

Australian National Report March 2010

IMPLEMENTATION OF IOTC CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Resolutions Adopted at IOTC 13 – 2009

Resolution 09/01 On the Performance review follow-up

Australia's fisheries management policies are focused on ensuring that fishing activity is undertaken with an understanding of and concern for the sustainability of fish stocks and biodiversity conservation. Australia's national fisheries management practices currently exceed the requirements of some IOTC resolutions.

The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) aims to minimise the impacts of Commonwealth managed fisheries on all aspects of the marine ecosystem. AFMA's adoption of the ecological component of the Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) principles is a significant departure from traditional fisheries management with the focus broadened beyond the direct management of target species to also consider the impacts on bycatch species, protected (TEP) species, habitats and communities.

Australia fully supports any IOTC efforts to address deficiencies in the current Agreement.

Resolution 09/02 On the implementation of a limitation of fishing capacity of Contracting Parties and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties

- In accordance with paragraph 1 of Resolution 09/02, please find attached a list of Australian flagged fishing vessels which fished for tropical tunas during 2006 and for swordfish and albacore during 2007 (Attachment 1). Australia has verified the presence and fishing activity, as required under para 2, that only three Australian vessels fished inside the Convention Area for these species.
- In accordance with Paragraph 4 of the Resolution, Australian fishers fishing within the Convention Area (e.g. Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery (WTBF)) targeting swordfish and albacore under IOTC's mandate are managed as a limited entry fishery through a system of annually granted fishing permits. Operators are 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. AFMA is currently going through the process of granting individual transferable catch quotas under a comprehensive national management plan. A total allowable commercial catch (TACC) will be set for the fishery's four key target species (yellowfin tuna, bigeye tuna, broadbill swordfish and striped marlin) on an annual basis.

Resolution 09/03 On establishing a list of vessels presumed to have carried out illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing (IUU) in the IOTC area

Australia did not observe any activities involving IUU fishing occurring within the IOTC Convention area during 2009. We have also not received any reports of Australian flagged vessels being engaged in IUU activities within the area.

Australia currently maintains a closed port policy for foreign fishing vessels. Exceptions may be given to vessels in emergency situations with the approval of the Minister for Agriculture,

Fisheries and Forestry. For a foreign boat to enter an Australian port, a port permit must be issued by AFMA.

Resolution 09/04 On a Regional Observer Scheme

There is currently limited effort in the WTBF which has led to variable observer coverage. The overall observer coverage between 2005-2009 represents 18% of fishing effort for hooks and 17% for all shots. Most recently, in the 2009 season 12% of all shots and 11.6% of hooks were observed.

Resolution 09/05 To prohibit the use of Large-scale Driftnets on the high seas in the IOTC area

All Australian flagged vessels are prohibited from utilising large-scale driftnets on the high seas in the Convention Area of all the regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) in which Australia is a Member.

Resolution 09/06 On Marine Turtles

During 2008 there were four reported interactions with turtles. Two loggerhead turtles and two leatherback turtles were hooked, one of the leatherback turtles was found dead and the other three turtles were released alive. These interactions were reported through AFMA observers and the logbooks detailing catch and effort.

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. These measures include 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; and investigating the difference between “deep-setting” and shallow-setting of lines for bycatch. The long-term goals of the plan are to determine the patterns in bycatch within the Australian Tuna and Billfish Longline Fishery and any possible management responses, such as move on provisions, which may be available due to this pattern.

Existing Resolutions Adopted by IOTC

Resolution 08/01 Mandatory Statistical Requirements for IOTC Members and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties (CPCs)

Australia has complied with IOTC requirements for data provision, through submission of the "Australia National Report to the Scientific Committee of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission for 2008".

Resolution 08/02 On establishing a programme for Transhipment by Large-Scale Fishing Vessels

Australia's tuna fishing industry in the Indian Ocean did not tranship in 2009, either at sea or in port. Three Australian vessels are authorised for transhipment in the WTBF.

Resolution 08/03 On reducing the Incidental Bycatch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries

Australia has implemented fishing permit conditions aimed at reducing seabird mortality which are consistent with 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

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 operations such as location, time, method of fishing, gear and vessel details and the 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

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

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 (FMA) 1991* to allow Australia to give effect to measures to control Australian nationals operating in RFMOs to which Australia is a Member. The amendments make it an offence for an Australian national to breach a resolution as prescribed in regulations under the FMA. 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

Australia continues to provide the IOTC with 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. Operators are 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. AFMA is currently going through the process of granting individual transferable catch quotas under a comprehensive national management plan. A total allowable commercial catch (TACC) will be set for the fisheries four key species (yellowfin tuna, bigeye tuna, broadbill swordfish and striped marlin) on an annual basis, with seasons running on the financial year.

Operating in the same area of waters is Australia's WSTF. The WSTF is also 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.

Fishing concessions in the aforementioned Australian fisheries are fully transferable and allow 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 previously submitted the list of vessels authorised to operate in the ETBF and the ESTF to the IOTC.

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 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 vessels 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 by foreign fishing vessels 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 2009.

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

Australia's National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (NPOA-Sharks) was released in 2004 according to guidelines as set out in the International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks). Consultation during the developmental process included all relevant stakeholders, including members of the commercial fishing industry. In accordance with the terms of the IPOA-Sharks, the NPOA-Shark should be reviewed every four years to identify strategies to increase its effectiveness and report on progress. The review of the NPOA-Sharks is in progress at this time. The assessment includes the presentation and where possible, analyses of:

- resource information
- management information
- law and enforcement information.

The NPOA-Sharks is expected to be finalised by the end of 2010.

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 01/06 Bigeye Tuna Statistical Document Programme

The Australian Government has developed a uniform Statistical Document Programme to meet statistical document requirements implemented by the IOTC (Resolution 03/03) and other 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.

Attachment 1

VESSEL NAME	NATIONAL REGISTRATION SYMBOL	FLAG COUNTRY	FISHING GEAR	LOA	GRT	BHP	YEAR BUILT	SHIPYARD	HULL MATERIAL	HOME PORT
ALCYONE II	O652	AUSTRALIAN	INDUSTRIAL LONGLINE	24.3	110	410	2002	FREMANTLE	STEEL/ALUMINIUM	GERALDTON
OCEAN WILD II	O664	AUSTRALIAN	INDUSTRIAL LONGLINE	35	138	510	1985	JAPAN	STEEL	FREMANTLE
TAISEI MARU	O644	AUSTRALIAN	INDUSTRIAL LONGLINE	34.5	119	650	1991	JAPAN	STEEL	FREMANTLE

Note: all three vessels actively fished for albacore, yellowfin tuna, bigeye tuna and broadbill swordfish in the IOTC area in 2006 and 2007.

Source: Australian Fisheries Management Authority daily logbook database 22 September 2009.