

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

90th MEETING (RESUMED)

La Jolla, California (USA)

12-14 October 2016

DOCUMENT IATTC-90 INF-D

OVERVIEW OF IATTC FIELD OFFICE OPERATIONS

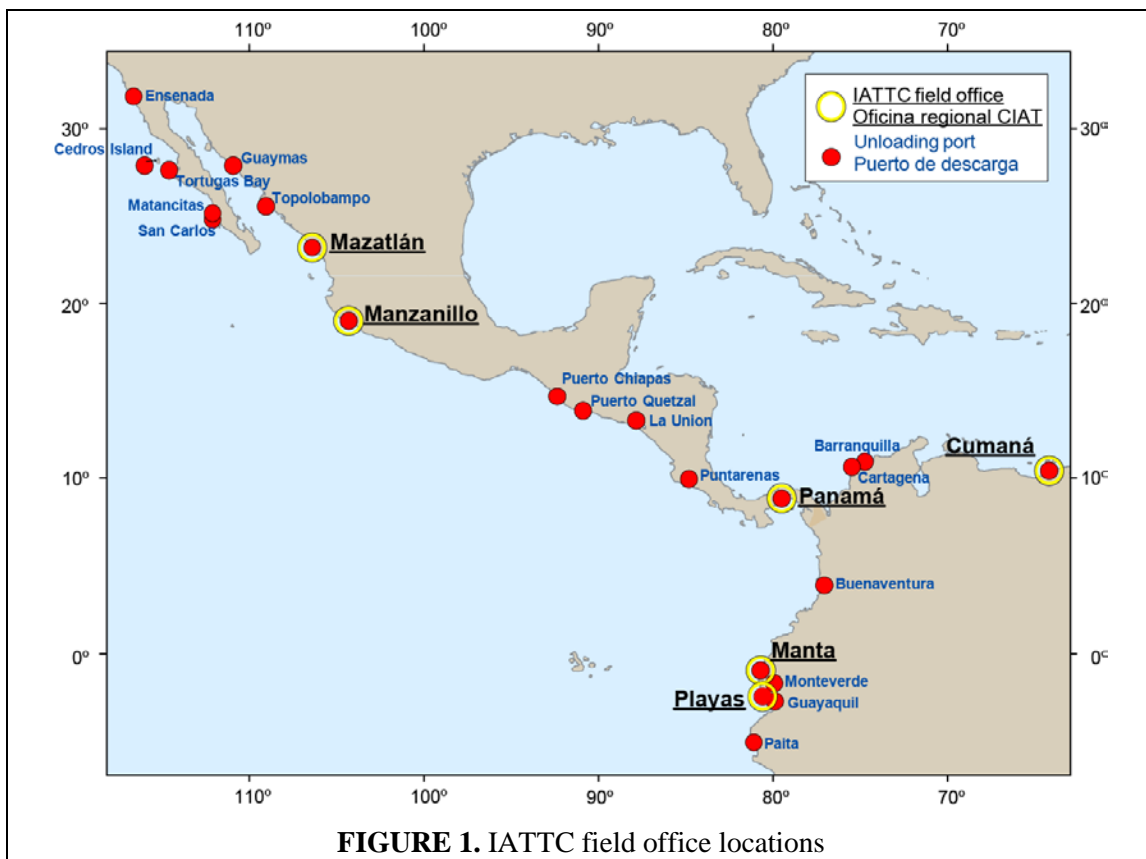
Fall 2016

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Well sampling program.....	2
3. Vessel logbook and cannery receipt data	4
4. Observer coordination.....	6
5. Field office budget	7

1. INTRODUCTION

In addition to the headquarters staff in La Jolla, California (USA), the IATTC currently has six field offices in Latin America and a research laboratory at Achotines, Panama. The mission of the Achotines Laboratory is distinct from the other offices and is not addressed here, but a summary of the most recent work at Achotines can be found in Document [SAC-07-07c](#). This document provides a summary overview



of the other six IATTC field offices, their staffing, duties, and budget.

Since the IATTC was established in 1950, staff members have been carried out their duties in various locations other than La Jolla, including Pago Pago, American Samoa; Puntarenas, Costa Rica; Ensenada, Mexico; Tobago, Panama; Coishco and Paita, Peru; Mayaguez, Puerto Rico; San Pedro, USA; and several locations in Japan. Currently, the Commission has six field offices, located in port cities that have past and current relevance for purse-seine vessels participating in IATTC tuna fisheries: Manta (MAN) and Playas (PLY), Ecuador; Mazatlan (MAZ) and Manzanillo (MZO), Mexico; Panama City (PAN), Panama; and Cumana (CMN), Venezuela (Figure 1).

The IATTC currently has 17 full-time employees working in these six field offices. Manta is the largest office, with 6 staff. The remaining offices have 2 employees each, with the exception of Mazatlan, which has a staff of 3. A current list of IATTC field office staff and their contact information can be found on the [IATTC web site](#).

2. WELL SAMPLING PROGRAM

The IATTC staff has been sampling the size distributions of tunas in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) since 1954, and the species composition of catches since 2000. The current sampling program examines catches from the wells of purse-seine and pole-and-line vessels at the time of landing. Each of the two sampling components serves a different purpose: length-frequency sampling is used to estimate the size composition of the catches for each species, while species composition counts are used to aid in the estimation of the total catch of tuna for each species.

Only certain wells of certain vessels are selected for sampling, based on the nature of their contents. Wells of purse-seine or pole-and-line vessels are considered for sampling only if all the fish in the well were caught during the same calendar month, in the same type of set (floating-object, unassociated school, or dolphin), and in a single IATTC sampling area (of which there are 13). The highest priority for sampling is given to wells filled from a single set.

There are data targets by fishery and sampling area per month. Thus, in some instances, wells that otherwise meet the criteria for sampling may be passed over if sufficient data for a given fishery and sampling area in that month have already been collected. Figure 2 shows the number of wells sampled per year since 1970. Figure 3 shows the percentage of vessel trips per year from which at least one well was sam-

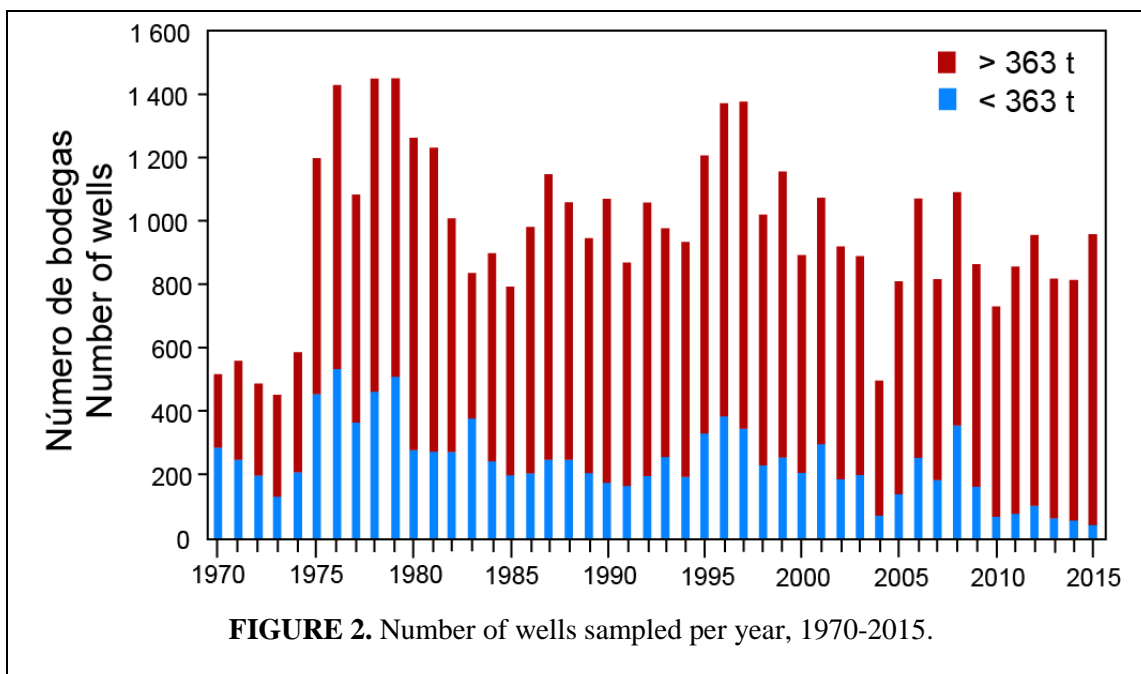
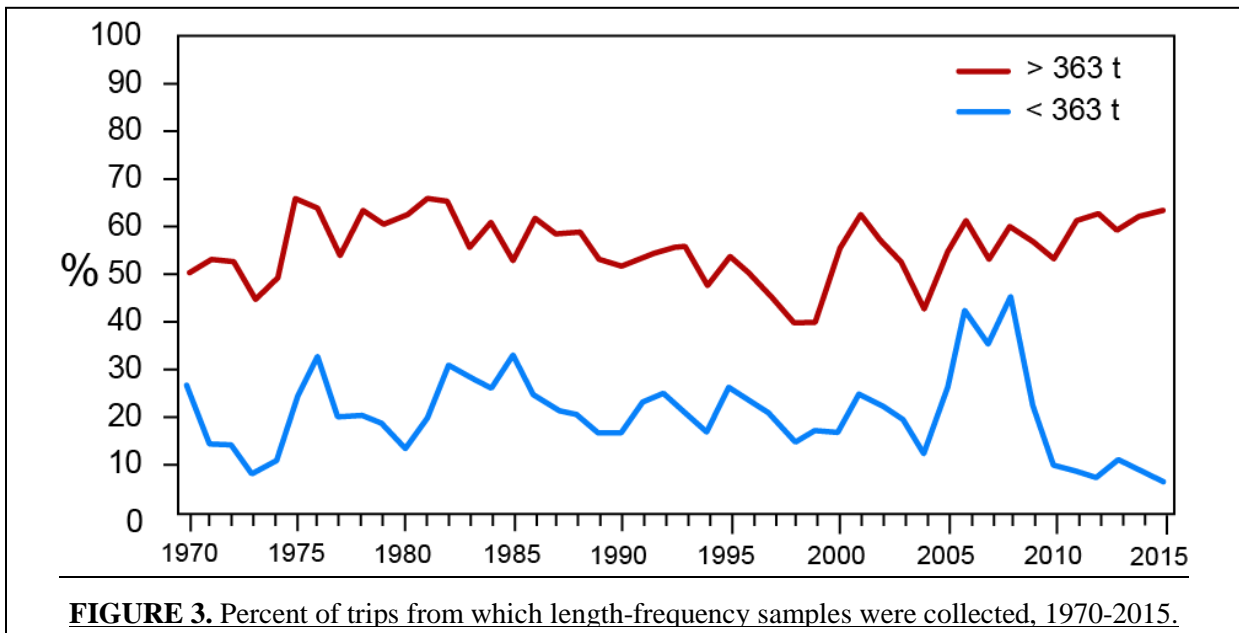
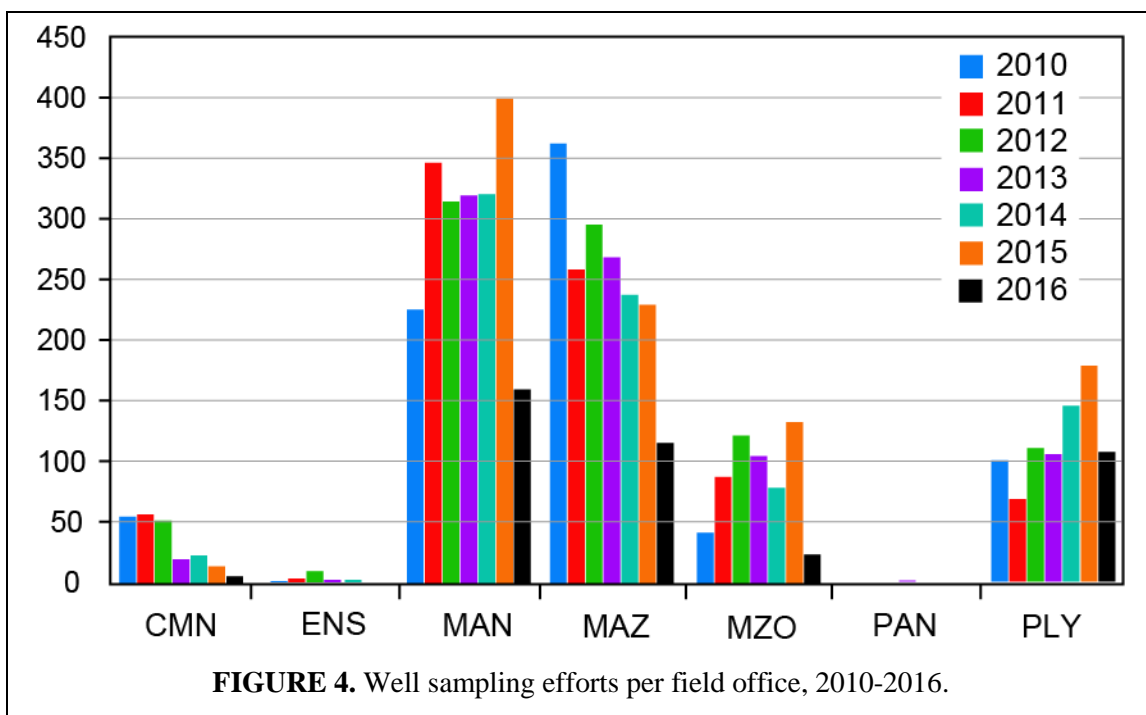


FIGURE 2. Number of wells sampled per year, 1970-2015.



pled for the same period. Figure 4 provides an overview of the number of wells sampled by each IATTC field office since 2010. Again, to some extent, the number of wells sampled per field office is reflective of the activity level in the regional ports, but the distribution is not identical to what is seen in the number of observer debriefings in the previous section. This is due to the fact that ports in different locations tend to receive vessels that participate in different fisheries in different sampling areas, and to the need to obtain representative data from the various areas.

Length-frequency samples are the basic source of data used for estimating the size and age compositions of catches. Age-structured estimates of the populations are components of the stock assessment process, including the integrated modeling with the Stock Synthesis platform that the staff has used in recent years. Length-frequency data for yellowfin and skipjack have been collected continuously since 1954,



bluefin since 1973, and bigeye since 1975.

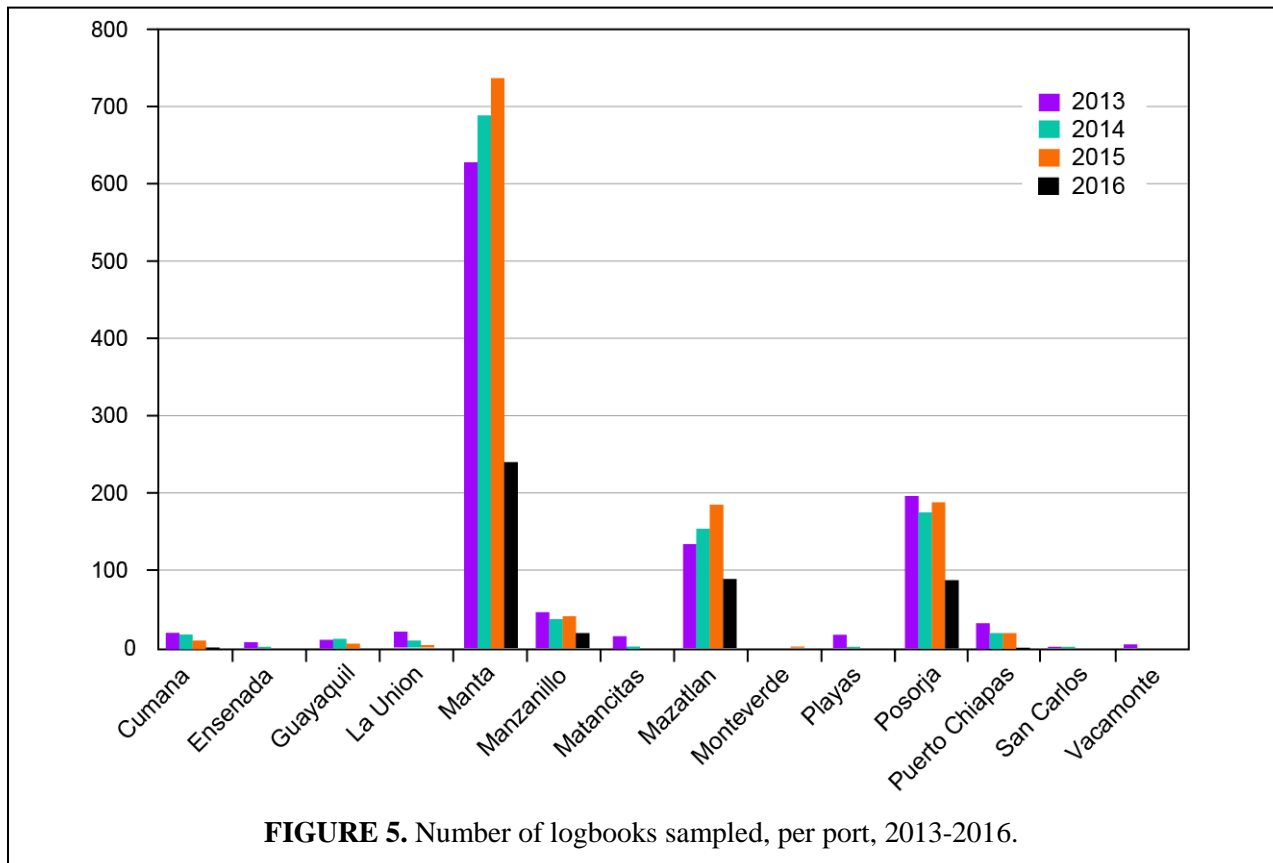
The current catch composition sampling program is the more recent component of the well sampling program. Depending on the circumstances and based on a standardized protocol developed by IATTC staff, when field office staff sample a well, they typically count between 100-600 fish from the well, noting their species. The estimate of landed catch for purse-seine and pole-and-line vessels, by species, is based primarily on data reported by the vessel at the time of unloading. However, since 2000, the total annual catches of bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack have been adjusted, based on the estimates of species composition, by flag, which are derived from the well sampling program. Typically, this has resulted in increases in the estimated catches of bigeye and corresponding decreases in the catches of the other species, indicating that unloading data tend to underestimate the amount of bigeye present in the wells.

3. VESSEL LOGBOOK AND CANNERY RECEIPT DATA

Data abstracted from the logbooks of fishing vessels are used in multiple ways. They are used in estimates of the total annual catches of tuna, by species, and of the numbers of purse-seine sets of each type (floating-object, unassociated school, or dolphin) in the EPO. Figure 5 shows the number of logbooks abstracted by field office staff, by port of landing, since 2013.

IATTC field office staff typically meet vessels arriving in port and request to summarize their fishing logbooks. If they happen to be in another port on other business, they may also opportunistically obtain copies of logbooks from vessels arriving there. This explains the expanded number of ports reflected in Figure 5.

Field office staff also help in the collection of cannery receipts and other data from canneries receiving EPO-caught tuna. The records of tuna weight, by species, purchased from vessels are another source of data that are used, along with logbook data and well sampling data, in the estimation of total catches of tuna species in the



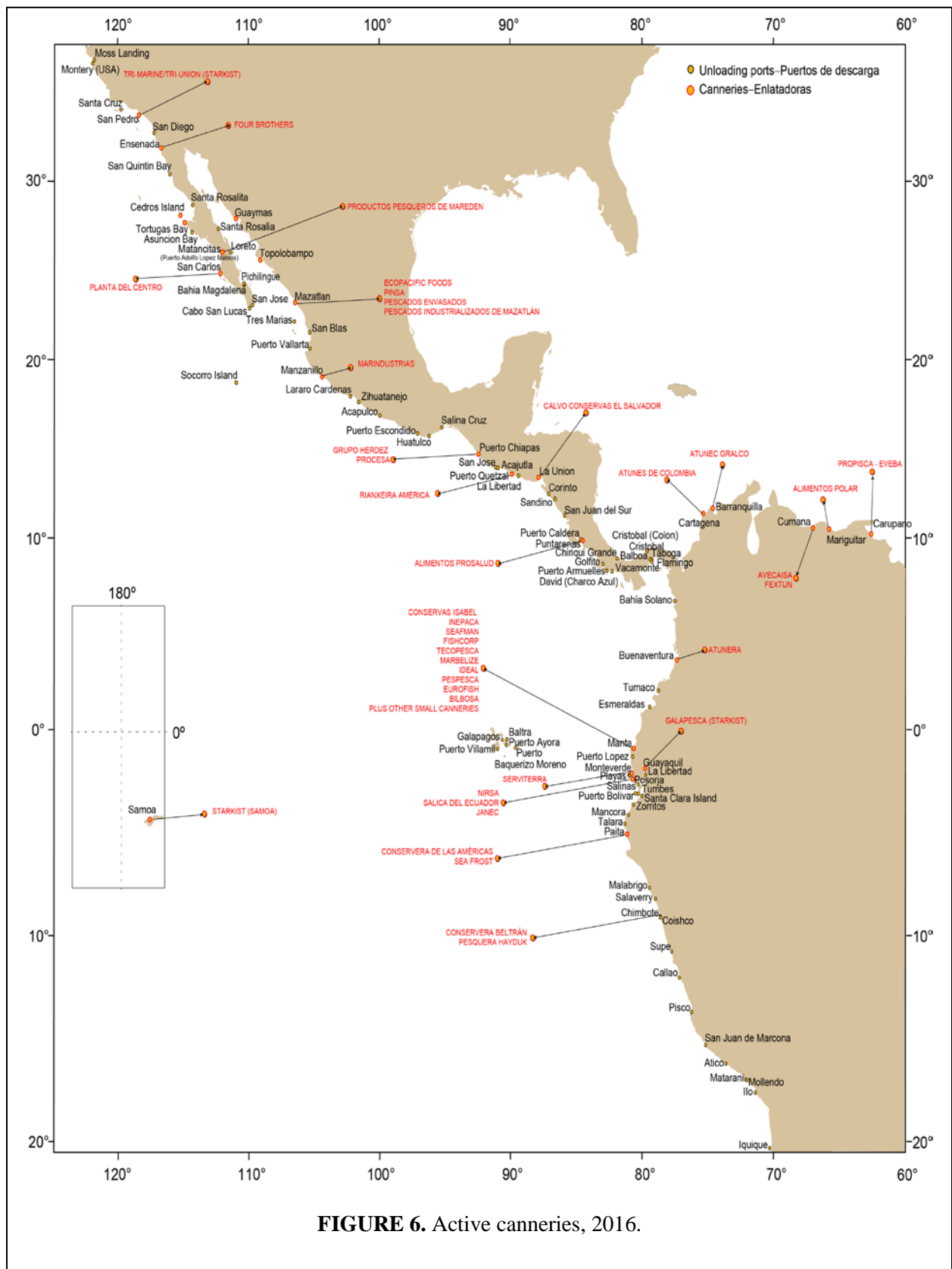


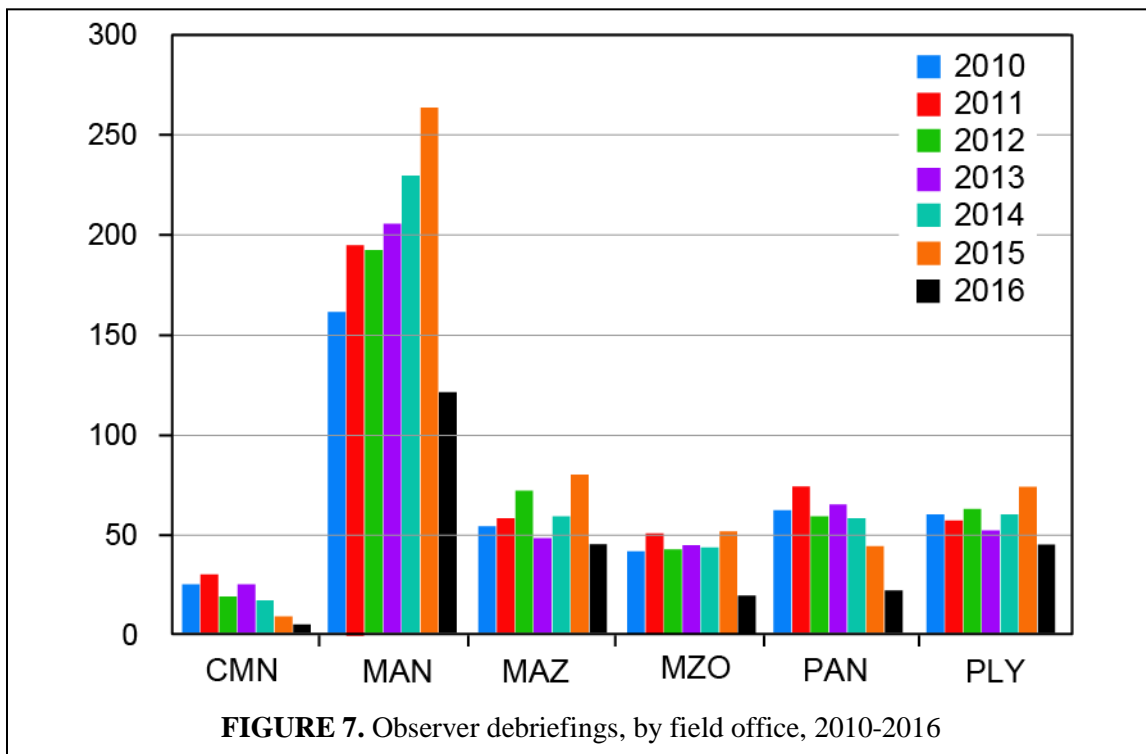
FIGURE 6. Active canneries, 2016.

EPO. Cannery data are also critical for the calculation of utilization of EPO-caught tuna, which is an element of the formula for calculating Member contributions to the IATTC budget. Figure 6 shows the name and location of active canneries that may purchase and process EPO-caught tuna.

4. OBSERVER COORDINATION

The IATTC began placing observers on large (IATTC capacity class 6) purse-seine vessels in 1977, initially to collect scientific data and monitor interactions with marine mammals. The level of coverage was 30%, considered sufficient for the fisheries data collected to be statistically reliable. Starting in 1993, under the La Jolla Agreement, which was agreed in 1992, observer coverage on class-6 vessels increased to 100%, and the level of coverage has remained 100% since the entry into force of the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP) in 1999. The quantity and scope of the data collected by the IATTC observer program has steadily increased since its inception.

The IATTC field office staff is responsible for the coordination, placement, and debriefing of observers from the IATTC observer program. They keep track of which observers are available at a given time, which vessels will be departing soon and require an observer, and determine which observers should be placed on which vessels, based in part on each observer’s recent history with a given captain or vessel. As a general rule, they try to avoid, to the extent possible, placing an observer with the same captain or vessel



twice in a two-year period. Once a trip ends, each observer returns to a field office in order to deliver the records from the trip in person and participate in a debriefing discussion. Figure 7 shows the number of observer debriefings conducted per year, by field office, during 2010-2016. Please note that the 2016 numbers represent the approximate activity for the first half of the year only. Overall, the number of observer debriefings conducted by each field office is reflective of the number of trips departing from or arriving at their respective ports.

The field office in Manta is unique in that it also has two full-time employees who enter and edit observer data on site. Historically, this was done exclusively at IATTC HQ in La Jolla. However, Manta and Playa together receive enough observer data to justify the additional staff. This change in approach was im-

plemented in 2013, when the departure of data staff from IATTC HQ made consideration of such a move possible, and has resulted in cost savings to the Commission.

5. FIELD OFFICE BUDGET

IATTC HQ provides funds to the field offices to cover their operations based upon their reported monthly expenditures. These include, but are not limited to, general office expenses, purchase of office equipment and supplies, vehicle maintenance, staff salaries, and observer payments. Examples of these costs are reflected in Table 1, which shows the 2015 fiscal year expenses originating from the field office in Manta. Manta is currently the busiest tuna port in the EPO, and accordingly, that office has the highest operating costs. As expected, the largest budget line items for this field office are related to observer compensation and benefits, followed by the salaries of the office staff. Although the costs of various items and services can vary significantly among field office locations, due to the unique circumstances of each office, the distribution of costs in Table 1 is representative. Some items are fairly stable and predictable, while others, such as purchase and/or maintenance of vehicles, can vary significantly from year to year.

Table 2 shows the expenditures processed through each field office in 2015. It should be noted that the staff salaries for both the Manzanillo and Mazatlán offices are processed through the Manzanillo office, and those for both the Manta and Playas offices through the Manta office. Aside from that, the expenditures are reflective of the number of staff in each location and the vessel activity in each port, which drives observer placement and other sampling efforts conducted by each office. The combined expenditures processed through the field offices in 2015, for both IATTC and AIDCP activities, were nearly US\$ 2.5 million.

TABLE 1. Manta field office operational expenses, 2015.

Expenses	US\$
Bank and finance charges	1,991
Computing	866
Field office staff compensation and benefits	152,592
Legal and professional fees	2,842
Materials and supplies	7,152
Observer compensation and benefits	763,382
Observer equipment/forms and miscellaneous	2,287
Observer training	5,578
Observer travel	29,965
Postage	11,029
Printing and duplication	10,467
Rent and storage	4,680
Repairs and maintenance (excl. vehicles)	393
Staff travel	5,922
Taxes, license, fees and permits	453
Utilities, telephone, internet	6,641
Vehicle fuel, parking, mileage, maintenance	6,947
Vehicle insurance	5,428
Total EXPENDITURES	US\$ 1,018,613

TABLE 2. Total field office operational expenses, 2015

Field offices	US\$
Cumana	63,692
Manta	1,018,613
Manzanillo	425,522
Mazatlan	252,668
Panama	397,664
Playas	262,614
Total	US\$ 2,420,773