COFI 35 – WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE PROCEDURE

RECEIVED COMMENTS FROM OBSERVERS

A – BASIC INFORMATION

Document Number	COFI/2022/9
Document Title	Developments in global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture
Commenting Observer	The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)
Referred paragraph numbers (if applicable)	-

B – COMMENT RECEIVED

The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) is pleased to be able to provide some written comments under Agenda Item 11, Development in global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture. These comments supplement ACAP's General Statement to COFI 35 by providing more detail on recent updates of ACAP's best practice advice for mitigating the threats to seabirds, particularly albatrosses and petrels, from fisheries operations.

All of ACAP's best practice advice, guidelines and factsheets are available on the ACAP website: https://acap.aq

The most recent meetings of ACAP's Seabird Bycatch Working Group (SBWG10) and Advisory Committee (AC12), held in August-September 2021, reviewed ACAP's best practice advice. Two additional mitigation measures for pelagic longline fisheries were assessed against the six best practice seabird bycatch mitigation criteria adopted by ACAP. These were underwater bait setting devices, specifically the Underwater Bait Setter' (Skadia Technologies) and one additional hook-shielding device, the Hookpod-mini. Following this review, ACAP recommends that the most effective way to reduce seabird bycatch in pelagic longline fisheries is the simultaneous use of weighted branch lines, bird scaring lines and night setting, or use of one of the assessed hook-shielding and underwater bait setting devices

Hook shielding devices are a relatively new method and can be used as a standalone measure. Hook-shielding devices encase the point and barb of baited hooks to prevent seabird attacks during line setting until a prescribed depth is reached (a minimum of 10 metres), or until after a minimum period of immersion (a minimum of 10 minutes). The new hook-shielding device assessed, the Hookpod-mini, is positioned at the hook, encapsulating the barb and point of the hook during setting, and remains attached until it reaches 10 m in depth, when the hook is released. Experimental and operational data are now available concerning the performance of the Hookpod-mini in pelagic longline fisheries in Brazil and New Zealand

Underwater bait setting is also a new method which has been trialled successfully in both commercial and experimental fisheries. Underwater bait setting devices deploy baited hooks at a pre-determined depth immediately at the stern of the vessel. These devices deploy baited hooks individually underwater down a track fitted to the fishing vessel's transom in a vertical manner enclosed in a capsule or similar device to eliminate any visual stimulus for seabirds following the vessel. The capsule is pulled quickly underwater to a predetermined target depth that can be adjusted in response to the dive capabilities of seabirds attending the vessel during line setting to prevent interactions. The Underwater Bait Setter (Skadia Technologies) was assessed based on experimental and operational data from the Australian Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery, the Uruguayan Pelagic Longline Fishery, and the New Zealand Pelagic Longline Fishery. These trials showed promising results, with impressive reductions in seabird bycatch.

AC12 also adopted new **guidelines for observers and for electronic monitoring**, which we consider will be of interest to FAO members.

ACAP's guidance and advice is also available in summary form in our **Factsheets,** which are specifically designed for use on board fishing vessels, and are available in a range of languages. We thank the FAO ABNJ (Common Oceans) Project, Part 1, for assistance with the costs of producing and translating the Factsheets.

Please see ACAP's website for all this material: https://acap.aq