Commission for the Conservation of
Southern Bluefin Tuna

みなみまぐろ保存委員会

CCSBT-CC/1310/BGD01
(Previously CCSBT-CCWG/1305/06)

Members' Comments in Relation to a Regional Observer Program

Background

The Seventh meeting of the Compliance Committee (CC) agreed that the Executive Secretary would consult with Members on their objectives and requirements in relation to a Regional Observer Program (ROP), analyse the requirements and report back to the Compliance Committee in 2013 with options on how to move forward.

The Secretariat distributed Circular #2013/011 on 1 March 2013 in order to obtain Members' initial views in relation to a ROP. Members were asked to provide their views on:

- What (if any) are the primary objectives or requirements they considered important for a CCSBT ROP.
- The need for a fully independent centrally run ROP, versus enhancement and more rigorous application of the CCSBT's Scientific Observer Program Standards (SOPS), versus retaining the status quo.
- The following four specific items:
  - Should the required observer coverage level be better defined and is a 10% coverage sufficient?
  - Should the specified observer coverage level be a target level or a binding measure?
  - Should the minimum data fields for observer reporting be revised?
  - Should SOP data be provided to the Secretariat for the purpose of making it available for CCSBT science and compliance purposes in accordance with CCSBT's Rules and procedures for the protection, access to and dissemination of data compiled by the CCSBT? And whether fine-scale or aggregated data should be provided.

Overview of Members' Comments and Possible Options

Members' responses to these questions are provided at **Attachment A**. A range of views were expressed by the different Members and the views were not always compatible. A brief summary of some of the main views is provided below together with some potential compromise options for consideration.

- <u>Primary objectives for a CCSBT ROP</u>

  A common view from all Members that commented on this question was that one of the primary objectives for a CCSBT ROP is improved data for stock assessment purposes. Two main areas of improvements were noted, these being verification of data and improved quality and availability of data. Two Members also mentioned that an objective was to collect improved information on interactions with Ecologically Related Species (ERS) or to collect information that was not otherwise available. Three Members indicated that the observer program has an important role for compliance.

Option: Define the overall objectives of a CCSBT ROP as being:-

- ***To improve the verification, quality and availability of data and information collected and used:***
  - ***as input to stock assessments[1] for Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT);***
  - ***for the assessment of the impact of fishing for SBT on ERS; and***
- ***To collect and provide information for verifying compliance with relevant CCSBT conservation and management measures.***

- Centrally run ROP versus enhanced SOPS versus status quo

Most Members that commented on this question preferred an enhanced SOPS to a fully centralised, independent ROP. This was mainly for financial reasons.

Option: Enhance the CCSBT SOPS to meet the CCSBT's needs and only allow observer programs that comply with the SOPS to be counted towards Members' CCSBT observer coverage levels.

Note: Considerable discussion (possibly a working group) may be required to determine and agree on how the SOPS would be enhanced. This would include incorporating decisions in relation to the items below.

- Definition of the Coverage level

There seemed to be general support for better defining the required level of observer coverage. One Member considered that the definition should be based only on targeted fishing effort.

The current SOPS covers the fishing activity of CCSBT Members and CNMs wherever southern bluefin tuna are targeted or are a significant bycatch. The current SOPS also has an observer coverage of 10% for catch and effort as a target level. The SOPS further defines this level of coverage as being relative to actual fishing operations, which, if randomly distributed, should result in about 10% of the catch.

Option: Members analyse their observer data in order to develop a recommendation for a suitable definition of observer coverage that can be used by all Members and CNMs. The definition should provide an equivalent level of SBT coverage to that intended by the current SOPS. Therefore, depending on the measurement unit being recommended (e.g. fishing days, hooks, SBT catch[2] etc.), the percentage level in the new definition might be higher or lower than the current 10%. Recommendations should clearly define the "fishery" to which the coverage level applies[3]. Members' recommendations and analyses should be submitted to the Extended Scientific Committee (ESC), ERSWG and/or CC as appropriate. These meetings should recommend a single definition to the Extended Commission.

- The level of Observer Coverage

A wide range of views were expressed on the required observer coverage level, including 5% and 10% for SBT assessment purposes. Some Members commented that higher coverage is desirable for ERS purposes and some Members noted that the appropriate coverage level is a scientific question. However, from the comments received, there seems little likelihood that consensus will be achieved in the near future to change the coverage level from its current 10%.

Option: For the immediate future, retain the 10% coverage level requirement[4] and:-

- ***Agree on a set of achievable interim targets for Indonesia while it is establishing its observer program; and***
- ***Promote or consider options for increasing the coverage level for ERS purposes in high risk areas, including through remote monitoring.***

In the longer term (*perhaps in a further 3 years?****), seek advice from the ESC, the Ecologically Related Species Working Group (ERSWG) and/or the CC as appropriate on***

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[1] Including the CCSBT's Operating Model and Management Procedure.

[2] For clarity and consistency in application, any definitions involving SBT catch should clearly specify what is meant by "catch". For example, it could be "retained SBT", or "all SBT, including those retained and those discarded after being brought on board".

[3] For example, fishing in specified statistical areas in specified months, or "fishing wherever SBT were targeted", or "fishing wherever SBT were targeted or caught" (*which is the definition used by the ERSWG for reporting purposes*), or "fishing wherever, SBT were targeted or were a significant bycatch" (*which is the the coverage specified in the current SOPS*). In the last case, it would be necessary to also define what a "significant bycatch" is.

[4] The 10% coverage level specified here is based on the current SOPS definition of the coverage level. If a new definition of the coverage level is agreed, then the percentage coverage specified here should be changed to be consistent with the new definition.

the impact of differing levels of observer coverage on their ability to provide robust management advice to the Extended Commission.

- Target or binding observer coverage level

  There was no consensus on whether the observer coverage level should be a target or a binding coverage level.

  Option: Retain the current coverage level as a target, but stress the importance of achieving that target[5]. Agree that failure to achieve the target level in any year would be questioned by the Compliance Committee. An explanation for the failure, together with plans for improvement to achieve the target in the next year would also need to be provided[6].

- Revision of the minimum data fields

  There was no consensus on whether the minimum observer data collection fields should be revised. Two Members did not support revision, two Members supported revision and two Members supported a review. In retrospect, the question was probably not appropriate at this time. It would have been better to first ask whether Members supported a review(s) being conducted. The question of whether the data fields should actually be revised should be left until specific recommendations of any reviews have been provided.

  Option: Support the current work of the ERSWG and the joint tuna RFMO bycatch technical working group to the review/develop minimum observer ERS data collection requirements. Also support review work that the ESC may decide to conduct in this area in relation to SBT data requirements. Consider recommendations for revising the data fields that arise in these reviews after specific recommendations have been provided to the Extended Commission.

- Provision of SOP data to the Secretariat

  There was no consensus on provision of observer data to the Secretariat for it to be available for CCSBT science and compliance purposes. One Member questioned whether there was a need to provide these data for science purposes and considered it inappropriate for compliance purposes. Three Members supported the provision of aggregated or highly aggregated data and two Members supported the provision of fine-scale data. Provision of fine-scale data is a long-standing issue within the CCSBT, so it might be most productive to take a two-step approach in relation to data provision.

  Option: For the immediate future:-

  - ***Agree that aggregated observer data should be provided in accordance with specifications to be recommended by the ESC and ERSWG for the use of those groups[7]; and***
  - ***Modify the SOPS to include specifications and requirements for analyses[8] that are considered necessary on an ongoing basis, but for which data is not provided. Members would be required to conduct these analyses with their own observer data and report the outcomes of such analyses to the ESC and ERSWG.***
  - ***Task the ESC and ERSWG with developing specifications and requirements for such analyses.***

  For the longer term (*perhaps in a further 3 years?****):-***

  - ***Evaluate the limitations of these data provision arrangements and determine areas where a finer scale of data provision or analysis is required to further improve the quality of management advice.***

Prepared by the Secretariat

[5] Unless interim targets have been agreed in which case the interim targets should be achieved.
[6] This is consistent with the "Resolution on action plans to ensure compliance with Conservation and Management Measures" that was adopted by CCSBT 16 in 2009.
[7] Noting that the ERSWG has already agreed specifications for provision of highly aggregated ERSWG data, but that the ESC has not developed such specifications.
[8] The current SOPS does not specify any requirements for analysis of data collected.

Attachment A

Member Responses to Questions Raised in Circular #2013/011

(1) What (if any) are the primary objectives or requirements they considered important for a CCSBT ROP?

Australia: Australia believes the implementation of a CCSBT Regional Observer Program will allow for improved data quality and availability and consequently better management of southern bluefin tuna (SBT). The development and implementation of a regional observer program is important in order to:

- verify catch and effort data used as important data sources in the Operating Model and Management Procedure; and
- improve information on interactions with ecologically related species (ERS).

Australia further believes a CCSBT ROP will result in the provision of more robust data for the management of the SBT stock and to monitor fishing activity interactions with ERS. More robust data will enable the ERSWG, the Scientific Committee and the Compliance Committee work to be of a higher standard.

Indonesia: In regard to CCSBT Circular 2073123 concerning Establishment of a CCSBT Regional Observer Program, we wish to inform you that Indonesia has issued Ministry Regulation Number 0UPERMEN-KP/2O13 concerning Observer at Fishing Vessel and Carrier Fishing Vessel. Based on that regulation, the objective of observer is to collect verified and accurate data related to fishing activity and transshipment from fishing vessel and carrier vessel on board.

Japan: The primary objectives of the observer program are to collect SBT fishing data which directly contribute to stock assessment, and to check the compliance by members, in order to ensure the conservation and optimum utilization of SBT through appropriate management. Enhancement of compliance is essential to achieve the objectives, as the compliance level with the current observer program differs between members/CNMs.

New Zealand: The goal of any observer program, whether administered domestically or centrally, should be to increase the level of confidence in the data gathered from fishers by providing a control sample against which to compare all other submissions. The program should also allow for the collection of additional information that may not otherwise be available through standard reporting. Observers must therefore be independent and able to perform their duties without hindrance or interference from the operators.

For operational and analysis purposes, the information gathered should be standardised across all fleets to the extent possible. The information should be made available for science and compliance purposes at a fine enough scale to allow for effective conclusions to be drawn while adhering to existing confidentiality and security protocols.

Taiwan: We think the CCSBT Scientific Observer Program Standards (SOPS) and Australia's proposal for a CCSBT Regional Observer Program(ROP) share the similar objective of improving the quality of the data and information used as input to the stock assessment for SBT.

(2) The need for a fully independent centrally run ROP, versus enhancement and more rigorous application of the CCSBT's SOPS, versus retaining the status quo

Australia: Improvements to the existing arrangements are desirable, in particular to ensure that a minimum of 10% coverage is achieved and to ensure adequate data sharing and transparency among Members.

While many advantages are to be gained through utilising the regional observer programs established by WCPFC and IOTC, neither program was designed with the objectives of the CCSBT in mind. Notable shortcomings in a CCSBT context are:

- At present, neither program would meet the target observer coverage of 10% of the catch and effort, adopted at CCSBT7 in April 2001.
- IOTC Resolution 11-04 on a Regional Observer Scheme does not require observers to record information on the deployment of mitigation devices, including mandatory tori lines.
- Insufficient requirements for recording interactions with ERS, particularly seabirds, sharks and sea turtles.

Considering the above points, Australia supports the development and implementation of a CCSBT Regional Observer Program to provide for improved data quality and consequently improved management of SBT

Japan: The current SOPS should be enhanced to improve compliance by the members and to reduce the gap in compliance level as stated above. A new fully independent ROP is undesirable since it will involve obligatory increase in the commission budget (e.g. personnel and travel cost needed to operate the system) and financial burden for the members.

New Zealand: We are concerned that there will be significant duplication of resources between any centralised ROP and Members' individual observer programs. A centralised repository for all CCSBT related observer information could be constructed with minimal costs and may provide significant improvements in data quality and access but a fully autonomous CCSBT-run program would unavoidably carry significant costs and likely mirror much of the administration currently undertaken by members.

The existing SOPS could be refined to improve monitoring against agreed performance measures under the compliance policy which may further reduce the need for centralised oversight. The introduction of the QAR will also provide independent assessment of observer programs based on their role in ensuring compliance with national allocations.

Taiwan: If a fully independent centralized regional observer program run by the CCSBT Secretariat, according to the experience of regional observer program for transhipment at sea implemented by other t-RFMOs, it would cause a huge increase for the annual budget and we think it is impracticable. Besides, the result of ROP is hard to expect. Therefore, we think it would be better for members to improve its scientific observer program at current basis.

Table 1: Questions on some fundamental items presented in (or related to) Australia's proposed short-term workplan for a CCSBT Scientific Observer Program

	Member's Response (please provide reasons in the response)
(1) Should the required observer coverage level be better defined and is a 10% coverage sufficient?	Australia: Australia believes an observer coverage of 10% is sufficient. The Kobe II Bycatch Workshop noted that 'Studies have shown that although 20% observer coverage is generally adequate to ensure very accurate estimates of the catch of target species, a greater coverage is needed to get similar accuracy of bycatch, which is rarer.' The CCSBT Scientific Observer Program Standards calls for a 10% observer coverage. Indonesia: Indonesia propose that a 5% of observer coverage is sufficient since Indonesia just establish observer program and there are many fishing vessels in Indonesia, that need more observer. Therefore, it is difficult to cover 10% coverage. Japan: I have no objection to make a better definition of calculation of observer coverage. 10% coverage is sufficient: it is higher than in other RFMOs. Korea: Yes, the required observer coverage should be better defined. At the moment, it is difficult to say if a 10% coverage is sufficient or deficient to meet the CCSBT's objectives. To see it, it should be advised that an analysis be conducted with scientific observer data up to date, such as with regard to the verification of catch and effort data, and ERS data and then long term strategy of observer sampling be considered to develop, including the unit and level of coverage. New Zealand: With regard to the appropriate coverage level, the question for New Zealand becomes whether the interest is in using observer coverage to improve information on catches in the target fishery or for gaining info on incidental catches, which are by their nature a rare event. Arguably 10% coverage would not suffice for the latter and it would make sense for the risk assessment to identify specific information gaps which could then be targeted by additional observer coverage accordingly. Whether 10% is sufficient for the target fishery is a science question that is perhaps best discussed within the ESC. We also support the suggestion to better define observer coverage to ensure that there is a common understanding across all members as to how their obligations should be met both in terms of the standard of the service and its spatial representativeness. Taiwan: Since it is difficult to predict the amount of catch of vessel when dispatching observer on board, the observer coverage level should be defined by effort. Besides, SBT is an unexpected catch for by-catch vessels, so that the coverage rate should be calculated just that effort in which SBT was targeted. In addition, current observer coverage level of 10%, which is relatively high in comparison with other t-RFMOs', is uneasy to achieve. It would be impracticable if the coverage level is proposed to be raised.
(2) Should the specified observer coverage level be a target level or a binding measure?	Australia: Reaching a 10% observer coverage level should be a mandatory requirement for all CCSBT Member and Cooperating Non-Members. Indonesia: Indonesia propose that the specified observer coverage level should be a target level not a binding level. Japan: Developing members are working to improve their coverage, so observer coverage should be maintained as a target. Korea: It is true that the specified coverage level is read as a target level in the CCSBT SOP standards and, even in the 2009 Resolution, it is action plan to improve it to 10% in terms of effort. Hence, this is a matter of clarification. New Zealand: New Zealand would support a move to make the current 10% target a binding measure. However, an increase in the current target level of observer coverage would require us to reconsider whether the higher level is best administered through a binding or non-binding measure. Taiwan:

(3) Should the minimum data fields for observer reporting be revised?	Australia: The minimum data fields for reporting observer data should be revised by the ESC to incorporate the ERSWG's set of minimum requirements for ERS observer data. Given the extensive workload of the ESC for 2013, this could be given priority in 2014. Indonesia: Indonesia propose that the minimum data fields for observer reporting should not be revised since the minimum requirements data is sufficient, in line with Indonesia regulation MR Number: 01/PERMEN-KP/2013. Japan: In order to achieve the primary objectives of the program, the minimum data fields should not be revised. Korea: Yes, the minimum data fields in the CCSBT SOP need to be revised taking account of recent development of data collection, especially for ERS. New Zealand: As suggested, the current work of the ERSWG provides us with a great opportunity to assess the relevance of the current data fields in an ERS context. We would also support a wider review to ensure that the current fields are meeting the needs of the ESC in its work. Taiwan: As for the minimum data fields for observer reporting, it should be reviewed by the Extended Scientific Committee and/or ERSWG, if necessary.
(4) Should SOP data be provided to the Secretariat for the purpose of making it available for CCSBT science and compliance purposes in accordance with CCSBT's Rules and procedures for the protection, access to and dissemination of data compiled by the CCSBT (herein referred to as Data Protection Rules - DPR)? Please also indicate whether: • Fine-scale data should be provided; or • Aggregated data should be provided.	Australia: Observer program data should be handled in accordance with the CCSBT's Rules and procedures for the protection, access to and dissemination of data compiled by the CCSBT. Australia maintains that the ability of the ESC to provide good quality advice depends on its access to the most recent fine-scale fisheries-dependent data Indonesia: Indonesia propose that aggregate data should be provided since the observer data is high risk. Japan: As long as the data protection rules are applied, there will be no problem to provide the aggregated data. However, provision of fine-scale data is impossible to protect confidential commercial information. Korea: Yes, SOP data need to be provided to the Secretariat as its purpose is for the use of scientific, compliance and management objectives and in highly aggregated form as was agreed in ERS WG. New Zealand: New Zealand supports the provision of fine-scale data in order to support the scientific process and on-going compliance efforts. The Data Protection Rules in place are robust enough that we believe the risks of confidentiality breaches to be sufficiently mitigated. Taiwan: Consider that data used for the CCSBT stock assessment is processed by scientists from each member and observer data collected was used to verify the logbook data provided by fishers. We are wondering if it is necessary to provide observer data to the CCSBT Secretariat. Besides, we think it is inappropriate for compliance purpose