UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL OBSERVER SCHEME

IOTC Secretariat

Purpose, expectation and action intended

Discussions (for information and open discussion)

The paper presents the coverage estimation of observations at-sea of the IOTC Regional Observer Scheme (ROS).

Feedback (to collect input and suggestions)

CPCs are invited to review the information presented and follow up with the Secretariat if any updates are required.

Recommendation

The paper is to seek collaborative work with the CPs on the improving of the ROS data reporting.

Abstract

All-fleet longline coverage was below the 5% requirement in every year from 2010 to 2025 except 2022 and was 4.7% in 2025 (4.3% in 2023–2025); seven of fourteen fleets met 5% in 2025. All-fleet purse seine coverage was above 5% in eleven of thirteen years since 2013 and was 15.9% in 2025 (19.6% in 2023–2025).

Keywords: observer data, observations at-sea, observer coverage

1. Introduction

The Resolution on the ROS requires observer coverage of at least 5% of the total number of fishing operations (sets) for vessels of 24 m length overall and above, and for smaller vessels fishing outside their Exclusive Economic Zone. CPCs are responsible for training and deploying observers and for reporting the data to the Secretariat using the IOTC reporting tools.

The objective is to review coverage against the requirement of the Resolution 25/06.

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Data available

This review combines observer data submitted by CPCs, and the total fishing effort reported through the mandatory statistics of the CPCs with observations at-sea reporting obligation and their longline (LL) and purse seine (PS) fisheries, for the period 2010–2025. Total effort by fleet and year was extracted from the IOTC database, using the effort declared by CPCs under the mandatory statistics.

2.2 Coverage

Observer coverage was calculated as observed effort divided by total reported effort, per fleet and year:

- LL: number of hooks, only for fleets reporting hooks.
- PS: number of sets. Fishing days were used only where the fleet does not report total effort in sets.
- All fleets of a gear: the sum of observed effort divided by the sum of total effort of all fleets reporting that gear. A fleet-year without observer data counts as zero observed effort, so the figure is conservative.

3. Results

3.1 Coverage against the 5% requirement

Longline

Coverage of the entire fleet has remained below the 5% threshold every year except in 2022, when it reached 6.8% (Figure 1). The fall in 2020–21 is related to the limitations imposed by the deployment of observers on board due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the recovery in 2022, the total coverage of longline fleets remained just below the 5% requirement (Figure 1).

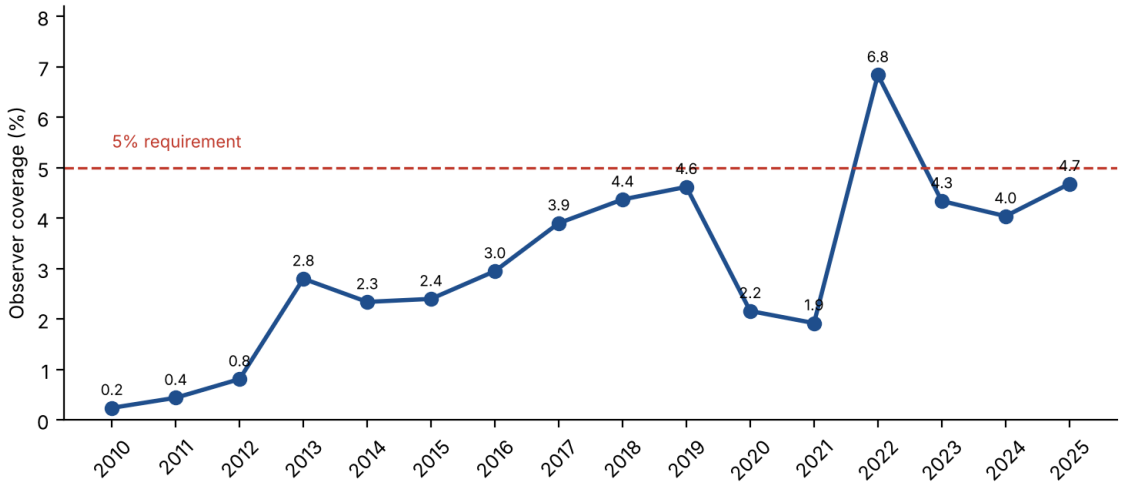


Figure 1: All-fleet longline observer coverage trend (observed / total hooks) for the period 2010–2025. Dashed line: 5% requirement.

In 2025, seven fleets met the requirement: Japan (18.6%), South Africa (18.5%), EU,France (17.0%), Korea (14.4%), Australia (8.7%), EU,Portugal (7.3%) and China (5.3%). Taiwan,China (4.0%) and EU,Spain (3.7%) were below 5%. Five fleets that reported effort (Seychelles, Malaysia, Oman, Mauritius and Tanzania) have no observer data reported. (Figure 2).

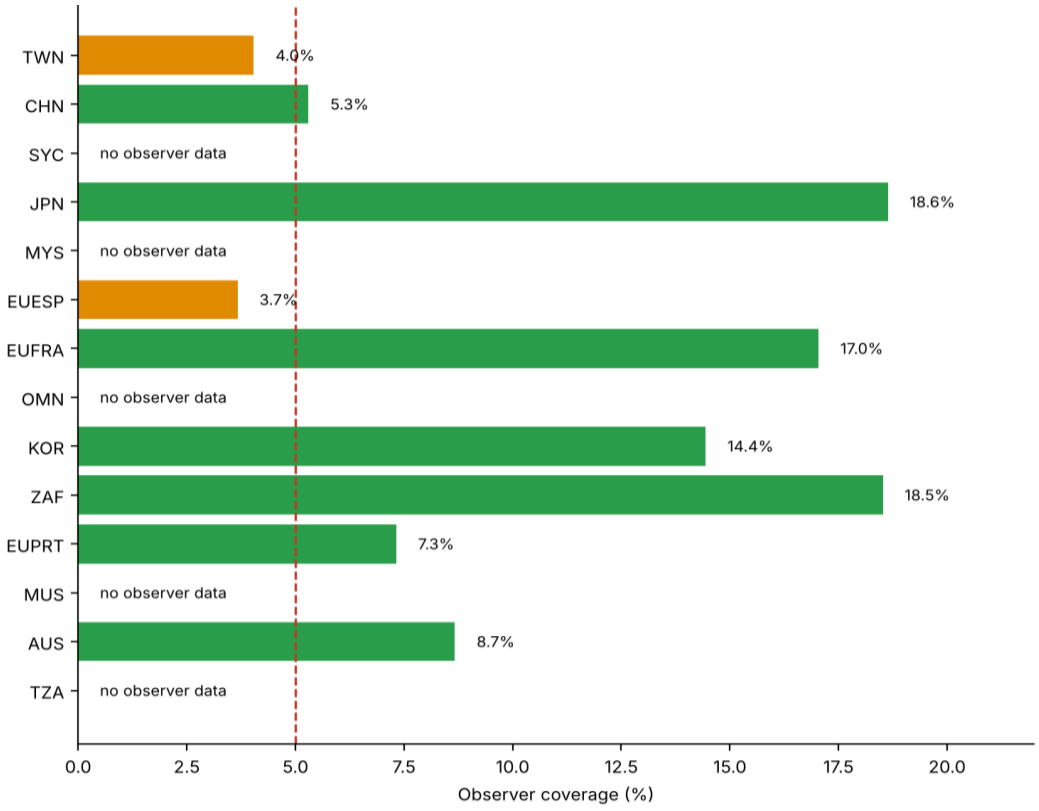


Figure 2: Longline 2025 observer coverage by fleet (hooks). Fleets ordered by total effort.

Purse seine

All-fleet PS coverage, in sets, was above 5% in most of the observed period (Figure 3). For the last year all-fleet coverage was 15.9%, with six of the eight fleets reporting sets met the requirement: Kenya (53.9%), EU,France (51.7%), Tanzania (35.5%), EU,Italy (33.2%), EU,Spain (10.2%) and Seychelles (6.9%). Oman was below (2.7%) and Mauritius has no observer data reported since 2020 (Figure 4).

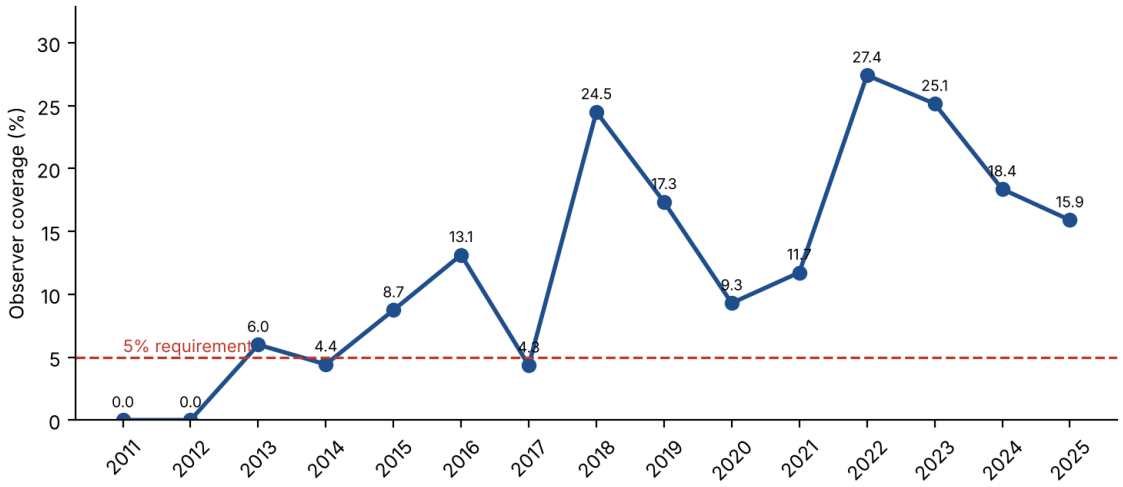


Figure 3: Purse seine: all-fleet observer coverage (observed / total sets), 2010–2025. Dashed line: 5% requirement.

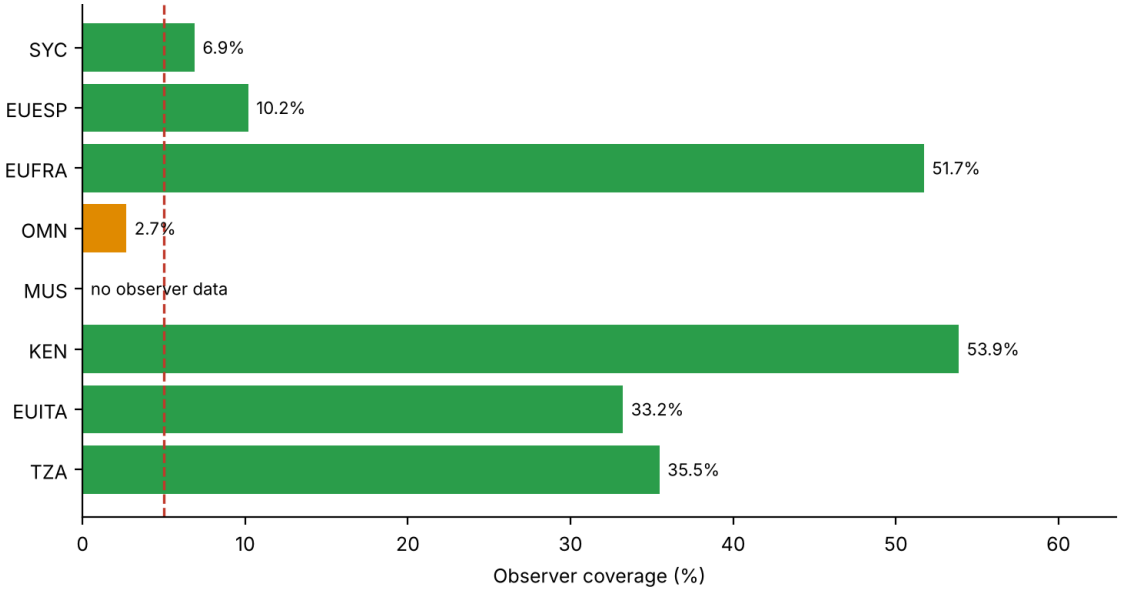


Figure 4. Purse seine 2025: observer coverage by fleet (sets). Fleets ordered by total effort.

5. Conclusion

The reporting of observer's data to the Secretariat is evolving positively, since 2022 the number of fleets reporting operation-level data using the agreed IOTC format increased from two to seven in longline and from one to four in purse seine between. In 2025, seven of fourteen longline fleets and six of eight purse seine fleets reported coverage at or above 5%.

7. References

IOTC Resolution 25/06 On a regional observer scheme.