

## NATIONAL REPORTS ON THE PROGRESS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

### AUSTRALIA

#### Australian National Report

March 2009

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF IOTC CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

##### Resolutions Adopted at IOTC 12 – 2008

##### **Resolution 08/01 Mandatory Statistical Requirements for IOTC Members and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties (CPCs) (Resolution 01/05 – Reporting of Catch and Scientific Data)**

Australia has complied with IOTC requirements for data provision (Resolution 08/01 and 01/05), including the provision of shark bycatch data. Australia will also examine the possibility of providing historical observer data on shark bycatch for consideration by the Bycatch Working Group.

##### **Resolution 08/02 On Establishing a Programme for Transshipment by Large-Scale Fishing Vessels** (this resolution replaces resolution 06/02 - Establishing a Programme for Transshipment by large scale fishing vessels)

Australia's tuna fishing industry in the Indian Ocean did not tranship in 2008, either at sea or in port. However transshipment is currently permitted. There are currently only 3 vessels permitted to undertake transshipment in the Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery (WTBF) (as of 28/1/09 the following boats are nominated to those permits Taisei Maru, Ocean Wild II and Dampier). No other vessels may receive catch taken by another vessel without prior written authorisation from the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA).

All WTBF vessels are restricted from transshipping, except to a permitted carrier vessel. Vessels are required to facilitate the carriage of an observer at the request of AFMA. If a carrier vessel intends to take delivery of fish on the high seas, they are required to give AFMA 7 days notice prior to departure to facilitate an observer.

##### **Resolution 08/03 On Reducing the Incidental Bycatch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries**

Australian legislation (The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)) requires the development of a Threat Abatement Plan (TAP) for oceanic longline fishing in order to limit the impact on seabirds during fishing operations. The current iteration of the TAP (2006) requires the Australian tuna longline fishery (including the WTBF) to significantly reduce the bycatch of seabirds in oceanic longline operations and maintain a bycatch rate of less than 0.05 birds per 1000 hooks set.

In the WTBF, Australia has implemented fishing permit conditions aimed at reducing seabird mortality which are consistent with the objectives and prescriptions of the TAP and exceed the minimum requirements as prescribed under IOTC Resolution 08/03. These include:

- All longline operators fishing south of 30 degrees South are required to:
  - deploy a tori line (of specific design requirements compliant with IOTC specifications)
  - set fishing gear between nautical dusk and nautical dawn
  - use a line weighting system and use thawed baits
- All longline operators fishing north of 30 degrees South are required to:
  - deploy a tori line.
- In addition, all longline operators are:
  - banned from discharging offal while setting
  - recommended to avoid offal discharge during hauling.

**Resolution 08/04 Concerning the Recording of Catch by Longline Fishing Vessels in the IOTC Area** (this resolution fulfils a requirement of Resolution 07/03 (Paragraph 3) Concerning the recording of catch by fishing vessels in the IOTC Area)

Australia has implemented catch and effort logbooks in its purse-seine and longline tuna fisheries. Australia's Logbook Program collects accurate and timely catch and effort information on a "shot-by-shot" basis. Logbooks record information on fishing operation such as; location, time, method of fishing and gear and vessel details as well as the resultant catch and bycatch for each fishing operation. The logbook program is managed by AFMA, with all data maintained in a central database. Copies of the logbooks can be found on the AFMA website:

[http://www.afma.gov.au/industry/logbooks/docs/a06\\_pelagic.pdf](http://www.afma.gov.au/industry/logbooks/docs/a06_pelagic.pdf)

Australia provides an aggregated data set based on the logbook data requirements outlined in Resolution 08/04 to the IOTC annually.

**Existing Resolutions Adopted by IOTC**

**Resolution 07/01 To promote compliance by nationals of contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties with IOTC conservation and management measures**

Australia has amended the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* to allow Australia to give effect to measures to control Australian nationals operating in regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) to which Australia is a Party. The amendments to the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* make it an offence for an Australian national to breach a conservation and management measures adopted by such RFMOs. Regulations are being developed under the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* to enact the requirements of IOTC resolution 07/01.

**Resolution 07/02 Concerning the establishment of an IOTC Record of Vessels Authorised to operate in the IOTC Area** (supersedes Resolution 05/02 - Record of Authorised Vessels)

Australia continues to provide the IOTC an updated list of vessels currently authorised to fish for tuna and tuna-like species within the IOTC convention area. The two fisheries operating under the purview of the IOTC are the WTBF and the Western Skipjack Tuna Fishery (WSTF).

The WTBF is currently managed under the provisional arrangements of the *Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery Management Plan 2005*, whereby the fishery will continue to be managed as a limited entry fishery through a system of annually granted fishing permits. The fishery will begin to operate under the Management Plan in late 2008 following the final grant of 127 Boat Statutory Fishing Rights and catch quota SFRs for the fishery's primary species (broadbill swordfish, bigeye tuna, yellowfin tuna and striped marlin) to eligible persons. Once SFRs have been granted, operators will be able to use pelagic longline, minor line (includes poling trolling, handline and rod and reel) and purse seine fishing methods in the fishery to target tuna and billfish species.

Operating in the same area of waters is Australia's WSTF. The WSTF is a limited access fishery managed through a system of annually granted fishing permits which allow the holder to target skipjack tuna in the area of the fishery using the purse seine fishing method. There are 14 fishing permits which provide access to this fishery however fishing effort by WSTF vessels in the IOTC area of competence during 2008 was very minimal. There has been no fishing effort north of 20 degrees South.

Fishing concessions in the aforementioned Australian fisheries are fully transferable and allows concession holders to nominate (and similarly, de-nominate) vessels to (or from) a fishing concession at any time. Consequently the list provided to the Commission is only guaranteed to be accurate at that time of submission. Australia will continue to inform the IOTC of any changes to the authorised vessel register as soon as practical.

#### *Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Convention Area Overlap*

An overlap between the IOTC area of competence and Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) convention area exists, between longitudes 141 degrees East and 150 degrees East, south of the Australian mainland. Two Australian fisheries operating under the purview of the WCPFC are also permitted to operate in the area of overlap between the IOTC and WCPFC; the fisheries are the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF) and Eastern Skipjack Tuna Fishery (ESTF). These fisheries are managed in a manner consistent with the provisions adopted by WCPFC.

To ensure full compliance with IOTC Resolution 07/02 Australia has included the list of vessels authorised to operate in the ETBF and the ESTF in Australia's submission to the IOTC. There are currently 172 annually granted fishing permits in the ETBF and 19 fishing permits in the ESTF.

The area of overlap between the WCPFC and the IOTC has been raised previously and repeatedly by Australia as a source of concern for Australia's domestic management arrangements. The overlap creates complexities in reporting and other obligations under the two organisations for Australia. Furthermore, it complicates collection of information between the IOTC and the WCPFC and may result in double counting of catch for some jurisdictions.

#### **Resolution 07/05 Limitation of fishing capacity of IOTC Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties in terms of number of longline vessels targeting swordfish and albacore**

In accordance with Paragraph 5 of Resolution 07/05 Australian fisheries (WTBF) targeting swordfish and albacore under the purview of the IOTC are managed by directly limiting catches using individual transferable catch quotas under a comprehensive national management plan. A total allowable commercial catch (TACC) is set for the fishery's four key target species (yellowfin tuna, bigeye tuna, broadbill swordfish and striped marlin) on an annual basis.

Attachment A: Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery Management Plan.

#### **Resolution 06/03 On establishing a vessel monitoring system programme**

A vessel monitoring system (VMS) has been a mandatory requirement under AFMA permit conditions for all Australian fisheries operating under the purview of the IOTC area of competence since 2000.

The Australian VMS is based on 'Automatic Location Communicator' (ALC) with a built-in Global Positioning System (GPS) fitted to each vessel nominated against a Commonwealth fishing concession. These ALCs transmit data on vessel position, course and speed via Inmarsat communications satellites (C or D+ satellite). AFMA can initiate reports from vessels at any time as required via remote access.

In addition, the VMS allows for two-way communications between AFMA and the vessel, providing the vessel operator with secure communication to other similarly fitted vessels, or any fax, telex machine or email.

Vessel tracks can be automatically cross referenced against spatial rules set in fisheries management plans. Through the use of base station software, any fishing vessel activity of interest can trigger a variety

of pre-programmed alerts to instigate a Short Message Service (SMS) text to any relevant Compliance Officer via their digital mobile phone 24 hours a day.

#### **Resolution 05/03 Report on Port Inspections (List of Foreign Vessels and Catches)**

AFMA, under the *Fisheries Management Act 1991*, administers port access to foreign fishing vessels. Transshipment and catch landings are prohibited by the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* unless the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry grants an exemption. No exemptions were granted for transshipment or landing of catch in 2008. Australian authorities made one (1) inspection of a foreign fishing vessel in an Australian Port in 2008.

#### **Resolution 05/05 Concerning the Conservation of Sharks Caught in Association with fisheries managed by IOTC**

In 1994 Australia developed the National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (Shark-plan). As advised by recommendations outlined in the International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks) all relevant stakeholders, including members of the commercial fishing industry, were engaged during the developmental process. In accordance with the terms of the IPOA-Sharks the Shark-plan should be reviewed every four years to identify strategies to increase its effectiveness and report on progress. The review of the Shark-plan is in progress at this time.

Shark finning, being defined as the removal of fins and subsequent discarding at sea of the carcass, is illegal in all Commonwealth, state and Northern Territory fisheries. In line with the Shark-plan, management measures have been put in place in the longline sectors to minimise shark bycatch, prevent indiscriminate finning and to encourage full utilisation of landed shark catch.

#### **Resolution 05/05 On Sea Turtles**

Over the last two years marine turtle interactions have not been common in the WTBF due to the low level of effort in the fishery. During the 2006 and 2007 period there were five interactions reported through AFMA observers and logbooks with all turtles released alive.

The Australian Tuna and Billfish Longline Fisheries Bycatch and Discarding Workplan mitigation measures for bycatch species include an analysis of methods to reduce risks to turtles (eg: quantifying the catch rates of turtles from circle hooks in the Australian Tuna and Billfish Longline Fisheries; making the carriage of line cutters and dehookers compulsory; providing a weather-proof bycatch recording device to all vessels; investigating the difference between “deep-setting” and shallow-setting of lines for bycatch and; analysing logbook and observer data to determine spatial and seasonal variations in Australian Tuna and Billfish Longline Fisheries bycatch species abundance.

#### **Resolution 01/06 Bigeye Tuna Statistical Document Programme**

The Australian Government has developed a uniform Statistical Document Programme in order to meet statistical document requirements implemented by the IOTC (Resolution 03/03) and other Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and import markets.

The Australian Fish Export Statistical Document was developed to combine all statistical document requirements for swordfish, bigeye tuna and northern bluefin tuna into one document. Australia's Fish Export Statistical Document includes amendments included in IOTC resolution 03/03 and has been accepted by other RFMOs, including the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.