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**COLLECTION OF FISHERIES DATA WEST OF 150°W**

Recently, questions have arisen regarding fisheries data collected by IATTC observers aboard vessels fishing beyond the western boundary of the IATTC area.

The 150°W meridian is recognized as the boundary between the eastern and western Pacific Ocean. The IATTC is responsible for the management of tuna fisheries east of this boundary, and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) performs the same role in the western Pacific. There is, however, an area between 4°S and 50°S and 130°W and 150°W in which the two Convention areas overlap.

When purse-seine vessels with IATTC observers aboard cross the 150°W meridian into the western Pacific, observers are instructed to continue recording information, since the staff's scientific studies, based on the observers' records collected, require an uninterrupted series of data. The data collected are used for a variety of analyses and studies mandated by the Commission, as well as to verify compliance with the resolutions and requirements of the IATTC and the AIDCP. It should also be noted that the flag governments of vessels fishing west of 150°W have requested the collection of the data, which is made available to them by Commission staff.

The information in this document is based on IATTC observer records only; it does not include data from other programs, national or international. It includes only vessels that normally fish in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) but which occasionally cross the 150°W boundary into the western Pacific. Regardless of their reasons for doing so (to transit to a port in the western Pacific, to fish, *etc.*), all such vessels are regarded as having 'activity' in the western Pacific, including the overlap area.

The main fisheries-related data collected by observers are:

- Time spent searching, running and drifting; locations of sets by set type; sightings of marine mammals and those fish-aggregating devices (FADs) that the vessel approaches; oceanographic data; catches (retained and discarded).
- Number of marine mammals sighted and encircled, by species; injury and mortality of dolphins; performance of the vessel's dolphin safety gear.
- Observations of FADs deployed, sighted and set on, including size, components, distinctive marking such as the name of vessel that deployed them, and geographical location.
- Species identification and estimates of size of all marine species captured; disposition of captured animals (discarded, retained, rescued).
- Information to verify compliance with the operational requirements of the AIDCP, mainly those in Annexes II, III, IV and VIII, and also AIDCP resolutions.
- Information to determine the AIDCP dolphin-safe status of the tuna caught.

**1. DATA FROM NATIONAL AIDCP OBSERVER PROGRAMS**

Observers from national AIDCP observer programs collect the same information as IATTC observers, using the same instructions and forms, and the data collected are exchanged with the IATTC. As far as the staff knows, the instructions for observers of these national programs are the same, and they collect all

information regardless of ocean area.

## 2. DATA FROM OTHER OBSERVER PROGRAMS

The Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) observer program has been recognized as an ‘approved international observer program’, pursuant to Annex II.9 of the AIDCP, and observers from that program may accompany vessels entering the EPO from the western Pacific when placing an AIDCP observer is not practical. Since the AIDCP came into force in late 1999, only seven trips, all by United States-flag vessels participating in the South Pacific Tuna Treaty (SPTT), have been recorded entering the fishery with FFA observers aboard, five in 2002 and two in 2004. A protocol for exchanging information has been established with the FFA, and all the data on the activity in the EPO of observed vessels participating in the SPTT are provided to the IATTC staff; however, these procedures do not include exchanging information on fishing activities west of 150°W.

## 3. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

At the time of writing this report, 223 of nearly 8,900 trips in the IATTC observer database had any sort of activity in the western Pacific, distributed as follows.

	IATTC-observed trips				IATTC-observed trips		
	W of 150°	Total	%		W of 150°	Total	%
1980	1	67	1.5	1995	2	411	0.5
1981	0	60	-	1996	6	463	1.3
1982	2	48	4.2	1997	2	486	0.4
1983	3	33	9.1	1998	9	498	1.8
1984	0	24	-	1999	21	593	3.5
1985	0	47	-	2000	22	562	3.9
1986	2	95	2.1	2001	5	488	1.0
1987	1	126	0.8	2002	9	510	1.8
1988	0	160	-	2003	9	592	1.5
1989	5	190	2.6	2004	9	531	1.7
1990	1	223	0.4	2005	15	549	2.7
1991	0	238	-	2006	25	471	5.3
1992	0	278	-	2007	69	453	15.2
1993	0	325	-	<b>Total</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>8,863</b>	<b>2.5</b>
1994	5	342	1.5				

If only fishing activity, expressed as number of sets, is considered, this information can be summarized as follows:

	IATTC-observed sets		
	W of 150°	Total	%
1983	80	1,763	4.5
1984	0	905	-
1985	0	1,933	-
1986	0	3,450	-
1987	0	5,385	-
1988	0	6,739	-
1989	0	7,607	-
1990	0	7,804	-
1991	0	8,282	-
1992	0	10,547	-
1993	0	11,323	-
1994	121	11,127	1.1
1995	2	12,228	0.0
1996	41	13,135	0.3
1997	56	14,834	0.4

	IATTC-observed sets		
	W of 150°	Total	%
1998	40	16,581	0.2
1999	141	15,693	0.9
2000	213	13,714	1.6
2001	21	12,189	0.2
2002	55	14,474	0.4
2003	39	16,204	0.2
2004	70	15,325	0.5
2005	160	16,523	1.0
2006	200	15,410	1.3
2007	1081	13,663	7.9
2008 <sup>1</sup>	48	545	8.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,368</b>	<b>267,383</b>	<b>0.9</b>

<sup>1</sup> Sets made by vessels whose trips started in 2007

#### 4. SETS IN THE OVERLAP AREA

The annual distribution of sets made in the overlap area recorded in the observer database is shown in the table below. No sets have been recorded south of 30°S.

	IATTC-observed sets		
	In overlap area	Total	%
1994	2	11,127	<0.1
1995	60	12,228	0.5
1996	94	13,135	0.7
1997	102	14,834	0.7
1998	182	16,581	1.1
1999	55	15,693	0.4
2000	68	13,714	0.5
2001	79	12,189	0.6
2002	83	14,474	0.6
2003	84	16,204	0.5
2004	92	15,325	0.6
2005	57	16,523	0.3
2006	142	15,410	0.9
2007	313	13,663	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,413</b>	<b>201,100</b>	<b>0.7</b>

#### 5. POLICY OPTIONS

The principal question to be addressed is whether observers should continue to collect data on fisheries activities by vessels operating west of 150°W.

If observers no longer collected these data, the IATTC data base would lose continuity. For example, information on floating objects that could be leaving the EPO would be incomplete, and therefore information on their patterns of movement would be lost, as well as information on any associated fauna. Data on sightings of the various species of marine mammals, important for the estimation of their relative abundance, would also be lost.

Furthermore, any vessel fishing outside the EPO would not be eligible for an *AIDCP Dolphin-Safe* certificate, as observers could not document the required information on the Tuna Tracking Form, as specified in the AIDCP [System for Tuna Tracking and Verification](#).

Finally, it should be noted that most, if not all, governments with flag vessels fishing in the western Pacific want to have fisheries data collected and reported to them.

If the Parties wish to continue having observers collect these data, they need to decide how the information should be handled. There are two aspects to this which need to be considered.

First, should the data be treated as confidential pursuant to IATTC and/or AIDCP rules? The issue has arisen as a result of several enforcement incidents involving vessels fishing west of 150°W with IATTC observers aboard. In those cases, the staff has treated the observer data as confidential, and has denied access to governments (other than the flag governments) which have requested it. However, if the Parties decide that observers should continue to collect data, and that these data should be considered confidential, then it would be advisable to amend IATTC and/or AIDCP confidentiality rules to clarify the issue.

Second, the Parties need to decide whether to provide data collected by observers to the WCPFC, and if so, under what conditions in terms of format and confidentiality. This matter will be addressed under agenda item 10(b), *Exchange of data between IATTC and WCPFC*.