

AN UPDATE ON ELECTRONIC MONITORING PILOT IN SEYCHELLES

The government of Seychelles has been testing EM systems in country since 2016 and in 2020 made a commitment to use EM to support its Monitoring, Control and Surveillance team. Since 2020, Seychelles Fisheries Authority has developed an in-country EM Data Review Center to review and analyze the EM data on its domestic purse seine fleet and is moving to scale EM across its longline fleet. EM scaling in country is supported by Seychelles' Fisheries and Aquaculture Bill, 2025 which specifies that EM systems are now legally required on all fishing vessels.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- 13 purse seine vessels
- 107 longline vessels

PROGRAM UPDATE

- The Electronic Monitoring (EM) pilot program was launched in 2016 as a foundational effort to strengthen fisheries oversight and transparency in Seychelles. Implementation began with the domestic purse seine fleet and was later expanded to include the domestic longline fleet, allowing the program to be tested and refined across different fishing activities and across around 13 purse seine vessels and 107 longline vessels.
- From the outset, the program placed a strong emphasis on the use of EM for compliance objectives. The Seychelles Fisheries Authority (SFA) is responsible for reviewing and analysing EM data, with Satlink engaged as the primary service provider supporting system installation and data delivery. To date, SFA has analysed data from more than 300 purse seine fishing trips, resulting in the identification of over 500 non-compliance-related events.
- Through this analysis, the program examines multiple dimensions of fishing activity, including fishing effort and set types, catch handling and discarding practices, and interactions with non-target and protected species. Monitoring is conducted using a risk-based approach, whereby the extent of data review is determined by a vessel's compliance history. Vessels with continued or repeated compliance issues are subject to more intensive data review, while vessels demonstrating consistently low levels of compliance events across trips are reviewed at a reduced level. To support this system, a colour-coding framework has been developed to clearly indicate where vessels fall along the compliance spectrum, enabling more efficient targeting of monitoring and enforcement efforts.

PLAN FOR SCALE-UP

- The scale-up phase will be anchored in the implementation of a new Fisheries Act, establishing a stronger legal foundation for monitoring, compliance, and enforcement across the sector. Under this framework, fishing agreements will be updated to formally require the use of Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS), ensuring more consistent and transparent oversight of fishing activities.

- A clear licensing and sanctions framework will be developed to support compliance, define responsibilities, and provide meaningful consequences for violations.
- To support successful implementation, a series of targeted workshops will be delivered to engage and inform key stakeholders, building shared understanding and buy-in.
- At the operational level, the program will progressively transition toward live reporting through satellite connectivity, enabling near real-time data transmission and improved responsiveness.
- Finally, monitoring data will be systematically reviewed and submitted to relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), aligning national efforts with international reporting obligations and best practices.

SUCSESSES AND CHALLENGES

SUCSESSES

- **Data Findings**
 - EM showed transshipment and non-compliance events
 - EM validated GPS location when VMS tracking was not functioning
 - EM validated potential gear violations (dFAD)
- **Governance and Legal**
 - EM Data Review Center established
 - Reviewing 100% of data on domestic purse seine vessels
 - EM into legal framework
- **Vessel Benefits**
 - EM used to help identify theft on vessel
 - EM to help validate compliance
 - EM used for potential MSC certification

CHALLENGES

Implementation challenges that affect progress toward effective use of Electronic Monitoring (EM), include:

- Uncertainty around how EM-specific data can be incorporated into the IOTC MARIS reporting format, creating reporting inefficiencies and compliance risks.
- Difficulties in meeting IOTC timelines for Vessel Monitoring Plan submissions, limiting Seychelles' ability to fully align with regional requirements.
- Domestically, there has been pushback from the longline fleet regarding the installation of EM systems, largely driven by the lack of available funds to cover the estimated costs of equipment and operation. Addressing this resistance will require continued efforts to increase industry awareness and understanding of EM, with the aim of building confidence and supporting broader uptake.
- From a regulatory perspective, EM regulations are not yet finalized; however, Seychelles is actively developing these regulations to operationalize and enforce the 2025 Fisheries Act.

- In parallel, there is a need to establish clear internal guidance and processes within SFA to manage issues related to EM data and compliance, including cases that may arise both with and without formal legal support.

ALIGNMENT WITH IOTC

- Seychelles' draft EM Standards adhere to IOTC's Resolution 2023/08 guidance
- Seychelles is hoping to use EM for domestic compliance objectives
- Vessel Monitoring Plans are in development and will adhere to IOTC guidance