



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment

Ref: D21/119045

Dr Chris O'Brien
Executive Secretary, Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
PO Box 1011
VICTORIA SEYCHELLES

Dear Dr O'Brien

I refer to your letter of 4 December 2020 about Australia's outstanding compliance issues in the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). Australia considers strengthening compliance with IOTC conservation and management measures fundamental for effective fisheries management and the integrity of the IOTC. Australia's responses to the matters set out in your letter are as follows:

Resolution 17/05 Submission of data regarding sharks – size frequency

As per previous advice, due to very low levels of effort in Australia's relevant fisheries, sampling is undertaken upon landing and is primarily focused on achieving effective sampling coverage for target species. Sharks are not a target species in these fisheries and Australia has a very low retained catch of sharks (many species cannot be landed and all live sharks must be released). Further, it is not practical to obtain size measurements of released sharks, as best practice guidelines for their release are to not remove them from the water. As a result, Australia is unable to meet the relevant sampling coverage and is unable to provide size frequency data for sharks. We also note that CoC16 recommended that the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch and the Scientific Committee provide advice on the applicability of the IOTC requirement related to size frequency data on sharks when the fisheries do not retain sharks, and furthermore if CPCs should have to report any size data in such cases and this is yet to be addressed by the WPEB and SC.

Resolution 11/04 Observer reports

Australia's electronic monitoring program provides independent fisheries data and is used as a tool to collect and verify data on Australia's fishing activity within the IOTC Area. Electronic monitoring uses a series of on-boat systems, comprising cameras, sensors and recorders, as well as ancillary monitoring (e.g. port sampling) and data analysis to provide monitoring and observation of fishing activity. Electronic monitoring is used to verify catch data, ensure mitigation measures are employed and record non-target species interactions. Electronic monitoring provides for 100% monitoring on each vessel; an audit is performed on a percentage of the recorded footage and the information is used to acquit information provided in logbooks. Australia acknowledges that electronic monitoring does not collect the full suite of data collected by observers in accordance with Resolution 11/04. However, as a member of the IOTC Australia is committed to providing timely, accurate and verifiable data to support management decisions and considers that the electronic monitoring data provided to the IOTC supports this broader

objective. Supplementary programs to efficiently collect the outstanding data fields are currently being considered.

Resolution 15/02 Size Frequency for Longline fisheries

Australia's fishing effort is very low in the relevant fisheries making it difficult to meet the requirements for the relevant sampling coverage following the random sampling methodologies for by-product and bycatch species. Australia primarily focuses on achieving effective sampling coverage for target species, which is undertaken upon landing. Catches of relevant species for which size frequency was not reported were largely under one metric tonne. Australia notes that COC16 reiterated its recommendation that the Scientific Committee to provide advice on the applicability of the IOTC requirements related to size frequency data (i.e. for each species measure one fish per metric tonne), and if required, provide possible alternatives to ensure representative sampling and this is yet to be addressed by the SC.

My sincere thanks to you, as well as the Compliance Committee Chair and members, for your ongoing efforts to strengthen compliance with IOTC measures.

Yours sincerely



George Day
Assistant Secretary
Fisheries Branch
8 April 2021