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Consideration of data fields for monitoring compliance with seabird bycatch mitigation measures as part of port inspection and transshipment monitoring

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Summary

Reflecting the request made by ERSWG12 to the Compliance Committee to consider ways to effectively monitor compliance with seabird bycatch mitigation measures, this document proposes priority data fields for inclusion in port inspection and transshipment monitoring.

1. Background

At its meeting in March 2017, The ERSWG12 meeting identified that *'the level of interaction between seabirds and SBT fisheries has remained at a high level and is still a significant level of concern. This suggests that mitigation measures and their implementation should be further promoted'* (ERSWG12 paragraph 156).

In addition, the review compiled by the 2016 Compliance Committee of 'Types of Information Collected on Bycatch Mitigation Measures Under Members' Compliance Programs' (CCSBT-ERS/1703/07) identified that methods vary widely between Members, ranging from reliance on observer program data to use of port inspection, electronic monitoring, aerial surveillance and at-sea inspection.

The ERSWG12 made a request that the CCSBT Compliance Committee *'consider how to effectively monitor seabird mitigation measures through mechanisms such as port inspections and transshipment observers. This could include the examination of fishing gear for evidence of tori lines and tori poles, the presence of line weights, and the inspection of log books for evidence of night setting'* (ERSWG12 paragraph 152).

As reflected in the Minimum Performance Requirements (doc CCSBT-CC/1710/13), the need is to:

- i. Identify whether a vessel has fished in an area to which one of the relevant RFMO seabird Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) applies (south of 25 degrees South latitude in the IOTC or the ICCAT Convention Areas, and south of 30 degrees South latitude in the WCPFC Convention Area)
- ii. Verify evidence that the vessel has been using at least two of the three mitigation measures, which are 1) night setting with minimum deck lighting, 2) bird-scaring lines (tori lines) , and 3) line weighting, recognising that specification of the measures varies between RFMOs, and would need to be consistent with the specification of the RFMO in whose area the vessel had been fishing.

Since 2004, BirdLife International has had a programme of work to engage with the five tuna RFMOs to provide support to their efforts to reduce the bycatch of albatrosses and petrels in pelagic longline fisheries worldwide. In addition, BirdLife International operates the Albatross Task Force across eight countries in South America and southern Africa, which works directly with fishers and

fishery managers to identify and implement solutions to albatross bycatch. Based on this experience, BirdLife has collated its experience of priorities for monitoring seabird bycatch mitigation measures as part of port inspection and transshipment monitoring.

2. Transshipment monitoring

The CCSBT program for monitoring transshipments at sea offers a valuable opportunity to monitor use of bycatch mitigation measures.

Recognising that the primary duty of the transshipment observer is to monitor the transshipping activities, but that this may include accessing data in logbooks, we propose that observers be mandated to collect, as part of their regular inspection duties, the following information whenever practical and possible:

- i. **Stern shots:** photographs of the stern of the vessel (also showing vessel name/identifying features) to ascertain the presence of bird-scaring line poles (tori poles), and to estimate the attachment height above sea level and whether the pole is sufficiently robust to support a bird scaring line with the aerial extent specified under the relevant RFMO seabird CMM.
- ii. **Night setting:** 10-15 photographs taken at random of non-consecutive pages of logbooks to check for fishing effort in areas to which the relevant RFMO seabird CMM applies and whether or not gear was set at night
- iii. **Line weighting:** photos of a subset of fishing gear (in baskets, coils or boxes) to check for presence of line weights, and, as far as possible, check that this is consistent with the specifications of the relevant RFMO seabird CMM.
- iv. **Bird scaring lines:** Where possible, photos of bird-scaring lines if any are present/visible

We suggest that the agencies responsible for managing the transshipment observer scheme could establish a data management protocol to allow digital images to be stored in association with other relevant details of each vessel inspected, ready for analyses which might be requested by CCSBT. It is noted that a level of expertise might be required to assess line weighting and bird scaring line features that might be present in photographs.

In the 2016, the IOTC Scientific Committee recommended that the collection of seabird bycatch mitigation photographs through the IOTC Regional Observer Programme be trialled as a pilot.

3. Port inspection

The importance of port inspection as a tool for delivering sustainable fisheries management is well established, and it provides a valuable opportunity to monitor presence and apparent use of bycatch mitigation measures as part of overall compliance monitoring.

Recognising the need to ensure that any additional data collection can be accommodated within a port inspectors' existing workload, the following are proposed as priorities:

- a) Verify if the vessel has the equipment necessary for deploying one or two tori lines. Priorities for verification, in suggested order of priority are (i) presence of tori pole(s), (ii) spacing and length of streamers, (iii) overall length of bird scaring line.

- b) Examine the logbook to establish the vessel's setting start and end times, to ascertain if the vessel is undertaking night setting (as defined by IOTC, ICCAT and WCPFC seabird CMMs as being completed between nautical dusk and nautical dawn). We recognise that inspector time may be restricted, and consultation with Nautical Almanacs may be necessary to determine local dusk and dawn times. In such cases, it may be most feasible to take photographs of logbooks, for later analysis, as above.
- c) Verify if weights are attached to the branch lines and if they comply with the weight and distance from the hook as required under the ICCAT, IOTC and WCPFC seabird CMMs (greater than a 40g within 50cm of the hook (*WCPFC only*); greater than a total of 45 g attached within 1 m of the hook or; greater than a total of 60 g attached within 3.5 m of the hook or greater than a total of 98 g weight attached within 4 m of the hook).

If necessary to save time, photographs could be taken in lieu of detailed checks. If this approach is taken, then a protocol and process could be used that is similar to the transshipment proposal above.

IOTC has taken recent steps to enhance compliance monitoring of its bycatch CMMs its port inspection procedures and training, and is piloting a secondary port inspection report form to record compliance with technical management measures including bycatch measures.

4. Summary

The opportunity exists to add elements to the CCSBT port inspection and transshipment monitoring protocols that could, with minor additional effort, provide valuable data on presence of bycatch mitigation measures. Such monitoring is likely to be important for increasing incentives for further uptake and use of bycatch mitigation measures by vessels. Since some CCSBT Members already collect such data through port inspection and at-sea inspection, they will have experience on how to implement this in a way that fits into the existing workload of the inspectors.