels authorized to fish in the Convention Area in accordance with the Commission’s Conservation and Management Measures 2004-01:

- i) vessels fishing exclusively on the high seas in the Convention Area, and*
- ii) vessels fishing on the high seas and in waters under the jurisdiction of one or more coastal States and*
- iii) vessels fishing in the waters under the national jurisdiction of two or more coastal States.*

Member countries of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) are obliged to provide data collected from ROP trips to the WCPFC Secretariat according to the requirements specified in the WCPFC Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) 2007–01 Attachment K, Annex C, which was approved by all Members of the Commission:

4. No later than 31 December 2008:

- Existing sub-regional programmes and national programmes shall be regarded as a part of the ROP, and shall continue unless otherwise determined by the Commission.*
- Data obtained through these observer programmes shall be submitted to the Commission and shall be considered Commission data.*

The Conservation and Management Measure for Bigeye and Yellowfin Tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (CMM 2008-01) requires 100% observer coverage with ROP-accredited observers on purse seine vessels fishing between 20N and 20S in the Convention area from 1

January 2010. The annual coverage period also contains a FAD closure period between July 1st and 30th September each year, it is estimated that in 2010 approximately 2000 purse seine ROP trips will occur.

Data collected by these trips should be available for analysis however the WCPFC Secretariat has not been able to receive data in time from the data provider or the national programmes to be able to provide a report based on observer ROP collected data for 2009 or 2010 to date. There are a number of reasons this has occurred. Reference is directed to SC6-2010/ST WP-1 Para 4.3 Regional Observer Programme (ROP) data, and also page 20 (Table 8) and page 21 (Table 9). As noted in these tables, only four WCPFC member countries have given authorization to the data provider (SPC) to release ROP data for analysis and to be made available to the WCPFC Secretariat.

Data Management

The Secretariat was asked to compile a number of options with costs for the management of data collected by the ROP observers these options for data entry were narrowed down to two options by TCC5, option 5.1 Noumea and option 5.3 Pohnpei. Following a commitment of a financial contribution of 115,000 ecu from New Caledonia at WCPFC6, option 5.1 was accepted for one year.

A paper indicating costs of funding for the management and data punching for approximately 3000 purse seine and long line observer trips a year was presented as part of the WCPFC6 work programme. The amount required to enable the development of adequate infrastructure and staffing for ROP data to be entered in 2010 (\$400,000) was not approved by the WCPFC6 and therefore the costs for infrastructure, staffing and entering ROP data is still to be resolved as well as the location.

Cadre of Observers'

Work on spill and grab sampling techniques by observers on purse seiners in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean was partially funded from the 2009 WCPFC "Cadre of Observers" budget

For the reasons outlined by Lawson, SC5–ST–WP3 observer-based sampling appears to be the only means of consistently sampling unsorted catches of known set type and area/time stratum that is required for most scientific purposes. For 2010, it was proposed that one of the priorities was for observer-based catch sampling: Specially trained observers were selected to assist in the work required for this sampling and an update on the estimation of selectivity bias based on paired spill and grab samples collected by observers on purse seiners in the western and central Pacific Ocean is contained in the paper WCPFC-SC6-2010/ST-WP-02

Cross endorsement of observers.

The initiative to develop a cross-endorsement process of observers between IATTC and WCPFC comes from CMM 2008-01, Para 29 which direct the Secretariat to work with IATTC to develop procedures to allow observers from each regional fisheries management organization (RFMO) to work in one another's Convention Area.

The attached agreement (ROP Attachment 1) will be presented to both the IATTC and WCPFC meeting later in the year for consideration. It is provided for your information.

Summary

With all its elements, the WCPFC ROP is the largest Observer programme in the world. This point needs to be taken into account when making decisions on the operational aspects of the programme. There have been, and there will continue to be many problems that will need to be addressed, and these can only be resolved through cooperation and guidance. The current infrastructures in place seem to be adequate, although as reported by Pacific Island Observer Coordinators at a recent workshop, adequate land based technical and support staff numbers to cope with the 100% coverage is a problem. The SC will require much of the data collected by observers for various reasons, consequently the timeliness, availability to both SPC and the Commission and the entering of data for analysis are an increasingly important priority which needs to be addressed.

ROP Attachment 1



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**MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION (MOC) ON THE CROSS ENDORSEMENT OF
WCPFC AND IATTC APPROVED OBSERVERS WHEN OBSERVING IN THE
CONVENTION AREAS OF BOTH ORGANIZATIONS**

between

**THE COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF HIGHLY
MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS IN THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC OCEAN**

and

THE INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

The Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPFC) and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC):

UNDERSTANDING the value of undertaking cooperative efforts to facilitate the operation of vessels that fish in both convention areas during the same fishing trip;

CONSIDERING the Memorandum of Understanding between WCPFC and IATTC signed in 2006 and the Memorandum of Cooperation signed in 2009;

Confirm the following conditions for the cross endorsement of approved observers to operate on authorized vessels that undertake fishing operations in the convention areas of both organizations:

1. Vessels with observers may only fish in the IATTC agreement area if they are included on the IATTC Regional Vessel Register, and may only fish in the WCPFC agreement area if they are included on the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels

2. Cross endorsement for observers will only be given when an observer is fully authorised and endorsed by the IATTC or WCPFC to carry out duties in the waters of both convention areas.

3. It is understood that the data and information requirements of each Commission will be met by the authorized observers when the vessel in question is in its Convention area.

4. All data or information collected by observers operating on trips that extend into the Convention area of the other organization will be provided to both the IATTC and WCPFC Secretariats.

5. Each Secretariat will identify the data and information required for its Commission and will ensure that observers will be able to meet all such requirements with respect to vessels fishing within that Commission's convention area.

6. The Secretariats shall cooperate in observer training, with a view towards developing a core group of observers from the observer programmes of each organization who may be used by vessels operating in both convention areas to meet the observer programme requirements of both IATTC and WCPFC

7. This cooperation on the cross endorsement of IATTC and WCPFC observers is subject to periodic review, and may be modified as agreed by both Commissions. Either Commission may terminate this MOC with three months' notice of such intention to the other Commission.

Signed on behalf of the Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission:

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| Chairman, WCPFC | Director, IATTC |
| Date: | Date: |