



Update on Seabird Project to Enhance Awareness on and implementation of Seabird Measures

1. Introduction

This project is aimed at assisting Members to meet existing CCSBT obligations that relate to the recording and reporting on interactions with seabird and the use of bycatch mitigation measures. Overall funding for the project is provided by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), via the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). The funding partner will evaluate the project outcomes against the baselines provided in Annex 1. These are related to GEF's indicator 3.3E for the project.

Indicator 3.3E: Demonstrated regulatory required compliance of CCSBT members with seabird bycatch mitigation measures, verified by data obtained from adequately trained observers, port inspections and/or a comparable minimum level of review of video footage collected using electronic monitoring, or other suitable measures of independent verification (score, max value 16)

The project plan provides an integrated and holistic approach to assist Members to achieve the stated ambition of the project. The project will support industry to:

- Reach or exceed minimum standards;
- Support officials to strengthen data collection and MCS processes; and
- Evaluate the state of affairs for seabird bycatch in global fisheries.

Stakeholder Engagement

Supporting the improved implementation of seabird bycatch requires that fishing masters, captains and other industry representatives are engaged. This is detailed in Element 1, where industry has the opportunity to share their experiences and preferences for mitigation, as well as receive practical support for how to meet existing obligations.

Supporting Member Administrations

Elements 2 and 3 are aimed at supporting national administrations to obtain harmonised, verified scientific and compliance-ready data on use of measures. The project will develop seabird-specific training for observers and compliance officers (inspectors, coast guard, etc.) in collaboration with Member administrations (Element 2). The project will further establish baselines for Members' current state of EM systems capable of meeting some of the project objectives, as the next step in Element 3. This may lead to project support being provided to Members to enhance existing tools and explore novel electronic monitoring solutions for evaluating seabird bycatch mitigation.

Global Bycatch Risk Assessment

Element 4 is the global bycatch risk assessment. A key, cross-cutting theme will be to facilitate inter-Member sharing of lesson, examine challenges in a confidential setting, and share updates. It is envisaged that these discussions may be facilitated in the margins of other meeting (e.g. future meetings of the CC).

2. Progress

Appropriately, the initial period has largely involved administrative and preparatory activities, which have proceeded much as anticipated. The Project Coordinator Dr Ross Wanless was introduced to Members at a meeting of the Seabird Project Working Group in May. He also participated in the May EMWG meeting. Thereafter, the Secretariat has progressed plans with Members with respect to all Elements.

The Executive Secretary and the Project Coordinator attended the Project Steering Committee meeting at FAO headquarters in Rome, 11-14 July. The project presentation at that event elicited an unexpectedly large number of uniformly encouraging responses from other project partners. The wide-ranging nature of the project has ensured that it provides multiple intersection points with sibling projects. Several strong collaborative opportunities were unlocked at that meeting. The project is amongst the most advanced of the ~dozen sibling projects in the Tuna Project portfolio, and expectations are high for this project to be successful.

Ongoing project progress is almost entirely dependent on engagement from Members and delegations are strongly encouraged to meet with the Project Coordinator in the margins of CC 18 to discuss potential future activities.

3. Detailed progress

Element 1:

Specific objective: Promote uptake and use of best practice seabird bycatch mitigation.

As part of developing proper relationships between stakeholders and to share a common understanding of the project and planning direction, the Seabird Project Coordinator utilised the CCSBT's existing framework and organised a meeting of the CCSBT Seabird Project Working Group (SPWG). The SPWG reaffirmed the aim of this element and discussed actual needs and direction for planning and implementation. The Seabird Project Coordinator is in communication with each CCSBT Member to develop a plan and materials optimised for each Member. CCSBT is engaging with Members and other Common Oceans II project partners (e.g. ISSF) to align activities, anticipated to commence after this reporting period.

Element 2:

Specific objective: Promote harmonised approaches to recording use of and inspecting mitigation measures at sea and in port.

Participation in the aforementioned SPWG meeting. The SPWG reaffirmed the aim of this element and discussed actual needs and direction for planning and implementation. The Seabird Project Coordinator is in communication with each CCSBT Member to develop a plan and materials optimised for each Member. The Project Coordinator is engaging with Members and others to align training activities, anticipated to commence after this reporting period.

Element 3:

Specific objectives: 1) Provide Members with tools to report on compliance-related aspects with robust, independent data, and 2) Strengthen and enhance Members' EM systems to align with CCSBT and other relevant RFMO rules, requirements, recommendations and ambitions.

A workshop was initially planned for the final quarter of 2023. As a precursor to this, the Seabird Project Coordinator attended a virtual meeting of the CCSBT electronic monitoring working group in May. At that meeting, Members requested explicitly that the timing of the project's EM inception workshop avoid the 4th quarter of the year, since the calendar for RFMO meetings is very congested in this period. The inception workshop will now take place in the first quarter of 2024. The Project Coordinator is engaging with Members to align activities for the first half of 2024, and keeping abreast of EM standards and related developments in other RFMOs.

Element 4:

Specific objective: Update global seabird risk assessment.

First (hybrid) meeting was held as planned in June. The project took advantage of the CCSBT Technical meeting of the Ecologically Related Species Working Group (Technical ERSWG, held in June 2023) to evaluate seabird bycatch – for brevity it is termed the “SEFRA process”. The SEFRA process has established some key principles that the global assessment will likely follow and has appointed a technical coordinator. Based on the outcomes from that meeting, the Project Coordinator will discuss alignment of activities, modalities for operations, and how to expand the SEFRA initiative to meet the objectives of Element 4. Besides maintaining the engagement between this project and the SEFRA initiative, no activities in Element 4 are planned for this year.

Cross-cutting:

Additional to the above, the Seabird Project Coordinator keeps abreast of developments in relevant fields through participation in relevant working group meetings of other RFMOs, when practical. He presented the project outline at the ICCAT EcoCard meeting in May, in an effort to align and find synergies with these two initiatives. The Project Coordinator for the EcoCard project is Dr Sachiko Tsuji, who is also coordinating the CCSBT SEFRA initiative, which creates efficiencies in the numbers of required interactions with Members. The Seabird Project Coordinator has also established a working collaboration including BirdLife International and ISSF to redevelop and enhance the ISSF's 'Longline Skipper Training' materials. CCSBT, FAO and ISSF are exploring jointly hosting workshops under the broader Common Oceans banner. This collaboration is anticipated to last for the duration of the project, and future lessons that may arise from this project will be integrated into ISSF outreach material.

A graphic designer has also been engaged to develop visual elements for the project. The results can be seen in the presentation accompanying this report. In the medium-term, the designer will produce infographics and other educational material for the project's training and outreach engagements.

Further, the Seabird project Coordinator is exploring options for obtaining videos for observer and compliance officer (inspector) training purposes. It would be particularly helpful if some of the projects dedicated communication resources can be used in this regard before the end of this calendar year, which is also the first year of the project.

Looking further ahead, the development of material is anticipated to evolve throughout the project, and the Seabird Project Coordinator remains interested in obtaining or making videos in collaboration with Members. Members are encouraged to approach the Seabird Project Coordinator should they have existing resources or be interested in both expertise-sharing and (subject to permissions) recording footage of appropriate inspections or enforcement activities in the next 12-18 months.

4. Conclusion

Members are encouraged to engage with the details that FAO has on record (see Annex) and consider what steps may be taken to improve, including in areas or aspects where the Project can provide support.

Prepared by the Seabird Project Coordinator

Annex 1: Baseline for indicator 3.3E

| CCSBT Member | 1. Observer Coverage (in %) | 2. Representativeness of observer coverage (in %) | 3. Compliant use of seabird mitigation measures (Percentage of observed effort in Members' long line fleets complying with seabird mitigation measures) | | | 4. Enhancement of data accuracy (number of independent data sources utilized in addition to scientific observer) | Notes |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|----------------|----------------|--|---|
| | | | 3/3 Measures | 2/3 Measures | Non-compliant | | |
| Australia | 8% | 0% | 63.6% | 36.4% | 0% | 4 | Electronic Monitoring used but do not use human observers. 2019 also used port inspection and at-sea inspection, plus aerial surveillance |
| European Union | Not applicable | Not applicable | Not applicable | Not applicable | Not applicable | Not applicable | The EU does not have southern blue fin tuna vessels. |
| Indonesia | 0% | 0% | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | 0 | |
| Japan | 7% | 33% | 6.5% | 41.4% | 52.1% | 0 | No at-sea inspection in 2019/20 |
| Korea | 0% | 0% | 0% | 100%* | 0% | 0 | *There is no observer data for Korea for 2020 so figures are for the 2019 fishing season |
| New Zealand | 9% | 50% | 41.6% | 58.4% | 0% | 3 | Port and at-sea inspections plus aerial surveillance |
| Fishing entity of Taiwan | 13% | 75% | 0% | 100% | 0% | 0 | |
| South Africa* | Unknown | Unknown | 100% | 0% | 0% | Not provided but likely that port inspections are occurring and possibly at-sea inspections | There is no observer data for South Africa for 2019 or 2020 so figures are for the 2018 fishing season. |
| Scoring | 0 | 0 | 2 | | | 0 | |

Table 3.3.E-4 Baseline data presentation indicator 3.3E

| Minimum standards | Score |
|--|--------------|
| Observer coverage of at least 10% | 0 |
| Representativeness of observer coverage | 0 |
| Compliant use of seabird mitigation measures | 2 |
| Enhancement in data accuracy | 0 |
| Overall Score (out of 16) | 2 |