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Progress Report on the IOTC-OFCF Project to improve statistical systems in Indian Ocean coastal countries

THE JOINT IOTC-OFCF PROJECT

1. The IOTC and the Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation of Japan (OFCF) have been working collaboratively since 2002 to assist developing countries of the region to improve their fisheries data collection and statistics. The IOTC-OFCF Project is funded by OFCF and involves the participation of staff from the Secretariat, working in conjunction with two OFCF experts attached to the Secretariat. A MOU is reviewed and agreed to annually, the latest MOU was signed on 01 March 2005.
2. The project embodies three main principles:
 - The activities undertaken under the project will follow the recommendations of the Commission and its relevant subsidiary bodies: the WPDCS and the Scientific Committee;
 - There will be no direct financial implications for IOTC Member countries.
 - The activities of the project should be directed towards reinforcing the statistical systems of developing countries from the region.
3. The current report covers for the activities of the fourth year (April 2005-March 2006). Continuation of the project is envisaged for up to one additional year at an annual funding level of about US\$500 000.

Priority Areas

4. The Secretariat identified the following four main areas of concern relating to tuna statistics in the region. The fisheries targeted by the project are those that are of sufficient size to influence stock assessments or future management measures, or catch fish at sizes not well represented in other fisheries. However, some of the planned activities will also benefit developing countries in the region that have not been identified by the criteria.
 - **Statistics from Indonesia:** Indonesia is a major tuna-fishing nation in the region. However, the data available from Indonesia is, in general, of uncertain accuracy and incomplete. Of particular concern is the large fleet of fresh-tuna longliners (of < 200 GRT) now under the Indonesian flag. This fleet is known to catch yellowfin, bigeye and southern bluefin tunas, swordfish and sharks but overall the fishery is poorly understood. Catches of other tunas such as skipjack and seerfish species by gears other than longline are also important but not well known.
 - **Improving data collection systems in developing coastal countries:** The collection of high quality fisheries statistics in developing countries is an important prerequisite for further development of their fisheries, and greatly assists in the assessment of the status of tuna stocks by regional bodies such as IOTC. In addition to **Indonesia**, countries participating under this category include **India, Kenya, Oman, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, and Yemen**.
 - **Statistics from gillnet fisheries:** These fisheries operate primarily from Iran, Oman, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and are an important component of the fisheries for tropical tunas, as they catch a range of sizes that are not usually available to other gears during the same seasons and areas.

- **Statistics from new longline and purse seine industrial fisheries:** These fisheries currently operate from Iran, South Africa and Seychelles and are of major importance in terms of the volumes of tropical tunas they catch.

PROGRESS DURING 2005

5. In February, a Regional Workshop on Database Management Systems was held in Seychelles. The main objective of this Workshop was to provide a forum for sharing experiences and ideas about Database Management Systems. Twelve people from four countries (Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Iran and Seychelles) participated in the workshop. The recommendations in the workshop report provide guidelines on the design and implementation of effective Database Management Systems in terms of Database Design, Data Lineage and Data Safety.

6. On 21 April 2005, the third IOTC/OFCF Joint Committee meeting was held in Jakarta. The Joint Committee expressed its support for the work plan proposed for the forth year, in particular for the sampling and training activities. And also continuation of the sampling programs after the termination of the Project and the contents of the comprehensive report on the Project Activities were discussed. The study on these issues will be continued during this year.

7. In 2005, the forth year of the Project, important advances were achieved in the Indonesian sampling programmes through collaboration between the IOTC-OFCF Project, National Indonesian institutions (DGCF¹, RCCF² and RIMF³) and the ACIAR⁴-CSIRO⁵ project. This collaboration resulted in sampling in the main three landing ports and the collection of data on vessel activities by port authorities; thereby greatly improving the information necessary to estimate catches of the large fleet of fresh-tuna longliners.

8. The sampling coverage throughout the year was around 30-40% of the fishing trips, except in Cilacap where coverage is almost 100%. A relatively uniform coverage of the various processing plants was achieved thanks to the cooperation from all the commercial operators in each port.

9. A total of 356 214 fish have been measured as part of the Indonesia sampling programme. With 209 787 fish (21 395 length measurements) collected in Jakarta and 21 496 fish (19 429 length measurements) in Cilacap. This represents a sampling coverage of approximately 30% of the fishing trips for the period January - December 2004. These data will be later combined with those collected at Bena (where 124 931 fish measurements have been recorded with 9 731 length measurements) to obtain estimates of total catch.

10. The forth meeting of the Steering Committee was held in April prior to the IOTC/OFCF Joint Committee meeting. During this meeting, progress reports on sampling activities, terms of reference for the institutions and persons involved in the programme, and current issues were reconfirmed. The successful implementation of activities in Indonesia was highlighted, and it was agreed that the IOTC-OFCF Project would continue to phase out its involvement in Indonesia during 2005-2006, transferring responsibilities to the Indonesian authorities. In the meeting, Indonesian authorities committed to continue the sampling program by themselves after the termination of the program. A plan to achieve this will be provided by the end of this year by Indonesian authorities.

11. In July at the IOTC Working Party on Tropical Tuna (WPTT), Indonesian representatives made a presentation of the results from the multilateral catch monitoring programme (the Indonesia sampling programme) including the catch estimates by Indonesian vessels during 2003-04.

12. The IOTC-OFCF Project continued funding and providing technical assistance for the sampling programme in Phuket, Thailand during 2005. This was implemented through a new MOU between the DOF⁶, IOTC and OFCF signed in May, and will continue until March 2006. A total of 58,159 fish have been sampled for the period January – December 2004.

13. The IOTC-OFCF Project undertook two missions to Thailand to review and enhance the system for collecting data from its purse seine fisheries based on the request made by Thailand authorities. A MOU (between DOF,

¹ Directorate General for Capture Fisheries

² Research Centre for Capture Fisheries

³ Research Institute for Marine Fisheries

⁴ Australian Council for Industrial and Agricultural Research

⁵ Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (Australia)

⁶ Department of Fisheries in Thailand

IOTC and OFCF) was signed in October. The programme will be on operation from October 2005 to March 2006. The activities include size frequency sampling of neritic tunas at two sites.

14. The IOTC-OFCF Project continued funding and technical assistance for the sampling programme in Sri Lanka during 2005. This was implemented through a new MOU between the NARA⁷, IOTC and OFCF signed in May, and will continue until March 2006. A total of 728 fish have been weighed and 18 390 fish have been measured for the period January – September 2005 in Sri Lanka. The activities include size frequency sampling of tuna and billfish at three sites by supporting the existing sampling program conducted by NARA in order to improve catch estimates of individual species.

15. Based on the recommendations of the Regional Workshop on Data collection and Statistical Systems (held in March 2004) that emphasised the importance of training for staff involved in the statistical systems, a training exercise for Iranian fisheries samplers is to be conducted in December 2005. A supervisor and two enumerators of the Iranian sampling team will be invited to Seychelles for the training session including practical sampling on board purse seiners.

16. The publication of the User's Manual of FINSS was completed in March 2005 and distribution of the manual is being carried out to relevant institutions.

17. In February and March 2006, a Fact Finding mission is planned to be dispatched to Kenya and Tanzania for compiling country reports together with their counterparts and collect information on those fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species.

18. In November 2005, a participant from each of Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Maldives will attend a "Fishery Resources Management Course (FRMC)" sponsored and organised by OFCF Headquarters, to learn about fishery resource management, the fisheries statistical system used in Japan, and sampling methods. They will also visit fishery related institutions and laboratories under the supervision of NRIFS⁸. This course is not funded by the IOTC-OFCF Project.

PRELIMINARY PLAN OF WORK FOR APRIL 2006 – MARCH 2007

19. Given the importance of the tuna catches by Indonesia vessels, it is expected that the Indonesian project will continue to receive significant support up to December 2006. However, special emphasis will be placed in the gradual transfer of the activities to Indonesian authorities.

20. Similarly, it is also expected that support will continue to be given to the Thailand and Sri Lankan sampling programmes in 2006.

21. The following activities will also be considered in the development of the final work plan: providing specific training for capacity building in selected countries; increasing contact with decision makers (to ensure continuity of programmes that are implemented); enhancing sampling programs and uptake of data collection and processing tools (such as FINSS) as a means for improving the quality and management of fisheries statistics.

22. The final work plan for April 2006 – March 2007 will be determined by IOTC and OFCF in the Joint Committee Meeting to be held in April 2006.

ACTION BY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

23. The Eighth meeting of the IOTC Scientific Committee is invited to comment on the progress of the IOTC-OFCF Project and the 2006-2007 work plan.

⁷ National Aquatic Resources Research & Development Agency

⁸ National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries in Japan