

# **IOTC DATA TECHNICAL WORKSHOP TO IMPROVE THE REPORTING OF PURSE SEINE DATA TO THE IOTC**

IOTC Secretariat  
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## **Summary**

The IOTC Purse Seine Data Reporting Workshop, held in Seychelles from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2026, brought together 18 participants from 6 Contracting Parties (CPCs) with large industrial purse seine fisheries in the Indian Ocean to strengthen the reporting of fishery statistics. The workshop was successful in improving the understanding and use of IOTC reporting forms through presentations developed by the Secretariat highlighting how to use the forms and presenting data reporting references. IOTC mandatory data reporting forms were reviewed, including retained catch, discards, species interactions, georeferenced catch and effort, and georeferenced size data. Updates of the mandatory statistical datasets, including drifting floating object (DFOB) data related available at the IOTC Secretariat were presented as well as instructions on reporting data with the mandatory IOTC forms 3BU and 3DA. The Secretariat also presented updates on the Regional Observer Scheme (ROS) reporting; including resources created to improve data reporting, and understanding ROS data requirements, as well as data available to the IOTC Secretariat. The Institut de Recherche et Développement (IRD) presented the software ObServe, a useful tool for storing and exporting ROS data from national databases and report to the Secretariat in the standard ROS format. The workshop also successfully facilitated an improved understanding of CPC data reporting efforts and workflow, through presentations by each CPC on their national programmes and current reporting status and challenges. The workshop concluded with discussions on persistent data gaps and challenges, recommendations for tools, and issues to be raised at future meetings, namely WPDCS and WPEB.

## **Introduction**

The Purse Seine Data Reporting Workshop to improve the reporting of fishery data to the IOTC was held at The Guy Morel Institute in Anse Etoile, Seychelles, from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2026. The workshop aimed to support the implementation of mandatory IOTC reporting templates and facilitate the successful submission of data to the IOTC Secretariat in line with the IOTC data related CMMs and reporting requirements. A total of 16 participants from 6 CPCs attended the workshop.

The Secretariat presented the data reporting process, the IOTC Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) relevant to data collection and reporting for purse seine fisheries (IOTC-2026-PSDR-02). The participants were further presented with the status of purse seine data available at the IOTC Secretariat (IOTC-2026-PSDR-03). The presentation provided an overview of the historical development of purse seine fishery fleets, which were previously dominated by distant-water fishing nations. In recent years, however, an increasing number of coastal States have begun flagging purse seine vessels. Industrial purse seine vessels were noted to primarily target tropical tunas, with bycatch comprising other IOTC

species and sharks. The reporting of geo-referenced catch and size data was identified as a challenge for newly flagged purse seine fleets. The number of purse seine and associated supply vessels has increased in recent years, with operations concentrated mainly in the western Indian Ocean. The Secretariat further noted an increase in the sampling of both tuna and non-tuna species from industrial purse seine fleets, with data recorded in logbooks and collected by onboard observers.

CPCs discussed the obstacles to consistently collecting size sample data, specifically for catches more than 1 metric tonne, as described in [Resolution 15/02](#). The Secretariat expressed the importance of emphasising sample collection for IOTC species. CPCs noted inconsistencies in Resolutions identified at the Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics ([IOTC-2025-WPDCS21-05](#)). The Secretariat expressed support for CPCs to discuss these inconsistencies with the Scientific Committee. It was further noted that proposed modifications to data-related Resolutions could be presented to the Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures (WPICMM) for endorsement, to facilitate the revision process for CMMs.

The Secretariat also presented the preliminary data compliance assessment 2026 of purse seine fisheries (IOTC-2026-PSDR-04). Each CPC received a factsheet summarising the data assessments conducted for the 2024 statistical year and review the Compliance assessment criteria provided by the WPICMM ([IOTC-2026-WPICMM09-13 Add1 Rev1](#)). The Secretariat clarified the standards and procedures for data compliance assessments.

### **IOTC Forms for Reporting Mandatory Datasets**

The first exercise involved review IOTC data forms for reporting species presence in the catch, retained catches, interactions, discards catch and effort, and size-frequency data. The Secretariat gave a presentation reviewing the structure and content of reporting forms for mandatory datasets (1DR, 1RC, 1DI, 1IN, 3CE, 4SF). The Secretariat noted a common problem with reported data, a misalignment of species included in the 1DR, 1RC and 1DI forms. The importance of coherency between these reporting forms was emphasised. The Secretariat also identified problems with raising catch data.

IRD raised the question of compliance for rare species detection in samples but not in logbook or catches. Given the workflows of observers for some CPCs, there are instances where samples or measurements are taken for rare species, but those species are not included in the catch data or in the logbooks. The IOTC Secretariat assured that a small discrepancy in rare species does not necessarily raise a non-compliance flag. However, the Secretariat also reminded CPCs to consult mandatory data reporting requirements in the resolutions, as some non-IOTC species, such as some species of sharks, are mandatory for some fisheries to report.

### **Data on drifting floating objects (DFOBs) and buoys**

The next activities involved reporting data on DFOBs and buoys associated with purse seine fishing vessels activities. The Secretariat presented the DFOB data available at the IOTC Secretariat and reviewed how to report data on operation activities conducted by purse seine and support vessels on DFOBs (Form 3DA). The Secretariat also presented on how to report data on daily positions of the buoys monitored in purse seine fisheries (Form 3BU). The Secretariat clarified what the FAD ID is and how it is linked to the FAD registry.

CPCs raised concerns about data reporting requirements. They noted that, given current workflows, some fields may need revision. For example, the length of the FAD should be reported, but often the FADs are underwater. CPCs noted a change in the categorization of FADs which has not been reflected in reporting. This results in reporting of a non-category which can impact compliance assessments. CPCs and the Secretariat agreed to review data fields. The Secretariat supported the review of the forms and suggested that the CPCs identify specific potential changes to present to the Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics (WPDCS) and the Scientific Committee. The Secretariat also commented that they are developing a validation system to improve the quality and consistency of reported data.

CPCs also brought up issues surrounding the roles and responsibilities for reporting for CPCs under charter agreements. Conversations covered charter agreements details and fishing license requirements, noting that the information on the periods of agreements might not always be available to the staff in charge of data collection and/or reporting. Relevant resolutions were reviewed and reporting responsibilities were clarified between CPCs. CPCs called for specific communications between parties before changing flags and when measuring catch against individual quotas.

### **CPC Presentations on National Programmes**

The Secretariat shared a presentation template with CPCs prior to the meeting, to compile information and updates on their national observer programmes. Each CPC presentation provided general information on their programmes, including their data collection, processing, and reporting procedures. They concluded by sharing the status of the programme and described any challenges they are facing. Information on the objectives of the programmes provided insights into some longstanding gaps observed in the ROS PS dataset. Understanding current workflows enabled the Secretariat to identify areas where additional support may be required.

### **ObServe software presentation**

A presentation of the ObServe software was delivered by IRD, including the structure of the software and a demonstration on its use. Within the presentation, a proposal was made for a shared IOTC server which would contain all the code lists. Using the software with this server could ensure that updated and current code lists are used. IRD also demonstrated how to run R code to output entered data into the IOTC reporting format. CPCs engaged with the presentation, discussing how they could be involved and trained in the software. The software is currently used by EU France, EU Spain, EU Italy and Seychelles, the Secretariat encouraged collaboration between IRD and CPCs with emerging PS fisheries.

### **Regional Observer Scheme (ROS) updates**

The Secretariat presented the available data and updates about the regional observer scheme (ROS). Following a reiteration of the relevant CMMs, a summary was given of the status of at-sea observations data from purse seine fisheries that is currently available to the Secretariat (IOTC-2026-PSDR-07) (see document [IOTC-2025-WPDCS21-25](#) for details) highlighting the issues or incompleteness of some of the mandatory data according to [Res 25/06](#). The Secretariat also shared the currently available tools and resources related to the ROS, as well as other tools in development. CPCs were given an opportunity to inquire about the tools and make recommendations for improvements that would increase usability. The main finding was the lack of retained catches from observations at sea provided by the industrial purse seine fisheries. CPCs clarified that this may be due to the nature of their observer programmes and

workflows. The Secretariat will work closely to the CPCs to reexport and complete historical ROS data in line with Resolution [25/06](#).

## **Activities carried out during the workshop and follow-up actions**

### *Review of mandatory reporting forms*

#### Retained catch and discards (Forms 1RC and 1DI)

- Reminder that species content needs to match across forms (1RC and 1DI).
- Reminder to match with geo-referenced catches including in form 3CE.
- Encourages use of historical records to estimate catch.

#### Geo-referenced catch and effort (Form 3CE)

- Discussion about preferences for effort units.
- Secretariat clarified that number of fishing days, and fishing sets should be used.
- Secretariat presented a table with recommended first effort units. Should be used by CPCs as a reference to ease harmonisation across CPCs.

#### Size-frequency data (4SF)

- Clarified differences between form and catch and effort data are in species composition and aggregation, spatial dimension, and potentially data sources.
- Request to create a template to understand and describe sampling scheme of each CPC.
- Secretariat will disseminate reports for CPCs on problems and errors in reported data.

### *Review of data collected on DFOBs and buoys*

- CPCs and Secretariat review of data fields for DFOB reporting.
- Present recommendations on form revisions to Scientific Committee.
- Secretariat to review updates to the code lists to ensure all codes are up to date.
- Secretariat to clarify procedures for updated code lists and outdated versions of codes.
- Secretariat will disseminate reports for CPCs on problems and errors in reported data.
- Secretariat will determine proper reporting procedures for noted fields, including Boolean data types. Forms will be updated accordingly.
- Secretariat is developing a validation system to improve data reporting.

### *Presentations by CPCs of National Observer Programmes*

- CPCs presented the status of their respective programmes and highlighted areas of misalignment with ROS objectives and potential areas for support.
- Secretariat to follow up with CPCs to support in observer programme development as needed.

### *Presentation on ObServe software (by IRD)*

- The workshop facilitated the introduction of CPCs to ObServe software. And CPCs spoke with representatives of IRD to get involved with the software
- IRD proposed a shared IOTC server with up-to-date code lists
- The Secretariat will follow up IRD proposal for shared server and review the code lists to ensure everything is up to date
- The Secretariat will collaborate with IRD staff to create a workflow where IOTC updates are properly and efficiently integrated into software.
- IRD promotes the idea of a training workshop with CPCs new to using the software, and encourages feedback from CPCs as new users

### *Regional Observer Scheme Updates*

- The Secretariat will compile all ROS tools on one page on the website to improve accessibility
- The Secretariat will review current sampling schemes to better understand workflows and areas where data reporting can be integrated
- The Secretariat will consider EM coverage and how it can be used to compliment observer data.

### **List of participants**

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