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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE

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HARMONIZATION OF CATCH DOCUMENTATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document provides an update on recent activities related to the harmonization of catch documentation. The Sub-Committee is invited to report on national policies and experiences related to catch documentation. The Sub-Committee is also invited to give guidance on priority areas for future work by the FAO in this area.

INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this document is to provide an update on recent activities related to the harmonization of catch documentation and to seek guidance from the Sub-Committee on future FAO activities in this area.

BACKGROUND

2. The report of the Ninth Session of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade was presented to the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in March 2005. COFI expressed support for FAO to continue its work on the harmonization of catch documentation. COFI also noted that ICCAT was in the process of reviewing its documentation scheme and that a planned meeting of the tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) in 2007 would also review the issue of documentation schemes. Some Members suggested that FAO take into account the outcome of these events in the further elaboration of its work on catch documentation. The need to clarify the

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terminology “catch documentation scheme” was raised. In respect of this last observation it should be noted that all of the “trade documents”¹ issued by the tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) are entitled “Statistical Document” and the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCAMLR) document is entitled “Dissostichus Catch Document”. It may also be useful to recall the conclusions reached at the Expert Consultation on Catch Certification held in 2002:

“REVIEW OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF CATCH CERTIFICATION AND CATCH DOCUMENTATION

5. *“Trade documentation” refers to schemes established by Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) to require documentation to accompany particular fish and fish products through international trade identifying the origin of the fish for the purpose of ascertaining levels of unreported fishing. Both schemes under consideration have the purpose of combating IUU fishing and in both, documents accompany the fish through trade. Discussion in the meeting revealed that the terms “catch certification,” “catch documentation” and other related terms have not been consistently applied in international practice.*

6. *One key difference between these types of programmes is that **catch certifications** are issued at the point of harvesting and cover all fish to be landed or transhipped. **Trade documents** are issued only with respect to products that enter international trade. Both types of documents contain information relating to the fish in question, although catch certifications contain more comprehensive data.*

7. *Two types of documentation programmes have been already adopted by RFMOs. The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) has adopted a Catch Documentation Scheme for toothfish (*dissostichus* spp.) that is in fact an amalgam of a catch certification and trade documentation programme. The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) and the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) have adopted trade documentation programmes. In addition, the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program, has adopted a programme to certify certain tuna as “dolphin-safe.” The Consultation considered that this programme is significantly different from programmes adopted by the other RFMOs, in that its primary purpose is unrelated to efforts to combat IUU fishing.”²*

Note: Following the publication of this report, a Trade Documentation Programme for Bigeye Tuna was introduced by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC).

3. The report of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade was also presented to the Fourth Meeting of the Regional Fisheries Bodies (the Regional Fisheries Bodies Secretariats Network) in Rome on 14-15 March 2005. The Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs) recalled that they had already called for the harmonization of catch documentation on behalf of their contracting parties. It was recognized that RFBs should collectively contribute to the ongoing debate on catch documentation harmonization. The potential importance of the outcome of the 2007 meeting of tuna RFBs was also emphasised. In general, the RFBs acknowledged that catch documentation harmonization is a complex and highly technical issue and it is also necessary to ensure that schemes are kept simple, achievable and, as far as possible standardized.

¹ The term “trade document” relates to the statistical document of the Tuna RFMOs and the Catch Document Scheme of CCAMLR and the associated re-export certificates. This is because of the dual role of the “Statistical Document Programmes” in that they are used for statistical purposes and also support the compliance regimes by tracking trade flows.

² Report of the Expert Consultation of Regional Fisheries Management Bodies on Harmonization of Catch Certification - La Jolla, United States of America, 9-11 January 2002. FAO Fisheries Report No. 697.

TRADE DOCUMENTS

4. There have been no new introductions of documentation schemes since the previous meeting of the Sub-Committee of Fish Trade in 2004. However it is considered highly likely that the newly established Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) will introduce a new system. Nevertheless amendments to existing schemes and forms have been made since the last compilation of trade documents made by FAO³.

5. A Working Group of ICCAT has conducted a very comprehensive review of the three trade documents they have implemented. (i.e. Atlantic Bluefin Tuna, Atlantic Big eye Tuna and Swordfish) (Fukuoka, Japan April 25 to 27, 2005). Recommendations from this meeting were considered at an ICCAT meeting in November, 2005.

6. This review proposed that developing a system of real-time information would be a key step to deal with the issue of fraudulent documents. The Working Group recommended the improvement of cooperation and information exchange as a priority. As a first step, a list of contact points in member countries and contracting parties should be created and maintained by the Secretariat to facilitate communications regarding these matters. Recognizing that electronic systems are clearly in the future and taking note that some countries may have difficulties in implementing such a system, the Working Group recommended that a pilot project on the use of an electronic system be conducted. It was also noted that live bluefin tuna require a “statistical document” and that the current form may not be adequate to address this. Those parties participating in the catch, transportation and farming of bluefin tuna should provide feedback to the Secretariat regarding areas that may need improvement at the ICCAT annual meeting in 2006.

7. A key development was the proposal that all Contacting Parties (CPC) and Non-Contracting Parties (NCPs) should supply the names and addresses of organizations authorized to issue/validate ICCAT Statistical documents as well as their official seal. The ICCAT Secretariat will include in its database, the date on which each CPC/NCP provided information to the Secretariat on the Institutions/Individuals authorized to issue and validate ICCAT Statistical Documents. It was also noted that improved monitoring of processing facilities would be an important step. The Statistical Document is not applied to bigeye tuna taken by purse-seine vessels, because their catch weight and species composition can be identified only when the catch is being landed at processing factories or ports.

8. The six trade documents that have been implemented by the tuna regional bodies are broadly similar. They cannot however, be regarded as “harmonized”. In Table 1, the documents are compared with their section numbers. It can be seen that all documents request the “Flag State of the Fishing Vessel”, however in the ICCAT swordfish document the vessel name and the method of capture are included under the Description of Fish. However the CCSBT requests the Destination of the Product and the Processing Establishment (if applicable). In considering the harmonization of trade documentation, it should be noted that the trade documents are effectively the responsibility of the flag states and that examples of the national trade documents are submitted by the flag states to the RFBs to ensure that they are in compliance with the RFB recommendations. In this respect it should be noted that during the ICCAT review of the Trade Documents it was recognized that changing the format of the trade documents might create problems at the national levels.

³ FAO Fisheries Circular 986 “Recent developments in Catch Certification and Trade Documentation” Rome FAO 2003.

CATCH DOCUMENTATION SCHEME

9. The CCAMLR Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS) differs significantly from the Trade Documentation schemes and is moving quickly to a system where the Catch Documents are submitted electronically (E-CDS). In relation to the following part of this document, it is important to note that CCAMLR now urges its flag states to verify that the data contained in the Catch Document are consistent with the data reports from VMS.

VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEMS

10. Flag states of the Regional Fisheries Management Bodies, including the regional tuna bodies, are increasingly implementing the use of Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) to monitor the fishing vessels under their control. ICCAT requested its Contracting Parties to implement VMS on all vessels over 24 metres by 1 November 2005. IOTC initiated a Pilot Programme of VMS in 2002 and IATTC initiated a programme in June 2004. CCAMLR has adopted Conservation Measure 10-04 (2005) concerning Automated Satellite linked Vessel Monitoring System. The CCSBT is due to hold its first meeting of the Compliance Committee in October 2006. In addition the new WCPFC is currently considering adding VMS and trade documentation to its MCS functions. These will be flag state systems with the countries reporting to the Regional Fisheries Bodies. To what extent real-time data will be reported to the RFMBs will be variable. NEAFC and NAFO have well established MCS systems whereby vessels transmit regular reports to the flag states, which then report the vessel data to the RFMBs. In addition, these two organizations have systems which facilitate the exchange of information between MCS units and also require vessels to submit entry and exit reports when entering and exiting the Regulatory Area. CCAMLR is also introducing this compliance measure.

11. It should be noted that recent incidents have been discovered where vessels have been transmitting false position reports by VMS. This practice was not unforeseen and was addressed in the FAO Guidelines on VMS⁴. Flag states and RFMBs should ensure that the type of approved on-board transmitting equipment is not susceptible to this type of manipulation. The development of fishing vessels surveillance by satellite mounted Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) combined with VMS position reports will detect this type of activity. Two types of anomaly can occur:

- a) an SAR image is detected without a VMS Report which could indicate an IUU Fishing vessel not reporting and possibly unauthorized.
- b) a VMS report from a specific position where no SAR image is detected which could indicate a fishing vessel misreporting its position.

ELECTRONIC LOGBOOKS

12. As requested by the Committee on Fisheries, an Expert Consultation on Data Formats and Procedures for Monitoring Control and Surveillance was held in Bergen, Norway 25-27th October 2004. The Consultation noted the detailed and well established vessel position and catch reporting formats and standards agreed at an international level in the North Atlantic and used by the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO) and several bilateral agreements in the area. These standards and formats are known as the "North Atlantic Format" (NAF).

13. Similar standards and formats have recently been proposed for adoption by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). The NAF is computer readable and can be imported into databases. The messages are short and compact,

⁴ FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries No. 1 Suppl. 1 Vessel Monitoring Systems. Rome FAO 1998.

which reduces communication costs. The NAF ensures that most critical information required for MCS is effectively transmitted and facilitates the exchange of information between VMS Programmes. The possible evolution of the NAF to Extensive Mark-up Language (XML) which will allow data to be accessed on a web-site was noted. The consultation recognized that, while the key data generated and transmitted by the VMS is with respect to the position of the vessel, the VMS is a communications tool and is increasingly used for the reporting of catches and activities. The consultation noted an evolving and rapidly expanding spectrum of electronic reporting by vessels, ranging from the basic position reports to catch and activity reports to electronic logbooks.

14. Electronic logbook programmes have been used or are under development in many regions and nations around the world including the USA, Japan, Australia, European Union (EU) and others. The experts provided two examples of electronic logbook systems, while noting that these programmes were not necessarily more, or less desirable than other logbook systems now in use or under development:

a) The Secure and Harmonized European Electronic Logbook (SHEEL) is a project financed by the European Commission (EC) and undertaken by several EU Member States, Norway and Iceland, in cooperation with the private sector. The objective is to develop, implement and demonstrate a secure, cost effective and harmonized electronic logbook for European fisheries. Specifically, it is intended that the SHEEL system will be able to (i) define the message type and format, the user interface and the services of the system that will facilitate on board inspections (ii) define all the security measures for ensuring secure data transmissions: and (iii) define the system requirements for transmitting the fisheries report via several communication services.

(b) The Norwegian SATRAP system was developed to assist the vessel master with registration of catch and activity reports. Predefined code lists prevent the user from registering wrong codes. The result of a completed registration becomes a small file in the North Atlantic Format (NAF) that is also encrypted. All messages contain an authenticity code and are saved in an encrypted log. The system requires that the vessel uses an electronic key or “dongle” which is programmed by the Directorate of Fisheries in Norway. The system also gives the ability to confirm whether a message has been sent or not.

COORDINATING WORKING PARTY ON STATISTICS (CWP)

15. The Expert Consultation on Data Formats and Procedures on MCS recommended, *inter alia*, that the Coordinating Working Party on Statistics (CWP) should follow up on the work of the Expert Consultation and that the CWP should:

- (i) Recommend field codes and data formats or database interchange formats, for fishing vessel databases, such as those required under the Compliance Agreement, in order to facilitate the crosschecking in, and exchange among, databases for fishing vessels.
- (ii) recommend standards for the international exchange of information on fishing vessels authorizations.
- (iii) Adopt the UN-LOCODE as a standard for identification of fishing ports in fishery related databases and international exchange of information.
- (iv) recommend definitions for major fisheries violations and the respective codes for violations to facilitate international exchange of information on violations.
- (v) FAO should synthesize available information on electronic logbooks with a view to establishing standard data formats. Where possible fisheries authorities should use existing codes and formats as recommended by the CWP.

- (vi) Ecolabelling certification bodies should use internationally accepted codes as recommended by the CWP.

16. The CWP considered the Report of the Expert Consultation at its 21st Session in Copenhagen Denmark 1- 4th March 2005. It was clarified during the meeting that the role of the CWP does not cover the adoption of standards, but rather to recommend them. Decisions on adoption are made by the individual RFBs and member states. It also agreed that knowledge of the CWP among fisheries experts and officials appears limited and that measures should be taken to increase the profile of the CWP. The CWP was not currently in a position to review or possibly recommend NAF as a standard, particularly since the instrument is not yet fully developed. However the CWP agreed to establish an inter-sessional electronic working group, consisting of interested CWP members and co-ordinated by NAFO. This group would report to the 22nd Session.

17. The CWP felt that it should not be directly involved in MCS or legal matters as such but there are elements of MCS that are of relevance to the work of CWP. Moreover, it was pointed out that, although VMS is currently used mainly for MCS it has great potential for the gathering of real-time fisheries statistics and for fisheries research. The meeting recognized that, in addition to not falling strictly under the CWP mandate, CWP does not have the technical expertise required for dealing with many of the technical MCS matters. The meeting agreed that CWP should take the initiative to contact the MCS Network with the aim to conduct a joint workshop during the inter-sessional period in which the recommendations of the FAO Expert Consultation are reviewed in order to establish if there are recommendations that the MCS Network would like to follow up.

CONCLUSION

18. The use of the term “catch documentation” is ambiguous and should be avoided. The term has only been used by CCMLAR in the “Catch Documentation Scheme” and it is unique in that it has some of the elements of a catch certificate and can be used as a trade document. The term “catch certification” can cover all elements of documentation that is required by the flag state authorities to ensure that its vessels are operating legally and under their control.

19. The system of trade documentation, VMS and other catch reporting systems is moving steadily towards a system where all data will be transmitted electronically. As the flag state is the authority to which the fishing vessels are responsible (by international law), in most cases the report will be made to the flag state and subsequently the information will be supplied to the coastal state or to the RFMB as the case may be. It should be noted that confidentiality is a key issue in catch and position reporting and that in some cases the data submitted by the flag state to RFMBs may be filtered and/or aggregated. As for paper logbooks, it is believed that it will not be possible to develop standardized electronic log books, as the finer detail required for the management of fisheries differ from fishery to fishery. However this does not mean that the various logbooks can be designed so that they are able to be aggregated or synthesised into a common format.

SUGGESTED ACTION

20. The Sub-Committee is invited to report on national policies and experiences related to catch documentation. The Sub-Committee is also invited to give guidance on priority areas for future work by the FAO in this area.

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF THE TUNA BODIES STATISTICAL DOCUMENTS

	ICCAT			IOTC	CCSBT	IATTC	FAO Recommendation
	Bluefin	Bigeye	Swordfish	Bigeye	S Bluefin	Bigeye	Expert Consultation
Date of Implementation	23/1/95	1/1/02	1/1/02	1/7/02	1/6/00	24/6/03	11/1/02
Document Number							
Flag of Country/Fishing entity	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Name of Vessel and Registration	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Method of Capture	3	3	5a	3	3	3	3
Point of Export	4	4	3	4	5	4	4
Area of Catch	5a	5	4	5	7a	5	5
Description of Fish	5	6	5	6	7	6	6
Processing Establishment (if applicable)					4		
Destination of Product					6		
Exporter certification	6	6a	6	7	8	7	7
Government Validation	7	7	7	8	9	8	8
Import Section	8	8	8	nn	nn	nn	

a - indicates that the item is included in the section numbered

nn - indicates that the section exists but is not numbered.