



Reducing uncertainty in SBT farming statistics

New Zealand

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The Extended Scientific Committee (ESC) has, on a number of occasions, identified the potential benefits of an analysis of the Australian data from the CCSBT catch documentation scheme (CDS) as a way of addressing the question of whether there is uncertainty in the reporting of catch stocked into southern bluefin farms. For example, in 2018, a small working group of the ESC agreed that:

“if the Australian CDS data, at the individual fish level in the sample of each company, were made available, they could be analysed with a range of scientific methods to verify catch estimates for the Australian purse-seine fishery. These methods could be more robust to various uncertainties and assumptions than those that can currently be applied”¹

The ESC again considered farming uncertainties in 2019 with the support of an independent expert, Dr Ana Gordoia. Dr Gordoia concluded that the necessary tool to reliably estimate input data would be the implementation of stereo video cameras but also recognised that additional information could be gained from the analysis of CDS data.²

To date Australia has not agreed to make its CDS data available for independent review citing confidentiality concerns and focusing its best endeavours on implementing stereo video technology.

The implementation of stereo-video has encountered numerous delays over the years. In 2006, Australia noted that:

“stereo video cameras had undergone extensive field testing and demonstrated reliable performance under experimental conditions. These cameras are expected to be implemented during transfers in the near future, as soon as the systems can be demonstrated to be robust enough for routine farm application”³

More recently, Australia has advised that travel restrictions linked to the global pandemic would lead to further delays in its most recent trial commitments.

Given that in 2022 CCSBT will address the issue of the global TAC for the following three-year quota block it is perhaps timely to ask Australia to reconsider its position in relation to the release of CDS data given the broader interest in resolving this issue.

While it is clear that the stated desire of Members to see “stereo video implementation by the next TAC block”⁴ will not be fulfilled, allowing an analysis of Australian CDS data would offer an alternative means of demonstrating progress towards a resolution.

New Zealand also notes that Japan has made progress on its proposal for market analysis and work to address farm uncertainties would assist CCSBT in its decision-making next year. New Zealand therefore proposes that, subject to Australia’s agreement to make its CDS data available on a confidential basis, an independent review is undertaken with the results reported back to the CCSBT meeting in 2022 following a review by ESC. This would complement the market proposal developed by Japan which will, we understand, focus on comparing farm outputs with market information.

¹ Paragraph 96, Report of the Twenty Third Meeting of the Scientific Committee

² Paragraph 45, Report of the Twenty Fourth Meeting of the Scientific Committee

³ Paragraph 73, Report of the Eleventh Meeting of the Scientific Committee

⁴ Paragraph 27, Report of the Twenty Seventh Annual Meeting of the Commission