



Research mortality allowance: Proposed allowance for 2021 and 2022



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Summary

Australia requests a 3t research mortality allowance for a project to trial the use stereo video technology to determine the weight of catch taken in Australia's Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery.

The trial will operate between December 2021 and March 2022.

Background

Since 1992, the majority of the Australian catch has been taken by purse seine, targeting juvenile southern bluefin tuna (SBT) in the Great Australian Bight. The catch is transferred to aquaculture farming operations off the coast of Port Lincoln in South Australia, where the fish are grown to a larger size to achieve higher market prices.

Each year approximately 30 tow pontoons return to port, typically containing between 100-200t (7000-15,000 fish) of SBT. Currently, a weight sample of 100 fish is taken out of the tow pontoon as it nears Port Lincoln. SBT under 10kg are not included as part of the 100 fish sample. The average weight of the 100 fish sample ($\geq 10\text{kg}$) is used to estimate the average weight of all of the fish in the tow pontoon.

At CCSBT 27 in 2020, Australia committed to trial emerging SV technology to test whether any of the new generation of systems are fully automated and cost effective. Australia has continued to monitor emerging SV technologies in Australia, New Zealand and Japan and there is anecdotal evidence that there may now be systems appropriate for implementation in farming operations off Port Lincoln. However, this cannot be confirmed without testing these in an operational environment.

Trial of Stereo Video technology

The major aim of the project is for service providers to demonstrate, to the Australian Government fully automated, cost effective stereo video technology in situ in Australia's SBT farms.

Australia's SBT fishing season commences on 1 December each year, with purse seining for SBT farms being concentrated over the first few months of the season. The trial will be conducted between 1 December 2021 and 30 March 2022.

Need for research mortality allowance

One objective of the trial is to determine how well stereo video measures the weight of fish compared to physical measurements of fish. To meet this objective, the service provider will be required to undertake a number of measurements, including removing fish from the water to physically measure them. As these fish will undergo a series of measurements and be subjected to the associated stress, they will not be returned to the pens for further grow out and marketing as a premium product. The requested 3t research mortality allowance will provide for sufficient fish to be measured to meet this objective.