

AGREEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM

25TH MEETING OF THE PARTIES

LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA
19 JUNE 2012

DOCUMENT MOP-25-05

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM IN 2011

1.	Introduction	1
2.	The On-Board Observer Program	1
3.	Dolphin mortality	2
4.	International Review Panel	3
5.	Tuna tracking and verification	3

1. INTRODUCTION

In the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO), schools of yellowfin tuna frequently associate with marine mammals, especially spotted, spinner, and common dolphins. When the purse-seine fishery for tunas in the EPO began around 1960, the fishermen found that their catches of yellowfin in the EPO could be maximized by setting these nets around a herd of dolphins and the associated school of tunas. However, releasing the dolphins caught without losing the tuna proved more difficult, and in the early years of the fishery many dolphins became entangled in the nets and died during this process. As techniques and equipment to solve this problem were developed, this mortality fell, gradually at first and dramatically in the 1990s, thanks to the combined efforts of the fishing industry, governments, the IATTC, environmental organizations, and other interested parties.

The 1992 La Jolla Agreement provided a framework for the international efforts to reduce this mortality, and introduced such novel and effective measures as Dolphin Mortality Limits (DMLs) for individual vessels and the International Review Panel to monitor the performance and compliance of the fishing fleet. The [Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program \(AIDCP\)](#), which built on and formalized the provisions of the La Jolla Agreement, was signed in May 1998 and entered into force in February 1999. The Parties to this agreement committed to “ensure the sustainability of tuna stocks in the eastern Pacific Ocean and to progressively reduce the incidental dolphin mortalities in the tuna fishery of the eastern Pacific Ocean to levels approaching zero; to avoid, reduce and minimize the incidental catch and the discard of juvenile tuna and the incidental catch of non-target species, taking into consideration the interrelationship among species in the ecosystem.”

As of 31 December, 2011, Belize, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, the European Union, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, the United States, Vanuatu, and Venezuela have ratified or acceded to the Agreement, and Bolivia and Colombia are applying the AIDCP provisionally. The IATTC provides the Secretariat for the IDCP and its various bodies and coordinates the On-Board Observer Program and the [Tuna Tracking and Verification System](#).

2. THE ON-BOARD OBSERVER PROGRAM

The AIDCP international observer program and the national observer programs of Colombia (Programa Nacional de Observadores de Colombia, PNOC), Ecuador (Programa Nacional de Observadores Pesque-

ros de Ecuador; PROBECUADOR), the European Union (Programa Nacional de Observadores de Túndidos, Océano Pacífico; PNOT), Mexico (Programa Nacional de Aprovechamiento del Atún y Protección de Delfines; PNAAPD), Nicaragua (Programa Nacional de Observadores de Nicaragua; PRONAON, administered by the Programa Nacional de Observadores Panameños, PRONAOP); Panama (PRONAOP), and Venezuela (Programa Nacional de Observadores de Venezuela; PNOV) constitute the AIDCP On-Board Observer Program. In addition, observers from the international observer program of the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) were approved by the Parties to collect information for the On-Board Observer Program on vessels that fish in the Agreement Area without setting on dolphins if the Secretariat determines that the placement of an IDCP observer is not practical.

2.1. Observer coverage

The AIDCP mandates 100% coverage by observers of fishing trips by purse seiners of carrying capacity greater than 363 metric tons (t) in the Agreement Area. In 2011, the Ecuadorian program had a goal of sampling approximately one-third of the trips by its fleet, and the Colombian, European Union, Mexican, Nicaraguan, Panamanian, and Venezuelan programs each had a goal of sampling approximately half of the trips by their respective fleets. The IATTC program covered the remainder of the trips by these five fleets, plus all trips by vessels of other fleets.

During 2011, observers from the On-Board Observer Program departed on 746 fishing trips (Table 1), which included 8 trips by vessels of less than 363 tons capacity required to carry observers during closure periods. This does not include 22 observed trips that fished outside the Agreement Area. The Program covered vessels operating under the jurisdictions of Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Spain, the United States, Vanuatu, and Venezuela.

In 2011 the Program sampled 100% of trips by large purse-seine vessels, as required by the AIDCP, and the IATTC program sampled 60% of all trips.

2.2. Observer training

The IATTC conducted one observer training course for the IATTC program and the national program of Ecuador (PROBECUADOR) on 12-29 September 2011, with 18 attendees.

3. DOLPHIN MORTALITY

3.1. Dolphin Mortality Limits (DMLs)

3.1.1. 2011 DMLs

The overall dolphin mortality limit (DML) for the international fleet in 2011 was 5,000 animals, and the unreserved portion of 4,900 was allocated to 86 qualified vessels that requested DMLs. The average individual-vessel DML (ADML), based on 86 DML requests, was 56.97. A total of 83 vessels utilized their full-year DMLs; 2 vessels renounced their DMLs, and 1 vessel forfeited its DML when it changed flag to a non-Party country. Five vessels that did not utilize their DMLs prior to 1 April were allowed to keep them for the remainder of the year under the *force majeure* exemption allowed by the AIDCP. There was 1 second-semester DML allocated, but it was not utilized. There have been no assignments from the Reserve DML Allocation. No vessel exceeded its DML in 2011. The distribution of the mortality caused in 2011 by vessels with DMLs is shown in Figure 1.

3.1.2. 2012 DMLs

The Parties requested and received 84 DMLs for 2012 from the unreserved portion (4,900) of the overall fleet mortality limit. The ADML is 58.33. One vessel forfeited its DML by not utilizing it prior to April 1. Eight vessels were allowed to keep their DMLs for the remainder of the year under the *force majeure* exemption allowed by the AIDCP. There were no second-semester DML requests, and as of 15 June there has been one request for a DML of 19 from the Reserve DML Allocation.

3.2. Preliminary estimates of the mortality of dolphins in 2011 due to fishing

The preliminary estimate of the incidental mortality of dolphins in the fishery in 2011 is 986 animals, a 15.7% decrease over the 1,170 mortalities recorded in 2010. The mortalities of the principal dolphin species affected by the fishery show declines since the early 1990s (Figure 2) similar to that for the mortalities of all dolphins combined (Figure 3).

The number of sets on dolphin-associated schools of tuna made by vessels over 363 t decreased by 17.5%, from 11,646 in 2010 to 9,604 in 2011, and this type of set accounted for 44% of the total number of sets made in 2011, compared to 53% in 2010. The average mortality per set was 0.10 dolphins in 2010 and 2011. The trends in the numbers of sets on dolphin-associated fish, mortality per set, and total mortality in recent years are shown in Figure 3.

The catches of dolphin-associated yellowfin decreased by 12% in 2011, as compared to 2010. The percentage of the catch of yellowfin taken in sets on dolphins increased from 70% of the total catch in 2010 to 72% of the catch in 2011, and the average catch of yellowfin per set on dolphins increased from 13.4 to 14.2 metric tons. The mortality of dolphins per metric ton of yellowfin caught decreased from 0.0075 in 2010 to 0.0072 in 2011.

3.3. Reports of dolphin mortality by observers at sea

The AIDCP requires the Parties to establish a system, based on real-time observer reporting, to ensure effective implementation and compliance with per-stock, per-year dolphin mortality caps. Observers prepare weekly reports of dolphin mortality, by stock, which are then transmitted to the Secretariat via e-mail, fax, or radio. In June 2003 the Meeting of the Parties adopted [Resolution A-03-02 on at-sea reporting](#), which makes the vessel personnel responsible for transmitting these reports. During 2011, the reporting rate averaged 97% (Table 2).

4. INTERNATIONAL REVIEW PANEL

The International Review Panel (IRP) follows a general procedure for reporting the compliance by vessels with measures established by the AIDCP for minimizing the mortalities of dolphins during fishing operations to the governments concerned. During each fishing trip, the observer prepares a summary of information pertinent to dolphin mortalities, and this is sent to the government with jurisdiction over the vessel by the Secretariat. Certain possible infractions are automatically reported to the government with jurisdiction over the vessel in question; the IRP reviews the observer data for other cases at its meetings, and any cases identified as possible infractions are likewise reported to the relevant government. The governments report back to the IRP on actions taken regarding these possible infractions.

During 2011, the IRP consisted of 20 members: the 14 participating member governments, and 6 representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 3 from environmental organizations and 3 from the tuna industry.

The IRP held one meeting during 2011:

Meeting	Venue	Dates
50	Del Mar, California, USA	20 October

The minutes of IRP meetings are available on the [IATTC's website](#).

5. TUNA TRACKING AND VERIFICATION

The [System for Tracking and Verifying Tuna](#), established in accordance with Article V.1.f of the AIDCP, enables “dolphin-safe” tuna, defined as tuna caught in sets without mortality or serious injury of dolphins, to be identified and tracked from the time it is caught through unloading, processing, and sale. The Tuna Tracking Form (TTF), completed at sea by observers, identifies the tuna caught as dolphin safe (Form ‘A’) or non-dolphin safe (Form ‘B’); with this document, the dolphin safe status of any tuna caught by a

vessel covered by the AIDCP can be determined. Within this framework, administered by the Secretariat, each Party establishes its own tracking and verification program, implemented and operated by a designated national authority, which includes periodic audits and spot checks for caught, landed, and processed tuna products, mechanisms for communication and cooperation between and among national authorities, and timely access to relevant data. Each Party is required to provide the Secretariat with a report detailing its tracking and verification program.

All trips by vessels fishing in the Agreement Area that departed in 2011 with an IDCP observer aboard were issued TTFs.

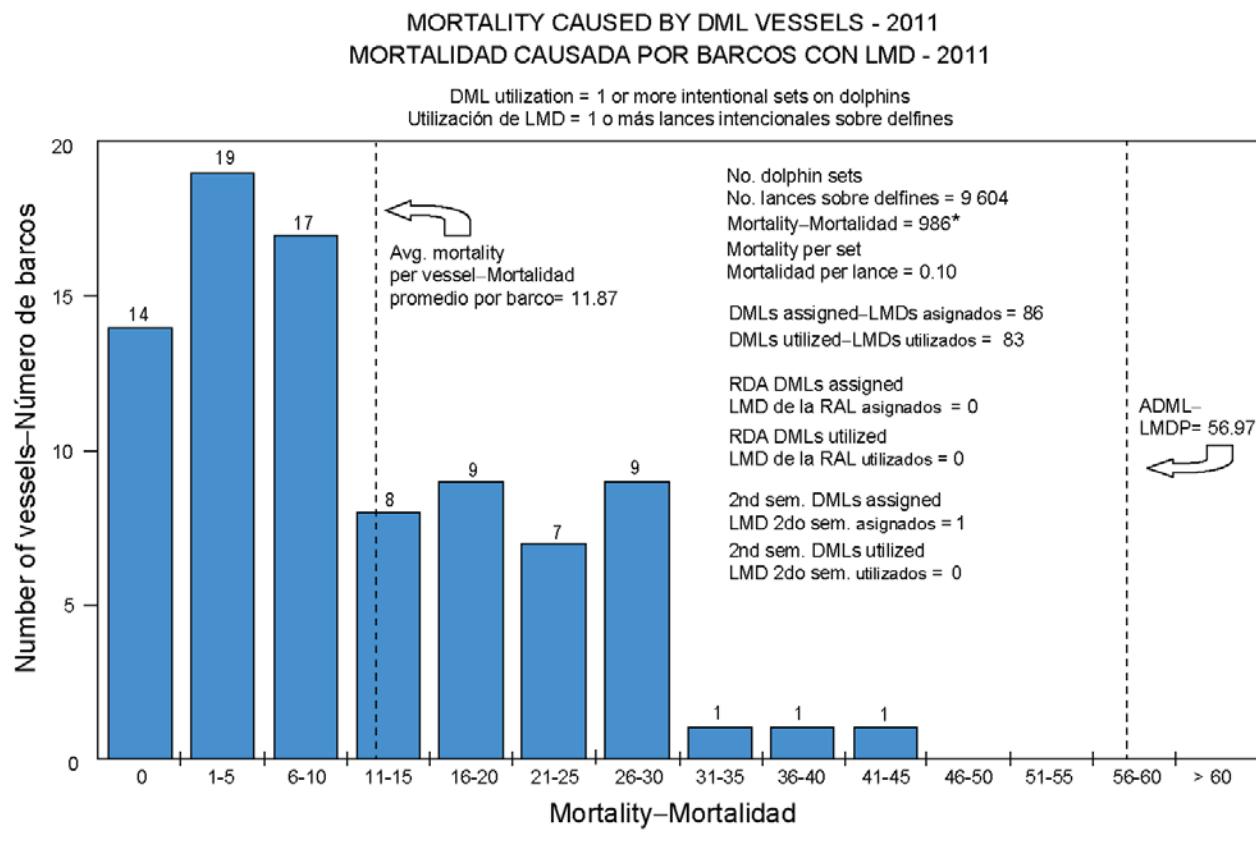


FIGURE 1. Distribution of dolphin mortality caused by vessels with DMLs during 2011.

FIGURA 1. Distribución de la mortalidad de delfines causada por buques con LMD durante 2011.

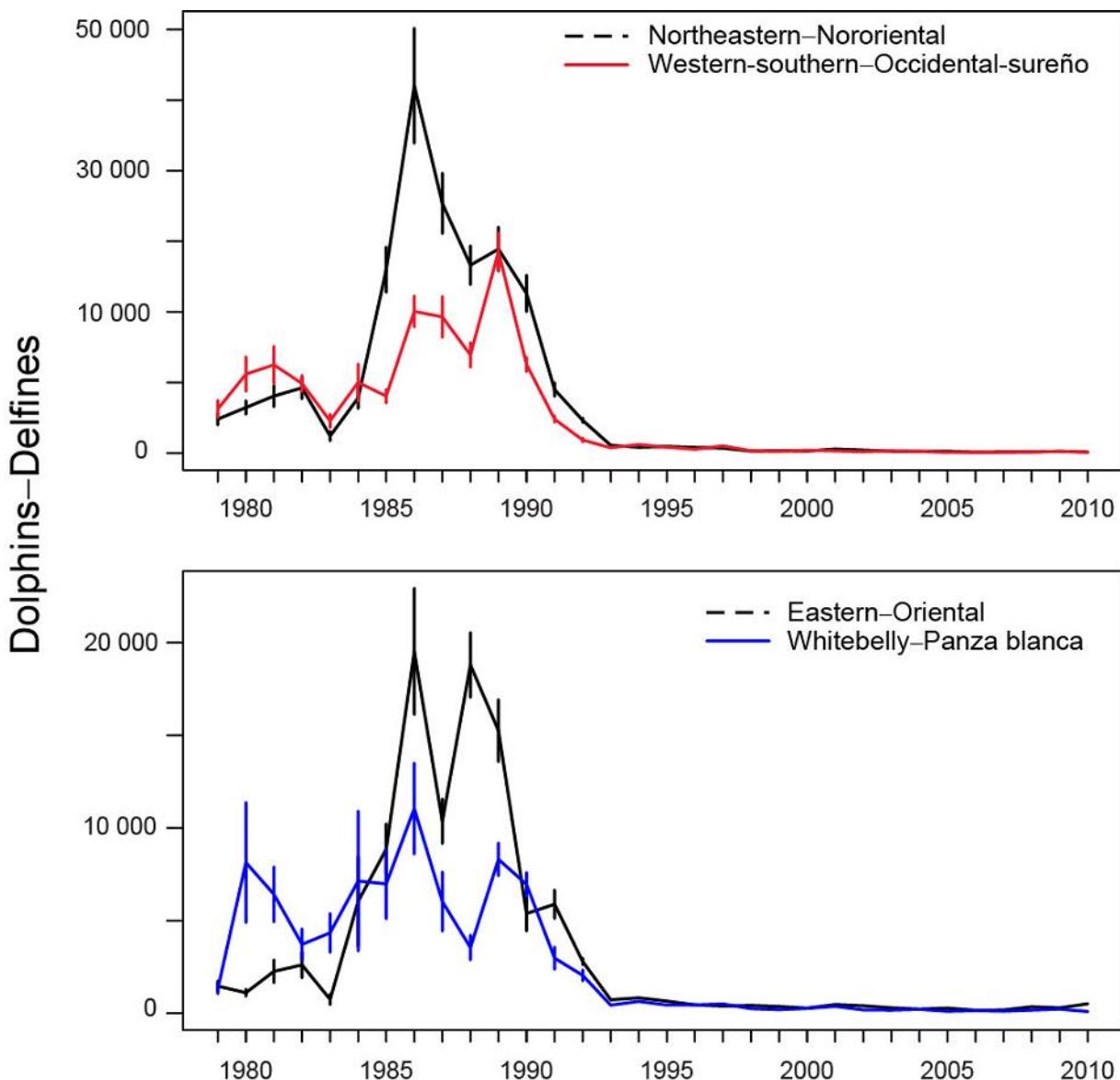


FIGURE 2. Estimated mortalities for the stocks of spotted (upper panel) and spinner (lower panel) dolphins in the eastern Pacific Ocean, 1979-2010. Each vertical line represents one positive and one negative standard error.

FIGURA 2. Mortalidad estimada de las poblaciones de delfines manchados (panel superior) y tornillo (panel inferior) en el Océano Pacífico oriental, 1979-2010. Cada línea vertical representa un error estándar positivo y un error estándar negativo.

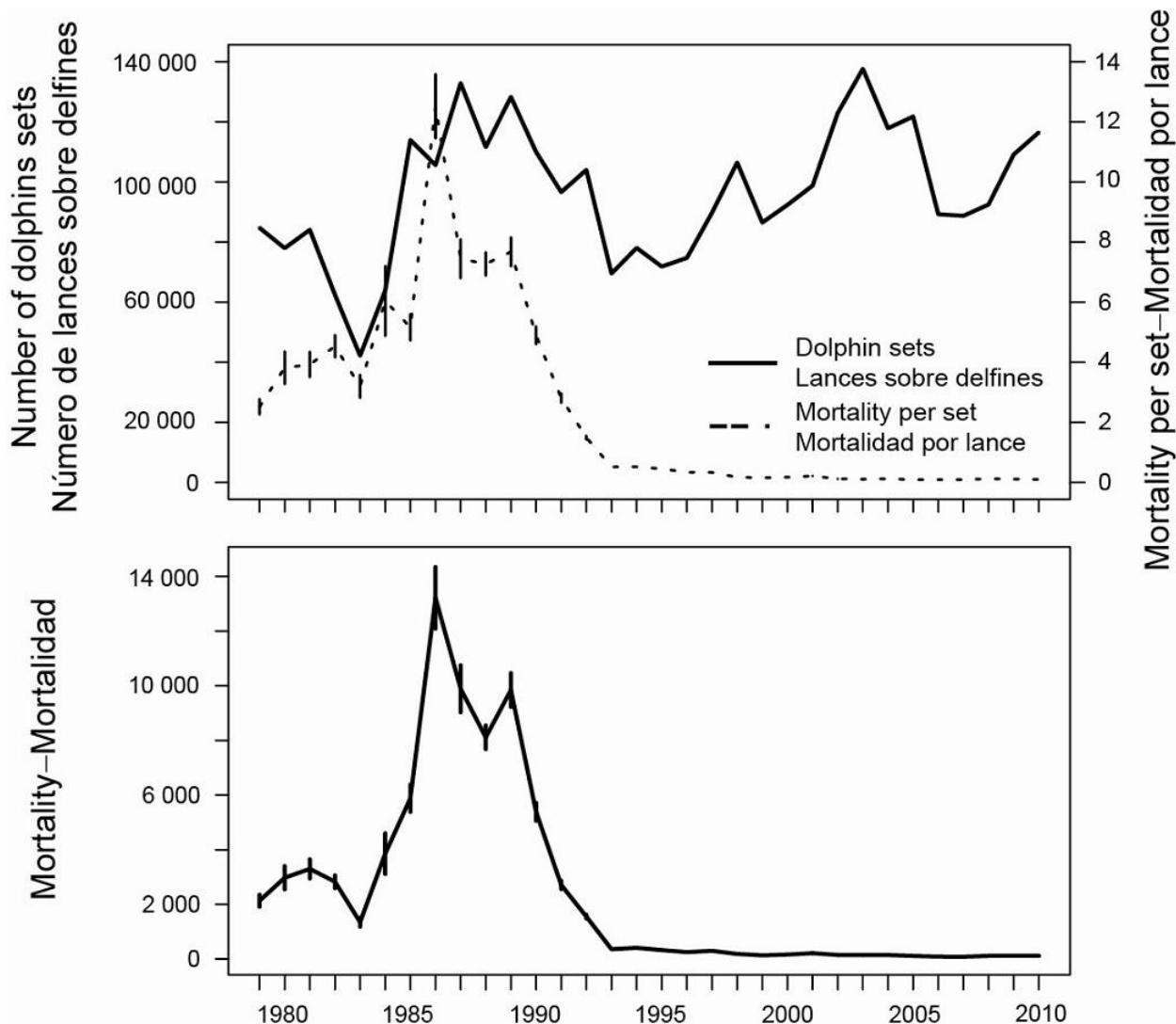


FIGURE 3. Total number of dolphin sets and average mortality per set (upper panel) and estimated total mortality (lower panel) for all dolphins in the EPO, 1979-2010. Each vertical line represents one positive and one negative standard error.

FIGURA 3. Número total de lances sobre delfines y mortalidad media por lance (panel superior) y mortalidad total estimada (panel inferior) para todas especies de delfines en el OPO, 1979-2010. Cada línea vertical representa un error estándar positivo y un error estándar negativo.

TABLE 1. Sampling coverage by the On-Board Observer Program during 2011.**TABLA 1.** Cobertura por el Programa de Observadores a Bordo durante 2011.

Fleet	Trips	Observado por programa		
		National	IATTC	% observed
		Observed by program		
Fleet	Trips	National	IATTC	% observed
Colombia	COL	45	23	22
Ecuador	ECU	276	94	182
UE - EU	EUR	13	7	6
Guatemala	GTM	13	-	13
Honduras	HND	4	-	4
México	MEX	204	99	105
Nicaragua	NIC	23	11	12
Panamá	PAN	66	32	34
El Salvador	SLV	20	-	20
EE.UU. – USA	USA	6	1	5
Venezuela	VEN	65	30	35
Vanuatu	VUT	11	0	11
Total		746	297	449
				100

TABLE 2. Weekly reports of dolphin mortality received, 2011.**TABLA 2.** Informes semanales de mortalidad de delfines recibidos, 2011.

Fleet	Program	Weeks	Reports	%
Flota	Programa	Semanas	Informes	%
COL	IATTC – CIAT	194	190	97.9
	National - Nacional	201	199	99.0
ECU	IATTC – CIAT	1,048	1,029	98.2
	National - Nacional	541	517	95.6
ESP	IATTC – CIAT	58	57	98.3
	National - Nacional	71	71	100.0
GTM	IATTC – CIAT	97	95	97.9
HND	IATTC – CIAT	12	12	100.0
MEX	IATTC – CIAT	570	564	98.9
	National - Nacional	607	585	96.4
NIC	IATTC – CIAT	83	82	98.8
	National - Nacional	68	64	94.1
PAN	IATTC – CIAT	228	225	98.7
	National - Nacional	249	235	94.4
SLV	IATTC – CIAT	145	143	98.6
USA	IATTC – CIAT	42	40	95.2
	National - Nacional	15	15	100.0
VEN	IATTC – CIAT	212	212	100.0
	National - Nacional	210	193	91.9
VUT	IATTC – CIAT	84	82	97.6
Total		4,735	4,610	97.4