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## COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

### SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE

#### Eleventh Session

Bremen, Germany, 2-6 June 2008

### HARMONIZATION OF CATCH DOCUMENTATION SCHEMES

#### SUMMARY

The paper provides a review of documentation schemes that have been implemented by Regional Fisheries Management Organizations and comments on recent developments related to these documentation schemes. The Sub-Committee is invited to comment on the role FAO could play in the development of new catch documentation schemes, electronic reporting and harmonization of these schemes.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this paper is 1) to provide a review of documentation schemes that have been implemented by Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), and 2) to comment on recent developments related to these documentation schemes.

## REVIEW OF EXISTING DOCUMENTATION SCHEMES

2. The most commonly used documentation schemes are trade documentation schemes and catch documentation schemes.

### DEFINITIONS OF DOCUMENTATION SCHEMES

**Trade documentation scheme (TDS)** - a scheme that documents verifiable information on fish trade from the point of landing through the entire export/import chain to the final destination (usually point of sale).

**Catch documentation scheme (CDS)** - a scheme that combines both catch certification and trade documentation, i.e. it documents verifiable information on fish catch from point of capture to the final destination.

3. At present, the following RFMOs have developed and implemented documentation schemes, most of them being for tuna species:

- International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)
- Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)
- Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)
- Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)
- Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)

4. The schemes by the four Tuna RFMOs are Trade Documentation Schemes (TDS) that document fish trade from the point of export to the final destination. The CCAMLR Catch Documentation Scheme for *Dissostichus* spp. is a Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS) that tracks catch from point of capture, through the value chain, to its final destination.

5. Despite some differences in wording, the main objectives of all RFMO TDS and CDS schemes are to improve catch statistics for stock assessment purposes and to assist RFMOs in combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

6. The First Meeting of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network noted that there have been many positive outcomes resulting from the implementation of catch and trade documentation schemes. These outcomes include<sup>1</sup>:

- fish carrying documents attract a higher price;
- fraudulent and criminal activity being detected; and
- identification of fishing operations and/or trade routes.

7. All RFMOs with TDS and CDS in place have developed and adopted strategies on cooperation with non-Contracting Parties, Entities and Fishing Entities. The implementation of

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<sup>1</sup> FAO, 2007. Report of the first meeting of Regional Fisheries Body Secretariats Network (RSN-I). FAO Fisheries Report No. 837.

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these strategies has resulted in a number of non-Contracting Parties becoming Contracting Parties to the RFMOs. There are also examples of reductions in the level of IUU fishing in the Convention Areas of some RFMOs as a result of these schemes. Such reductions are, however, generally the result of the combined effect of CDS and TDS and complementary monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) and enforcement measures.

8. The major shortcoming of TDS in relation to CDS, is that they do not include catch certification since the fish are only identified and certified at the time when the fish enter international trade<sup>2</sup>.

9. The Tuna RFMOs have also observed that TDS possess limitations in relation to the monitoring of 1) fish caught and landed for domestic consumption, and 2) fish caught and delivered for processing at local canneries. These limitations undermine the ability of TDS to monitor all the fish caught under the purview of the RFMO.

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

10. In relation to documentation schemes, the most significant recent developments by tuna RFMOs relate to the following three categories:

- extension of the current TDS to track catches from the point of capture to the market (i.e. to apply catch certification requirements at the point of capture), which effectively converts TDS to CDS;
- harmonization of catch and trade documentation schemes;
- application of centralized real-time information exchange systems and transition to electronic web-based catch and trade documentation systems.

The next sections will discuss each of these areas in more detail.

### ***TRANSITION FROM TRADE DOCUMENTATION TO CATCH DOCUMENTATION SCHEMES***

11. In the past two years, the tuna RFMOs conducted a thorough review of trade documentation schemes in force, and decided on a number of major improvements and revisions. In terms of developments, a transition from trade documentation to catch documentation schemes is the most important.

12. ICCAT was the first tuna RFMO, in December 2007, to adopt a CDS for bluefin tuna, the Bluefin Tuna Catch Documentation Program<sup>3</sup>. Most of the key elements of the newly adopted ICCAT CDS are consistent with the CCAMLR CDS. The main difference between the schemes is an additional set of ICCAT provisions to track catches and fish products related to tuna farming. As with the CCAMLR CDS, the ICCAT CDS incorporates a requirement for the centralized database to be used for the verification of CDS documents and trade statistics analysis. It also considers development of a centralized electronic web-based system to issue and process documents, i.e. E-CDS.

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<sup>2</sup> Miyake P.M., 2002. Catch certification and the feasibility of harmonizing certifications among Regional Fisheries Management Bodies. FAO, Document FI:HCC/2002/Info 2, FAO Expert Consultation of the Regional Fisheries Management Bodies on the Harmonization of Catch Certification (La Jolla, CA, USA, 9-11 January 2002).

<sup>3</sup> ICCAT, 2007. Recommendations and Resolution adopted at the 2007 Commission Meeting. Recommendation by ICCAT on an ICCAT bluefin tuna catch documentation program \*ADP 01-10) ([www.iccat.int](http://www.iccat.int)).

13. In 2006, the CCSBT adopted a Resolution on the implementation of CDS<sup>4</sup>. The Resolution states that the CCSBT will develop and implement a comprehensive CDS to track catch of SBT from point of capture to the point of first sale, regardless of whether the SBT is traded. The Resolution also states that the development and implementation of a CDS should take into account the need for coordination with other tuna RFMOs, and the practicality of tagging individual fish as a cornerstone of a CDS. In addition, CCSBT agreed that the principles for a CDS should include<sup>5</sup>:

- validation of the catch reporting regime;
- means of identifying and quantifying the catch of non-cooperating states; and
- tools to restrict the trade of non-cooperating non-members.

At a recent Western and Central Pacific Commission (WCPFC) meeting (Guam, USA, 3-7 December 2007), there was a brief discussion on CDS, but no conclusions were reached.

### ***HARMONIZATION OF CATCH AND TRADE DOCUMENTATION***

14. The International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU), adopted by FAO in 2001, calls for the standardization of certification and documentation requirements.

15. The Eighth Session of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (2002) included an item on the feasibility and practicability of harmonizing catch certification used in some regional fisheries management bodies. It was agreed that the issue should be considered by an Expert Consultation in conjunction with RFMOs in order to prepare suitable recommendations to the Sub-Committee. The FAO Expert Consultation was held from 9 to 11 January 2002, in La Jolla, California, United States of America.<sup>6</sup> The Consultation's report was discussed by the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade in 2002 and by COFI in 2003. In 2003, COFI indicated that FAO should continue the work on harmonization.

16. Initially, there were attempts to evaluate whether standardization of existing trade documentation schemes was possible. These attempts were not successful, mainly because they focused primarily on the formats of the trade documents. COFI:FT (2002) concluded that "it is difficult to develop a harmonized document from the plethora of documentation schemes that exist, especially if the objectives, scope and history of those schemes are different".<sup>7</sup>

17. There is little enthusiasm by RFMOs to modify the formats of the trade documents that are currently operational. However, the trade documents that are currently being used have very similar reporting requirements. Rather than attempt to harmonize the documents themselves, it may be possible to harmonize the information collected in the documentation schemes so that data from all TDS and CDS schemes are compatible. While this will not address the concerns of private operators who have to complete a "plethora of documents", it will ensure consistency of data collection. This would enable RFMOs to have consistent data, which could be used for cross-checking.

18. As noted earlier, the effectiveness of documentation schemes is dependent on the implementation of complementary measures. In this regard, FAO is developing a legally-binding

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<sup>4</sup> CCAMLR, 2006. Report of the Twenty-fifth Meeting of the Commission, Hobart, Australia ([www.ccamlr.org](http://www.ccamlr.org)).

<sup>5</sup> CCSBT, 2005. Report of the Twelfth Annual Meeting of the Commission, Narita, Japan 15 October 2005 ([www.ccsbt.org](http://www.ccsbt.org)).

<sup>6</sup> FAO, 2002. Report of the Expert Consultation of the Regional Fisheries Management Bodies on the Harmonization of Catch Certification (La Jolla, CA, USA, 9-11 January 2002). FAO Fisheries Report No. 697.

<sup>7</sup> FAO, 2004. Report of the Ninth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade. Fisheries Report No. 736.

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instrument on Port State measures<sup>8</sup>. There is also increasing demand for information in the retail sector for fish and fish products in respect of their sustainability, origin and legality. This includes the use of eco-labels. Traceability plays an important role in ensuring that safety/quality requirements are met. The information requirements in catch and trade documentation schemes are similar to the emerging requirements in the retail sector and the requirements contained in the binding instrument on Port State measures. These recent developments emphasize the importance in harmonizing the scheme's data requirements, in order to facilitate data-sharing and increase their effectiveness.

### ***ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTATION SCHEMES***

19. The IPOA-IUU, adopted by FAO in 2001 states that, where possible, electronic schemes should be developed for certification and documentation schemes.

20. At this moment, CCAMLR is the only RFMO that has developed and implemented an electronic CDS (E-CDS). The CCAMLR E-CDS:

- is based upon the same principles and regulations as the existing paper-based CDS;
- expedites the processes of document completion, certification and verification by Flag, Port and Market States, thus mitigating the burden imposed by a paper-based CDS on fishing and trade operators, both in terms of time spent and costs;
- maintains a high level of confidentiality and security for issuing and processing of catch documents;
- allows for a real-time cross-checking of each of the documents for catches landed versus the sum of all shipments exported and imported under the same document number; and
- excludes the issue of fraudulent documents and, therefore, substantially limits access to world markets by IUU fishing operators and IUU fish traders.

21. There are cost savings attached to the CCAMLR E-CDS for Flag, Port and Market States that have not yet been quantified. One CCAMLR Member, the United States of America, has switched to E-CDS and now requires that all landings and imports of toothfish to its territory be accompanied with E-CDS catch documents.

22. The application of electronic means to enhance the performance of existing TDS has been discussed by the tuna RFMOs. The quality of "real-time" TDS data exchange depends directly on the nature and quality of data to be submitted to the databases by TDS parties, as well as on the timeliness of their submissions. However, the current range of TDS data to be submitted, and the frequency and timing of their submission varies substantially between tuna RFMOs, with none of them having a 'real-time' requirement for data submission.

23. A step forward in implementing electronic means in support of TDS is the ICCAT electronic Statistical Document Programs (SDP), a pilot program adopted in 2006 (Resolution SDP 06-16). The pilot project relies upon ICCAT parties "to investigate the feasibility of electronic systems to improve statistical document programs, consistent with their national law". Pilot systems "shall contain all of the information elements of the current paper systems and have the ability to produce paper copies upon request of national authorities from exporting and importing parties". From the ICCAT description of the pilot project, it seems the final objective would not be to establish and test a centralized system, but to use "automated links between national catch reporting and customs processing systems".

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<sup>8</sup> FAO, 2007. Report of the Expert Consultation to Draft a Legally-Binding Instrument on Port State Measures (Washington D.C., USA, 4-8 September 2007). FAO Fisheries Report No. 836.

## CONCLUSION

24. Catch documentation schemes that document fish from point of capture to the final destination in the trade chain are becoming the norm in RFMOs. The shift from TDS to CDS schemes was motivated by the recognition that monitoring fish throughout the value chain will avoid some of the limitations observed in TDS schemes.

25. RFMOs are increasingly considering the development and implementation of electronic documentation schemes. Electronic documentation can enhance the performance of existing schemes. At the same time, there are concerns related to the security of data transmission, data management, and cost of implementation. It will be useful to monitor the development and implementation of CDS schemes to ensure their compatibility.

26. The harmonization of documentation schemes has been a long-term objective of FAO and RFMOs. To date, there has been limited commitment to changing the reporting forms developed by individual RFMOs. However, electronic documentation enables sharing and harmonization among documentation schemes without modifying formats of individual schemes, as long as the schemes collect the same set of information.

## ACTION BY COFI:FT

27. The Sub-Committee on Fish Trade may wish to comment on the review of existing documentation schemes and recent development in this area. The Sub-Committee may also wish to consider what role FAO could play in the development of new CDS schemes, electronic reporting, and harmonization of documentation schemes. FAO could, in particular, have a role in ensuring that such schemes are developed in compatible ways.

28. The Sub-Committee may also wish to comment on the suitability of FAO developing harmonized procedures related to the verification and certification of:

- catches;
- landings;
- transshipments;
- export and import operations;
- fish caught for farming purposes; and
- landings for domestic consumption.