

23rd REGIONAL OBSERVER COORDINATORS WORKSHOP

28 February to 3 March 2023

Brisbane, Australia

THEME – Returning to Operations

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS



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Day 1 – Tuesday 28 February 2023

Theme: Returning to Operations

1. OPENING OF MEETING

Chair Mr Uati Tirikai welcomed the FFA Deputy Director-General (DDG), Dr Pio Manoa and SPC FAME Deputy Director Dr Graham Piling and country representatives to the 23rd meeting of the Regional Observer Coordinators Workshop. to the meeting.

Mr Terence Fininiki from Papua New Guinea (PG) opened the meeting with prayer.

FFA DDG and SPC FAME Deputy Director formally provided opening remarks.

On behalf of the FFA Director-General Dr Manumatavai Tupou-Roosen, the FFA DDG Dr Manoa welcomed members of FFA and SPC and acknowledged representatives from WCPFC and PNAO. DDG Manoa reflected on the history that brought us together being how the membership put down the building blocks to support and protect observers. DDG highlighted the regional terms and conditions that safeguard the role of Observers, these terms and conditions are reflected in the laws of our national countries. DDG Manoa acknowledged the loss of a great deal of trained Observers to other jobs and recognised the need to provide adequate training and support as our Members regrow their programs.

DDG further noted the forward moving steps in the regional observer insurance scheme expressing that it is the first time the region has put in a place insurance for all observers. DDG Manoa highlighted that members have begun to change and refocus their national observer programmes and FFA acknowledges that and will continue to ensure Observer safety and training will continue. FFA's role in the WCPFC remains strong to ensure our regional interest in the safety in Observers continues.

The Chair thanked FFA DDG Dr Manoa for his remarks and invited SPC FAME Deputy Director Dr Piling to provide remarks.

Deputy Director Dr Piling reflected on the words of the FFA DDG thanking all those that attended noting the pause in operations the programs had experienced due to the COVID pandemic. Deputy Director Piling acknowledged the importance of observer data which feeds into bio-stock analysis in the region and further expressed the advancements in electronic monitoring (EM) noting that EM will not in any way replace Observers but provide additional coverage on vessels. Deputy Director Piling recognised the varied topics of discussion to be held over the course of the three days and noted these topics are all important to understanding the impact not only on our fish stock but also on the environment.

2. CONDUCT AND MEETING APPROACH

SPC provided a broad overview of the meeting noting time, location, breaks and other general housekeeping matters.

3. APOLOGIES AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

There were no apologies

NR requested the topic of accommodation on board vessels in the agenda. SPC Senior Fisheries Adviser (SFA) noted the requested and agreed to address in Observer Sea Safety Agenda item 16.

SPC's Regional E-Reporting Coordinator (RERC) requested to move Agenda item 22 on Electronic Reporting (ER) and EM due to a clash with other presentations. SPC agreed to amend the schedule to suit.

During proceedings Agenda item 15 was brought forward to day one and followed Agenda item 10.

4. PROGRAMME UPDATES

4.1. Cook Islands Observer Programme (CIOB)

CKOB confirmed they have currently 6 active male observers. Two of these persons are certified Debriefing Mentor Assessors and one PIRFO Trainer. CKOB works in three regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs). Over the year 2022, CKOB maintained 100% coverage in the Indian Ocean, 200% coverage in SPRFMO. In the WCPO doing domestic placements, there was only one placement on the one and only domestic vessel. All trips are on longline (LL) vessels.

CKOB requested refresher training for gear types LL and purse seine (PS) due to no observer placement over the years and the changes in the various RFMO requirements. CKOB has engaged in recent training events including Debriefing workshop and the PIRFO Trainer workshop both in Fiji in late 2022.

Additionally CKOB noted they hold Observer insurance for 2023.

4.2. Federated States of Micronesia Observer Programme (FMOB)

FMOB confirmed they had completed 8 trips (2 national trips and 6 FSMA trips) during 2022. Currently FMOB has 32 active Observers; 4 are certified for cross endorsement, 26 MSC certified, 32 for port sampling. Additionally, FMOB noted they have 26 trained transshipment monitors, 32 EM Analysts, 26 ER, two Debriefers, three Debriefing Mentor and Assessors and two PIRFO Trainers and 1 new Debriefing Assessor. FMOB noted they had not recruited since 2018 however explained more Observer will be taken on in 2023. FMOB identified key training needs including sea safety, EM and transshipment monitoring.

4.3. Fiji Observer Programme (FJOB)

FJOB noted 110 trips on LL and 25 EM trips analysed. Currently FJOB has 31 active observers of those five PIRFO Debriefers and three Debriefing Mentor and Assessors. FJOB has six trainee Debriefers and is regrettably without an Observer trainer. FJOB noted the loss of many

observers to the seasonal labour scheme and reported that FJOB hold insurance cover for Observers as part of their contracts.

4.4. French Polynesia Observer Programme (FPOB)

FPOB reported they currently have six observers on permanent contract this includes two PIRFO Debriefers. FPOB reported 100% use of ER on LL.

4.5. Kiribati Observer Programme (KIOB)

KIOB reported a total 169 Observers (32 Females and 137 males) of this KIOB have nine Debriefers and one Debriefers Assessors and Mentors. During 2022, a total of 26 trips were registered on PS vessels, 16 national trips, 10 Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) trips. KIOB additionally informed the meeting they have one PIRFO Trainer and two Trainee-Trainers. KIOB's training needs include sea safety, Cert IV for Trainers and Assessors.

4.6. Marshall Islands Observer Programme (MHOB)

MHOB reported 9 national and 3 PNA trips. Currently the MHOB have 32 Male active Observers all endorsed in both LL and PS and are Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified. MHOB noted the need for refresher training in MSC, biological ER and EM. MHOB reported they currently have six Debriefers who are also certified Debriefers Mentor and Assessor with five Trainee Debriefers. MHOB has experienced a loss of 13 observers due to the suspension of placement. The programmes also reported that Observers have insurance cover paid for by the Marshall Islands Marine Resource Management Authority (MIMRA)

4.7. Nauru Observer Programme (NROB)

NROB reported they have 24 active observers this include one PIRFO Trainer, two Debriefers and Debriefers Mentor and Assessors and 11 trainee Debriefers. NROB highlighted that all Observers held expired sea safety certificates and due to no training facilities in Nauru funding was sourced from WCPFC to send 12 Observers to Australia for training and revalidation of their certificate. NROB noted the high cost to do this and reiterated that only half of the Observers could attend. NROB report 7 trips were registered in 2022 which were six for PNA and one bilateral. NROB raised the need to address and highlighted that due to the two-year suspension of Observers there is a need for refresher training across all aspects of the work.

SPC SFA noted the comment regarding refresher training and expressed the difficulty in scheduling these for the region just due to the number of people in need of training. SPC SFA expressed the desire to prioritise training needs through this meeting and then schedule accordingly.

4.8. New Caledonia Observer Programme (NCOB)

NCOB explained they are a LL fishery with 16 active observers. In 2022 NCOB registered 25 to 30 trips which amounted to 8% coverage of all trips. NCOB further explained the programme has 10 PIRFO certified Observers, no Debriefers are PIRFO certified. All Observers are trained the Offline Longline Observer app (OLLO) and undertake biological sampling

4.9. Palau Observer Programme (PWOB)

PWOB reported that Observers have not been deployed since 2018 and currently their office is being restructured. PWOB anticipated that after the restructuring it is anticipated that training will be necessary to bring on board new observers and port sampling.

SPC SFA sought clarification on the restructuring. PWOB confirmed the restructuring involves whole of government with fisheries and maritime being affected.

4.10. Papua New Guinea Observer Programme (PGOB)

PGOB reported 240 Observers all trained and using ER through FIMS. PGOB noted the programme has 18 Debriefers, 29 Debriefers Mentor and Assessors, 45 Observers with cross endorsement certification. There were a total 346 trips registered for 2022 (PS trips 323, LL 21, GF 1, RF 1) with 380 trips debriefed. PGOB priority needs include the engagement of more Debriefers, Debriefers Mentor and Assessor and the purchase of additional personal floatation devices (PFDs).

PGOB further noted inhouse training conducted which included business startup training for livelihoods, SOLAS training, FIMS and ER refreshing among others. PGOB highlighted that all 240 Observers were engaged in training throughout the COVID pandemic.

SPC SFA sought clarification on how many Debriefings occurred in 2022. PG confirmed it was 380. SPC also noted that PG retained all Observers during COVID. PG explained that were able to employ Observers in other roles in NFA and provide support and training.

FFA raised a question on the future the PGOB as it had been heard that the programme will be outsourced in the future. PGOB briefly explained that the Board of the PNG National Fisheries Authority (NFA) agreed to outsource the Observer Programme by 2025.

SPC SFA also noted that two PIRFO trainers are no longer providing PIRFO training and questioned if there was a need for additional trainers? PGOB clarified that the two trainers from the National Fisheries College (NFC) continue to provide training to NFA just not through NFC.

4.11. Samoa Observer Programme (WSOB)

WSOB informed participants that they currently have 3 active Observers (2 Female and 1 Male), regrettably there was a loss of 1 Trainee Debriefers due to a move to SPC. WSOB is seeking to train one person as a Debriefers and complete the training for four Trainee Observers noting that they have done online training and now must complete sea safety training. WSOB reported that there are 13 active foreign fishing vessels (FFV) in Samoa, 7 active domestic vessel however no trips were undertaken due to the fact that all observers are full time staff and are tasked to other needs including monitoring transshipment.

The Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) noted that WSOB is not a member of the Regional Observer Programme (ROP) therefore any trips on foreign vessel by WSOB contracted Observers will not be recognised. WSOB was encouraged to seek membership of

the ROP. WCPFC further offered any assistance to enable WSOB to become part of the ROP membership.

WSOB noted the comment from WCPFC and remarked that this had been raised with Executive and WSOB highlighted that they are currently preparing all things needed to become a member.

4.12. Solomon Islands Observer Programme (SBOB)

SBOB confirmed they had suffered a loss of 9 observers due to COVID however the programme remains strong with 62 active observers (2 Females, 60 Males), in 2022 a total of 121 trips were conducted, 72 on PS, 46 on P&L and 3 on LL. SBOB informed the meeting that Observers had been supplied to the PNA Observer Agency (POA) and UST vessels. SBOB noted the programme has five Debriefers, five Debriefers Mentor and Assessors and five Trainee-Debriefers with one PIRFO Trainer and two Trainee-Trainers. SBOB also noted that the programme had provided Advanced Sea Safety training which allowed for the acquisition of a Seaman's book. SBOB requested ER Training, MSC and Debriefers. SBOB further noted ongoing work with FFA on insurance policy expressed the need to ensure Observers are fully prepared for work as the SBOB had experienced many requests for workbooks, In-reach tablets, journals and stationery. SBOB additionally noted trials of the OLLO app and will seek training on the app in the future.

FFA sought clarification on the seaman's book and can Observers log their time as Observers or do they need to perform crew duties. SBOB clarified that Solomon Islands Maritime recognises Observers as seafarers so they can register their time. TV confirmed that both TV and PG observers are able to acquire a seaman's book, under the maritime act any person on a vessel must hold a seaman's book. The Chair and NROB both expressed the value of the book to gain visas if required to disembark in a foreign Port. FJOB noted that Seaman's books cannot be used in Fiji without additional documentation and training, details not required by Observers. MHOB acknowledged the varying recognition across the region and reminded and commented that some Observers hold Official Passport, while a Seaman's book requires a person to be listed as crew the Official Passport allows for similar privileges.

The Chair acknowledged the discussion of the Seaman's book and suggested it be raised at the end of the meeting during Agenda Item 19, Any Other Business.

4.13. Tonga Observer Programme (TOOB)

TOOB reported a total of 8 active observers and total of 49 trips on LL vessel (25 on foreign vessels and 24 domestic). Among the active Observers include two Debriefers whom also are Debriefers Mentor and Assessors, one PIRFO Trainer and one Trainer-Trainee. TOOB reported the loss of 1 observer during COVID.

4.14. Tuvalu Observer Programme (TVOB)

TVOB reported 73 observers, (1 Female and 72 Male) from this group TVOB has 22 Debriefers, nine trainee-Debriefers, 60 MSC certified Observers, 16 cross endorsed, five Debriefers Mentor and Assessors and three PIRFO Trainee-Trainers. In 2022 placements were on carriers for 8 of

transshipment, POA 33 placements, 20 national (4 carriers, 16 PS), 13 by POA. TVOB further noted their attendance to two in-country Observer training events and two sub-regional training activities. TVOB requested refreshing training ER and STCW. TVOB noted their attendance to the CertIV Debreifer and PIRFO Trainers workshop in Nadi. Additionally, TVOB highlighted their 100% ER and E-Debriefing work and request ongoing ER training. TVOB thanked PNG for observer attachments noting that was a valuable learning opportunity. TVOB added they have secured medical insurance for Observers as permanent employees of the Tuvalu government.

4.15. Vanuatu Observer Programme (VUOB)

VUOB reported placements for 24 trips (17 domestic LL and 7 FFV LL), in respect of EM, 283 sets were analysed. VUOB noted that due to COVID they had lost 12 Observers to other employment, they currently have 44 Observers active, of which eight are Debriefers and two are Debriefers Mentor and Assessors. VUOB explained they were not able to achieve 100% coverage on domestic LL due to lack of observers and delay of payments and not all EM trips were analysed due to limited operating systems. VUOB participated in observer training, transshipment training, trainee-training.

4.16. NOAA Observer Programme

NOAA expressed their gratitude to FFA, PNG and Tuvalu for their assistance in returning 11 observers home safely during the pandemic. In reporting NOAA noted a number of staff changes within the organisation including a new observer coordinator, Ridge Cooper. NOAA reported the resumption LL placements in 2022 highlighting that for the 10 vessels actively fishing, 45 trips were monitored, which equated to 8.9% coverage.

NOAA also noted that US PS placements had also recommenced in October 2022 with MRAG providing 15 placements across 20 trips. It was also noted that 13 US licensed PS vessels actively offloading Pago Pago. It was additionally highlighted that 9 Pago Pago based US LL vessels have had Electronic Reporting (ER) equipment (tablets) installed and have moved from paper logbooks to ER.

4.17. SPC Monitoring Programme

SPC SFA informed the meeting that the Observer division had undergone a restructure. The division continues to provide training however roles have changed and new staff have been brought onboard. The meeting noted the SPC Fisheries Monitoring Team maintained engagement with Members and partners throughout the year through online mechanisms and briefly explained that much of the funding for their role and work is funded under the Regional Observer Cost Recovery.

4.18. FFA Observer Programme (TTOB)

FFA Observer Programme Manager (OPM) had made their last placement for the US Trust Treaty (TTOB) Observer in October 2020 and recognised the assistance of NORMA for the Observer's safe repatriation. The FFA informed the meeting that the FFA Secretariat will no longer facilitate placement of Observers on UST vessels. FFA confirmed that PNA Observer

Agency (PNAO) will now manage TTOB logistics. FFA advised they will continue to support all other activities including training, the Observer Insurance Scheme and the Observer Livelihood study. FFA additionally highlighted that all historical Observer data will remain with FFA and encouraged Observer Programme Managers to contact the FFA if any of this data is required.

FFA raised the need for non-PNA members to discuss with PNAO the process of placing Observers onto UST vessels in the future. PNAO confirmed that PNA Members agreed that Observers from non-PNA countries may be placed on UST vessels

FJOB voiced a note of thanks to FFA and NORMA for their assistance in the repatriation of their Observers during the Pandemic.

5. MCSWG25 OUTCOME

FFA OPM presented the outcomes of the MCSWG25. During MCSWG25 FFA stressed ROCW22's recommendation to lift the observer coverage suspension and to implement components of the Observer livelihood study. FFA also invited participants of the MCSWG25 to note the Observer re-deployment plan, and the work done toward the Observer insurance scheme.

Following from this update the FFA OPM requested the participants of ROCW23 to note that the COVID travel requirements continue to remain ie. Vaccinations and PCR tests.

FSM thanked FFA for the updated and noted the challenges faced during redeploying Observers. FSM highlighted that all observers are fully vaccinated and FSM and is pleased to advise redeployment plan is being actioned.

SPC Port Sampling and Observer Training Officer (PSOTO) questioned the livelihood study and its relevance today. FFA acknowledged that now that the suspension has lifted we are now focusing on the redeployment of observers.

Recommendation:

1. Note the outcome of the MCSWG25

6. TWELTH DATA COLLECTION COMMITTEE (DCC12) OUTCOMES

SPC SFA presented the outcomes of the 12th Data Collection Committee. SPC recalled the general history and purpose of the DCC noting that it was focused on standardising the data collected in all monitoring methods used in the region, e.g. logsheets, port sampling and observers. More recently the development of a data collection strategy also included EM standards. The meeting of DCC12 discussed a new DCC strategy as the current strategy was due for review. SPC highlighted key details including the need for the alignment LL

Transshipment data, EM LL data fields and EM LL data quality standards. SPC further noted that there was a call from WCPFC ERandEMWG5 to develop an at-sea data collection, verification and monitoring CMM. Additionally, TCC18 recommended that data fields in transshipment observer forms be adopted from 1 Jan 2023. The meeting also noted the work done by FFA and stakeholders on the LL Standards, Specifications and Procedures (SSPs).

SPC RERC requested a greater representation from countries involved in EM in order to get more collaboration on the necessary data requirements.

Recommendation:

1. Note the outcomes of the DCC12.

7. NEW CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT MEASURES (CMMS) AND OTHER RELEVANT OBSERVER ISSUES FROM WCPFC.

The WCPFC Regional Observer Programme (ROP) Manager presented a summary of new CMMS and other issues from WCPFC. WCPFC highlighted there are reports available each year that come out of TCC and meeting participants were encouraged to access these reports to stay up-to-date. WCPFC request Programme Coordinators to ensure their contact details on the WCPFC website are current and maintained noting that much detail is outdated. The WCPFC noted the redeployment of Observers and also expressed the importance to continue observing safety protocols when placing observers.

WCPFC noted that cross endorsement training was held in Feb 2023. Participants were asked to note that while a small budget is available the training is limited to the availability of the IATTC trainer. It was confirmed that the Intersessional Working Group (IWG)-ROP will be reactivated to consider transshipment data and the compliance monitoring scheme. The IWG-ROP will review the fields in FC-1, FC-2 forms and the relevance of the FC-3. Meeting participants were informed that this data must be sent to the WCPFC or SPC within 90 days.

ROCW23 was also informed of developments by the FAD Management options group including consideration to the definition of bridgeable FADs and the management of drifting FADs particularly retrieval and reporting of lost FADs

WCPFC noted the creation of six (6) new CMMs. It was highlighted that there are two that directly relevant to Observers, these are CMM2022-02 on north pacific sword fish and CMM2022-04 relating to sharks. CMM2022-02 relates to those monitoring in areas North of 20°. CMM2022-04 covered the need to retain the whole shark if landed and procedures if fins are separated. The CMM also notes that as January 2024 wire traces and shark lines on buoys are no longer permitted. Participants were also informed that the CMM requires the release of sharks alive, if not landed as bycatch. It is also requirement that any sharks must be brought alongside the vessel and kept in the water for identification by the observer or EM prior to the line being cut noting that the branchline must be cut as close to the hook as possible or the shark de-hooked.

SPC SFA sought clarification on what type of sharks does this refer to. WCPFC confirmed that this CMM is relevant to all sharks that a vessel does not wish to keep noting that sharks such as Oceanic White Tips and Silky Sharks are protected species whereas other sharks are kept for consumption.

WCPFC continued to inform that it is prohibited to set on a whale shark explaining that in the event one is caught in a net then the Master of the vessel must release it safely. The setting, release and condition must be reported to the relevant authority of the flag State.

WCPFC also noted that Observers may wish to seek vessel information, this is available on the WCPFC RFV online.

WCPFC also informed the meeting of CMM updates relating to seabirds and additional measure for the safe handling and release of cetaceans. WCPFC also remarked that there remain 3 vessels on the IUU list however no others have been added since 2010.

TV questioned where to send the FC forms when complete. WCPFC encouraged TV to send it to either SPC or WCPFC expressing that if a Programme has a system in place to send to one or the other then Coordinators are encouraged to maintain that system.

NR noted the cross endorsement is based on the availability of the instructor and queried the possibility of training someone within our region to deliver this training. WCPFC agreed a regionally available trainer would be preferred to improve training opportunities however it was explained that this has been raised with IATTC before without success however the meeting was informed that WCPFC will raise this again.

NR thanked WCPFC for the response and highlighted they are keen to host another cross-endorsement training. WCPFC noted the request for training and will raise this with the trainer and discuss availability.

8. POAM10 OUTCOME

The Chair of the 10th Meeting of the POA presented to participants the three recommendations from the meeting. These being:

1. Training in asset management focusing on servicing and maintenance of observer safety equipment
2. Development and implementation of training for placements officers and
3. To develop and put to the PNAO a budget for training in ER and to enhance the capacity of Debriefers to analyse the Gen3 for compliance purposes and Observer safety.

SPC SFA noted that there is a PIRFO standard for training Debriefers and sought clarification on the training needs for Debriefers. PG confirmed that this request is to address the need for Debriefers to understand more about the Gen-3 and its role in case development. PG

noted the necessity of a Debriefers to comprehend the information and purpose of the Gen-3 to identify breaches which can trigger the opening of a case file and enforcement action.

SPC thanked PG for this and suggested that it may be possible to incorporate this training into existing training opportunities such as the existing PIRFO Debriefers or the Certificate IV MCS programme. SPC further noted that Gen-3 Critical Incident Analysis training is delivered by FFA.

FFA Compliance Policy Adviser (CPA) supported PG's call for training in the Gen-3 for Debriefers noting that this feeds into the Compliance Monitoring Report which is reviewed annually at TCC. FFA highlighted some of the incidents reported are false-positives which meant that the debriefing process needs to be strengthened. FFA expressed the need for the Debriefers to determine if an infringement has been detected and then pass it to the Commission which is used to inform members of cases to be addressed.

NR noted comments from the floor and has agreed that this training has arisen due to the suspension for three years and it is necessary for Debriefers to clearly understanding how the data is used most particularly in respect to alleged offences. This was supported by TV whom highlighted that the training needs to also include other types of offences which may be detected on a trip but not stated on the Gen3 due to its broad nature.

POA acknowledged that the 10th POAM recommendation on debriefing relates to E-Debriefing and PG highlighted gaps that need to be addressed in the PNA case file system.

The Chair thanked participants for the discussion and encouraged Members to talk further with SPC and FFA if any further questions arise or matters need to be addressed further.

9. IMPACT OF THE CONTINUOUS SUSPENSION OF OBSERVER COVERAGE

SPC SFA presented the impact of the long-term suspension of observer coverage. It was stressed that due to the loss of a number of observers and the lack of recent work it is evident that training is necessary and identifying training needs is to be determined. The Observer surveys are a critical source of information in this regard.

SPC highlighted the number of active Observers, active Debriefers and Trainers across the Programmes and noted in all cases that there has been decline in numbers over the years with a significant decrease during COVID. SPC explained the greatest loss of Observers is due to finding other work in their home country or being taken on as part of the various labour schemes on offer around the Pacific.

It was identified that the top three training needs included: Observer Training, ER and Sea Safety. Participants were thanked for providing the data and are encouraged to maintain communications with SPC and provide updates and forward on training requests as necessary.

Recommendation:

1. The ROCW23 discuss the implications of the observer programme survey.

10. COMMENCEMENT OF 100% PS OBSERVER COVERAGE

FFA OPM presented on the redeployment of Observers to meet the 100% observer coverage on PS. FFA highlighted that as of 1 January 2023 the National Observer Programmes (NOPs) are required to resume placements on PS with a goal to achieving 100% coverage as soon as possible.

Participants were reminded of the need to follow COVID protocols to maintain the health and safety of Observers and to remain informed of travel requirements (vaccinations, PCR tests).

SPC SFA asked participants if there were issues being faced in placing observers, any travel restriction impacting the placement of observers. There were no comments from the floor.

11. OBSERVER INSURANCE UPDATE (BROUGHT FORWARD AND PRESENTED ON TUESDAY 28 FEB)

FFA OPM presented an update on the insurance scheme highlighting that the insurance covers a person from departure from their home location to their return and that is designed to fill the gaps that may not be covered by national policies.

FFA informed the meeting that the scheme is funded from underspends in the Observer Programme due to the suspension of Observer placements and the years of border closures. It was confirmed that FFA sought tenders for the supply of insurance services and a contract is currently in development. It is expected that the scheme will be operational by April 2023.

In explaining the scheme, it was noted that claims will be paid within 1 week and the Observer Insurance service provider will recover the compensation paid out from the vessel's P&I insurance. FFA and Members will provide oversight of the scheme via an Insurance Fund Monitoring Group (IFMG)

WCPFC queried how does one join the scheme. FFA confirmed that Members are automatically covered. WCPFC further noted that many countries already have insurance therefore with the FFA scheme it means members will be insured twice. Can members elect to hold private insurance or join the scheme. FFA clarified that this scheme only provides for the minimum coverage and it is to supplement existing coverage paid by members.

NR sought clarification how will the vessel repay the claim. FFA informed members that the Insurance service provider will pay the Observer and then follow up with the vessel to recoup the funds paid. It has been agreed in the HMTc that a vessel must hold insurance which covers the Observer. If the vessel does not hold insurance then they will not be licensed.

NR questioned what happens if the vessel cannot repay the compensation given by the Insurance Scheme. FFA confirmed that suitably qualified persons have been engaged to manage the fund and we have been assured that they will pursue the repayments.

TV shared with the participants that during bilateral arrangements the vessels provides insurance however the Observer is considered part of the crew for this purpose and is therefore only covered for accidents when onboard, this insurance does not cover for events resulting from natural causes or events off the vessel. TV acknowledge the Observer Insurance Scheme covers Observers for these gaps. TVOB highlighted that TV Observers have been provided with personal medical insurance as additional protection and paid for by the Government of Tuvalu.

WCPFC noted that in the beginning of the observer programme there was no insurance, and it was concerning, some thirty years later insurance is now available and in some cases, NOPs have double insurance. This is a great advance in Observer safety.

DAY 2 – WEDNESDAY 1 MARCH 2023

Fiji opened the day with prayer

12. OBSERVER DATA MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Presented by SPC's Observer Data Manager (ODM) participants noted that since 2018 trip numbers remained somewhat steady however when the COVID pandemic was declared there was dramatic drop in trips in first quarter of 2020 which continued into 2022. Further data was presented relating to PS trips again highlighting that placements were high in 2018 (2,306 placements ie. 93% of VMS PS trips) which then dropped dramatically in 2021 down to 294 or 13% of known VMS PS trips. SPC explained that due to the low trip placements during 2021 they took the opportunity to deal with the backlog of data entry.

In the data gathering process SPC highlighted five programmes (FP, NC, TO, FJ and CK) are using OLLO to replace paper forms. SPC expressed the welcomed change to E-Reporting as this facilitates the faster transfer of data from the programmes to SPC and the enhanced to analyse data through tools such as PowerBI. SPC presented the features PowerBI explaining that it allows users to visualise data down to trips, Observers, years / month among other reporting capabilities.

SPC asked participants to consider the questions:

1. Would tools like PowerBI be useful?
2. What data / reports would be useful?
3. Existing national tools?
4. Any skills with PowerBi or other?

Coordinators were kindly asked to respond to the above questions at a later date and to also send to SPC a list of placements performed.

SPC SFA further queried the use of other mechanisms used by Coordinators for reporting?

PG noted the use of High Tail, a cloud based SPC system, for the transfer of data from the PGOB to SPC.

MH questioned SPC's data retention period. SPC noted the forms are scanned and e-copies are not disposed of due to the large storage capacity.

FFA CA remarked that it is pleasing to see that data is being managed because reflect on the past when it had taken over two years for information to make it to the Commission where a case may be raised. FFA noted ER through OLLO and queried receipt of data from the integrated fisheries information management system (iFIMS). SPC confirmed that the data is extracted from iFIMS in PDF which is then sent to and stored by SPC. Currently there is no ability to share the data between the two systems however this is in discussion.

FFA OBPM further sought to clarify if OLLO can be incorporated into iFIMS. SPC noted that OLLO data can be uploaded into TUFMAN2 which is the storage system for data however iFIMS is a separate system which is currently not compatible. FFA further asked about an e-debriefing model for OLLO. SPC confirmed discussion is in progress but it may be incorporated into TUFMAN2. SPC further clarified that TUFMAN2 is a cloud-based programme while OLLO is an app that is downloaded and installed onto a tablet. SPC advised that OLLO is a free App whereas iFIMS is a user pays service.

TV noted the time taken between when the Observer disembarks and when SPC receives the data using the paper-based system and questioned if there are any challenges with the ER process. SPC confirmed that time lag had been drastically reduced due to the immediate ability to upload data from OLLO into TUFMAN2 which then becomes immediately available to SPC. It was again highlighted that data from iFIMS is not integrated so a manual entry must be continued. TV noted that the countries like PG and other PNA members use FIMS and asked how long does it take to get their data, SPC confirmed it can take a few weeks to months due to the manual nature.

13. NON-ENTANGLING AND BIODEGRADABLE FADS

SPC Senior Fisheries Scientist (Fish Aggregating Devices) presented an update on the changes to CMMs in respect FAD construction. SPC informed participants that 30,000 FADs are deployed each year with high rate of loss, it is estimated that approximately 80% have an unknown fate. The impact of FADs includes a high rate of bycatch, juvenile bigeye tuna and entanglement of species of special interest (SSIs).

SPC recognised the value of Observers but noted that much information on FADs is missing that can better inform these reports. Main data sources are observer data and PNA's FAD tracking data.

It was shared with the meeting that a variety of steps have been taken at the Commission to improve the management of FADs these steps include a 3 month FAD closure, limit on the number of FADs that may be deployed and the construction of FADs.

SPC summarised the main aspects of CMM2018-01 and CMM2021-01 noting that non-entangling FADs will become mandatory in the WCPO by 2024. Coordinators were presented with a number of diagrams representing the various FAD designs currently encouraged. These can be accessed via the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) website.

SPC informed participants of the WCPFC's biodegradable FAD trial. The purpose of the trial to test design options and to secure industry support. The 'Jelly FAD' trial used a variety of materials including cotton, bamboo and clay. It is expected that the materials should degrade slowly over 9 to 12 months. In 2023 it is anticipated 180 trial 'Jelly FADs' will be deployed.

SPC asked Coordinators to inform Observers of the need to gather data on FADs to improve the data quality. The data request includes the materials used and the construction, design, the buoy identifying serial number (a mix of letters and number) and any painting marks.

SPC also asked Coordinators to inform their Observers if they will be boarding a vessel involved in the Jelly FAD trial and encourage them report as much detail about all Jelly FADs observed this includes taking as many photos as possible.

The vessels in the trial include FSM-flagged CFC vessels, FCF TW-flagged vessels and the US flagged fleet.

SPC expressed a desire to see data codes on the Gen-5 to include natural materials.

FSM noted SPC's trial of the Jelly FAD and expressed thanks to those from industry for supporting this project. FSM further expressed their ongoing support and assistance during this time.

FJ thanked SPC for the presentation and requested e-copies of the flier advertising and trial.

14. SEA SAFETY TRAINING UPDATE FROM NOPS

Presented by FFA Placement Officer it was reported a funding proposal was developed for the WCPFC special requirement fund (SRF) to sponsor the revalidation of sea safety certificates for 308 Observers across 9 programs.

The meeting noted that only three NOPS had utilized the fund, four NOPS were not yet complete while two NOPS were yet to provide training updates and expenditure reports. FFA expressed the need for this information due to the Secretariats requirement to report back to the Commission about expenditure and implementation

FFA CA further added that proposal was put to the WCPFC SRF in 2021 asked for members, who have not utilised the funds, if challenges had been experienced with implementation noting that it may be possible redirect unspent funds to other Observer needs.

NR sought clarification on the fund used for this training. FFA confirmed that it is the WCPFC SRF, the same fund that was accessed for NROB sea safety training in Australia.

FSM updated the meeting noting that FSMOB concluded their sea safety with national funding via the FSM Fisheries and Maritime Institute (FMI).

PGOB noted the remark of left over funds and questioned can other programme, not included in the original funding request, access this balance. FFA advised that this particular activity is limited to the nine countries that were originally targeted however there are other funds available and FFA can assist in drafting proposals to these sources.

MHOB showed interest in doing the revalidation of sea certificate and regretfully noted that the funds had not been used due to the receipt of World Bank funding which enabled MHOB to train most of their Observers. At this time MHOB needs to look at their current Observer numbers and determine what is required.

CK noted they are predominantly using Observers from other programmes and these persons have been re-trained and their sea safety certificates revalidated. CK also expressed the current challenge of having only two Observers, one being at sea at this time and the other not show an interest in continuing in the role.

TV noted the need to train six Observers and queried the use of the funds for this purpose. FFA confirmed that TV continues to have a small balance available for their use.

15. UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LIVELIHOOD AND SAFETY STUDY

FFA OPM updated the meeting on the activities actioned resulting for the Observer Livelihood and Safety Study. FFA explained that the livelihood study recommended a number of training events to develop and support Observers during the pandemic. FFA expressed their concern over the lack of communication from the programmes as many efforts were to coordinate training and provide support.

FFA encouraged NOPs to revisit the training needs identified in the study and then source suitable education institutions to deliver. The study recommended training in financial literacy training, basic psychology, EM / ER, conflict resolution, asset management, observer refresher and critical incident

Recommendation

1. Encourage NOPs to proactively investigate institutions in respective countries that can deliver the listed training
2. Communicate with the FFA Secretariat for guidance if required

- | |
|---|
| 3. Apply for the funding opportunity (CTTF, PROP, OFMPPII, JPF etc) provided for by the Secretariat and seek technical support from FFA with drafting proposals |
|---|

PG noted that funding proposals must be submitted via the national authority therefore there is a concern funds will not reach the programmes for its intended purpose. FFA recognised that this is an issue faced by most programmes. FFA encourages Coordinators to ensure that programmes follow their national processes to acquire the funds and continue to follow up with delegates within finance or treasury to secure the funds for their programmes.

Following the update, FFA presented the 19 livelihood study recommendations noting the following activities remain outstanding:

Apply for the funding opportunities (CTTF, PROP, OFMPPIII, JPF etc) provided for by the Secretariat and seek technical support from FFA with drafting proposals

1. NOPs to source and facilitate the delivery of identified training in national institutions (sea safety, psychology, EM / ER)
2. Supply Observers with robust safety tracking devices
3. Consideration to the mandatory implementation of cameras on all vessels by 2022
4. Consider the regional coordination of key Observer Programme management functions e.g. asset tracking, emergency response and coordination.
5. Development of a system that allows Observers to report safety incidents while on board vessels.
6. Potential of implement a fixed two-way satellite communication device onboard vessels to improve safety of Observers

The Chair asked the meeting to discuss the issue of accommodation on vessels as raised by NR during the opening.

NR thanked the Chair and welcomed the opportunity to tackle this issue in a regional and collaborative manner. NR noted that for a vessel to be registered on the WCPFC RFV and to apply for licences only papers and photos need to be submitted however physical inspections should be done. NR suggested the potential to issue vessels with a health or livelihood certificate which can only be issued after a physically inspection. NR suggested that this might be done by Placement Officers and raised the issue that with the growing number of women observers there is a need to consider private showers, not shared showers and private rooms.

FFA agreed that this has been ongoing issue and expressed that there is a need for Observers to be accommodated as an Officer not as crew. FFA recommended that Coordinators need to take this up at the national level and to encourage such action to be implemented in to legislation and licencing conditions. FFA highlighted the provisions in the MTCs when adopted into national legislation can be avenue for this change.

MH recalled the 2018 ROCW noting that this has been issue for sometime. MH put forward the suggestion to revise the Placement form to incorporate the accommodation and living conditions in the hope that these are noted at the higher levels and action may be taken. FFA

thanked MH and informed the meeting that in the past a vessel did not meet the standard the Observer did not have to board the vessel.

NR noted this as an ongoing issue and has been acknowledged by those at the highest level but NR stressed that there needs to be an operational solution recommending the potential for Placement Officers to perform the inspection and raise any problems relating to living conditions. NR agreed revising the placement form to identify other conditions is a worth consideration. SPC noted that there are a number of safety related checks and Observers must be encouraged to not board the vessel if the conditions are unfit.

PG agreed with NR that this is an issue and also stressed the need to put something in black and white to ensure that this is actioned at the national level.

TV suggested that living conditions should be included on the Gen-3 so that these become infringements noting that once the vessel sets sail the Observer may be told to move out of the accommodation inspected by Placement Officer and into shared or inferior accommodation below.

PG noted that they have various welfare issues therefore they have adopted compulsory vessel inspections in their licencing conditions, this inspection is necessary for all FFV and domestic vessels The inspections are conducted by an Observer and a Compliance Officer they are done prior to the placement of Observers and can occur in PNG or a foreign Port. Observers boarding in foreign Ports are accompanied by a Placement Officer to ensure the standards are met.

POA highlighted that this has been ongoing issue and have required the vessels under the FSMA to make available a single cabin for Observers. POA also suggested the Good Standing List (GSL) held by FFA, noting this is a check performed by FFA in order to be registered on the GSL

PG remarked that Observer Programmes are competing with the seasonal workers scheme and the conditions on these vessels must be improved in order to retain the existing numbers. Observer safety and living conditions must be addressed for the welfare of our people.

The chair thanked the group for the discussion and suggested that it should continue under agenda item Any other Business.

Recommendation:

1. The welfare and safety concerns of Observers on vessel, noting the increasing female employment
2. A revision of the placement form or the Gen3 form to include living conditions
3. The incorporation of living conditions on the FFA good standing list

16. E-REPORTING STRATEGIES AND IMPLEMENTATIONS

Malo Hosken (SPC) facilitated a session focused on Observer E-Reporting.

The objectives of this session were to understand:

- What apps are available now or planned?
- Who is using the apps, who wants to trial/implement them?
- The training needs for the apps
- This was achieved by a round table where observer coordinators provided an update on their program's use of ER tools status and future needs.

[See Attachment 1](#) *Table 1 PIRFO Observer E-Reporting Status 2023* lists the current status and aspirations of observer programmes with regards to the use of ER apps (LL and PS).

While there is a PNA FIMS e-obs longline app that is on trial with the collaboration of MHOB, other PNA countries are interested in starting OLLO trials.

It is understood that fisheries authorities from PNA countries want their data to be stored in the FIMS system.

A data flow allowing this was therefore proposed (Figure 1). In this example, the data is read-only in T2, and is erased whenever FIMS sends a new version of the trip (debriefed).

David Byrom (MRAG AP) questioned the OLLO>FIMS data flow idea. Was this just an idea or something already agreed?

Malo Hosken (SPC) responded that it's an idea and the first step in potentially developing it further was to present it at ROCW.

For this to happen there is a need to produce a regional standard for LL data exchange, and to use it to exchange LL observer data between FIMS and T2. Which means there is a need for development on both ends. This is possible on SPC's side.

Recommendation:

1.

17. ELECTRONIC MONITORING UPDATE

SPC Fisheries Advisor reported that EM commenced back in 2012 in Solomon Islands and since then seven countries have undertaken trials (SB, FJ, FM, VU, FP, MH and PW).

SPC highlighted the value of EM data recognising its ability to inform stock assessments however also noting that at this stage no EM data has been used.

To date EM work includes the development of EM LL standards, FFA LL EM Policy and SSPs for supporting the EM policy most recently Draft JSON formatted DCC LL EM minimum data fields and data quality control process has been proposed.

SPC explained that EM data quality control is centred on the verification and validation of the data. Methods to assess data quality include the calibration of the camera's, development of training records for EM analysts and the transmission of data (ensuring that it has been quality checked).

For scientific analysis it was recommended that at least 20% of sets in an EM trip is sufficient for SSI and 10% for target species.

Further developments in EM include the use of AI and machine learning for identification of the fishing activity and species landed.

EM training has been specific to vendors Satlink and DOS software. Reviewing software training is also being considered and participants asked to note that the PIRFO Framework includes learning standards in EM which vendors will be requested to apply in their training sessions.

18. PIRFO TRAINING FRAMEWORK UPDATE

FFA Training Adviser (TA) presented an update on the work toward revising the PIRFO Training Framework. FFA explained an audit of the Framework was carried out in 2020 during which it was identified that some units of learning were too wordy, complex or duplicated.

FFA explained that approvals have recently been secured to offer four short term contracts to work through the audit's recommendations and develop a revised set of learning outcomes.

The meeting was informed that advertising for these positions will be done early March and on the PIRFO website.

FJ noted the review of the Training Framework and asked if consideration can be made to the training of Debriefers. FJ expressed concern that many programmes are without Debriefers and are struggling to get people trained and certified due to the lengthy process. SPC SFA agreed the training is long however it is necessary to ensure that Debriefers understand the importance of the role and the data. It is necessary to provide Trainees with adequate training and assessment to ensure their competence. It was further added that being competency based requires practical training and assessment sessions which can take time.

MH noted the important role of Debriefers and the discussions around raising salaries for Observers and Trainers however the Debriefers are equally deserving of such an increase. The meeting noted the remark.

Recommendation

1. Support the review of the PIRFO Training Framework to improve relevance and flexibility
2. Encourage the continue collaboration between FFA, SPC and National Programmes to develop harmonised training standards for Pacific Islands Observers.

19. REGIONAL FISHERIES TRAINING UPDATE

FFA TA provided the meeting with an update on the formal training in the region. The meeting were advised that there were four accredited courses available to fisheries officers in the region these are:

Certificate IV in First Line Management

Certificate IV in Fisheries Enforcement and Compliance

Certificate IV in Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture Compliance

Diploma in Fisheries Investigation and Prosecution

Participants were informed that the Coastal Compliance qualification is currently open for nominations and officers are encouraged to contact Mark Nicholson of SPC to express interest in enrolling. Contact email: markn@spc.int

Additionally FFA advised that an Advance Diploma in Fisheries Management will also be developed in the future with potential topics of learning being data analysis and fisheries management practices. Participants were invited to provide the FFA TA with suggestions of other topics of learning for the course.

Recommendation

1. Support the nomination of Officers to the formal learning programmes offered by FFA and SPC
2. Express the need for Officers awarded scholarships to commit to their studies

20. PIRFO TRAINING UPDATE

SPC Observer Programme Training Coordinator (OPTC) presented an update of the PIRFO training scheduled for the coming year. The meeting was informed Debriefing training is scheduled for KI, Observer training for VU and FJ, MH and FSM have Debriefing and Observer training scheduled noting that all training will be done in collaboration with PIRFO Trainers.

Participants were also advised of Biological Sampling training offered in Noumea April 11 - 19 and informed of planned sub-regional Debriefing Assessor and sub-regional Observer training. SPC also acknowledged requests for training in OLLO, Onboard and Onshore.

In closing the presentation SPC demonstrated the LL 1 and LL 2/3 training in development at FFA hosted on the FFA platform. FFA confirmed that access to this online training is limited to persons nominated by NOPs or advised by SPC. Students to the course must be registered Administrators and then enrolled by course lecturers.

Recommendation:

1. Check with SPC Training Coordinator on their training needs.
2. Welcome comments

21. PFLP FEEDBACK DISCUSSION

FFA TA with SPC SFA presented to the meeting an opportunity to discuss recently completed Confident Communications course delivered under the Pacific Fisheries Leadership Programme (PFLP).

The FFA TA sought to understand participants views on personal development as a result of the training, what was done well, what could be done better and where could participants see other opportunities for this course to be used.

Participants informed SPC and FFA that their personal confidence had grown as a result of the training and it was felt that the location and delivery created a safe environment for learning. FFA noted that participants recommended facilitators to learn more about their audience to enable relatable content and that course could benefit from expanding to two in order to cover both theory and practice. It was noted that this course may be applied in a variety of other courses in the region including leadership courses offered by KOICA and JICA.

Recommendation:

1. Support the inclusion of confident communication training in regional formal qualification programs

DAY 3 – THURSDAY 2 MARCH 2023

Tonga opened the session with prayer

22. ISSUES RELATING OBSERVER REDEPLOYMENT

FFA OPM invited participants to discuss any issues relating to the redeployment of Observers. FFA acknowledged past discussion on the loss of Observers to the labour scheme and work. NR agreed with this loss of observers and queried the potential for the labour scheme to open up for Observers. WCPFC noted that there aren't many Observers on AU vessels due to the

increase in EM however agreed that this is a valuable point that could be raised at the Commission.

NR remarked that one concern is the Observer's salary. NR noted they have one of the highest rates and shore leave they get 100% DSA, observers hold Official passport. It's noted that when NR Observers only wish to work on bilateral arrangements due to the better salaries offered. NR stressed the need for Observers to be recognised as working in an international environment and the salaries must also this international space.

FFA agreed that many Observers are paid too low compared to many programmes outside of the region and advised that a review of salaries has been approved and it will commence in the coming months.

PG acknowledged they pay a high rate to their observers and this is an incentive to retain their observers.

WCPFC informed the meeting that the ROP nor Commission sets the wage rate and this is a national decision and participants are asked to consider their local economy and the salaries offered across the spectrum. However, it is worthwhile recommending that Observer conditions of employment include being paid fairly, paid for travel or sick days and are paid on time. Additionally, it was noted that if Observers are not happy they have rights of appeal under the commission.

SB shared recent requests from unemployed or retired Observers to return to the Programme and the SBOB would like support these trained and experienced people however it is recognised many are of an age not fit for onboard vessel work. FFA stressed the need for all Observers to be physically fit noting that some incidents due to poor health may not be covered by insurance. This insurance concern was echoed by FJ and the fact insurance will not cover for pre-existing conditions and it returns to the Programme to explain this to families.

WCPFC and SPC both informed participants that experienced Observers who have reached retirement age or cannot pass a fitness exam to board a vessel are excellent candidates for EM analyst work, Port sampling and biological sampling work.

FJ thanked SPC and FFA for the presentation and requested, FJ asked as a non-PNA member to the PNAO to continue to participate under the UST Observer placement programme, additional FJ expressed a request for CE training to increase opportunities for Observers.

MH thanked the meeting for the discussion and noted lower the pay rates offered by the MHOB and also recognised the various pay rates when an Observer is working across different RFMOs. MHOB commented on the value of Observers working in the waters of the IATTC noting there is no additional incentive.

SB and KI noted their observers on CE trips are not paid explaining the observers is doing two jobs they are gathering data in the WCPO and when they cross over to IATTC waters they do not get paid. WCPFC explained that IATTC does not pay extra for working in their waters, it

was explained that the Observer is paid for their time on the vessel however not for the waters they monitor.

NR noted that working in IATTC is doing extra work and there is no extra payment, additionally NR noted that EM Analysts are paid more than Observers as other roles within PIRFO however in terms of work and added risk Observers are deserving of an increase in salaries.

MRAG noted that they pay extra money for a range of jobs that involve experienced observers undertaking additional roles. MRAG explained that it may be possible to consider a raise of payment with the American Tuna-Boat Association (ATA).

In concluding remark FJ noted they had developed a project with DFAT Australia to propose to work with EM countries on the operational aspects of the EM SPs, this was to cover disc exchange, logistics and transshipment and among other processes.

Recommendation:

1. Raise the potential for fisheries monitoring to become part of labor scheme
2. Consider the potential of an international rate for Observers with the aim to improve pay rate for all observers across the region.
3. That all Observer contracts include the need to pay Observers a fair and reasonable rate, travel and sickness benefits and paid on time.

23. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

FFA CA presented on funding opportunities which included WCPFC and FFA providers. WCPFC manage the Japan Trust Fund, Chinese Taipei Trust Fund, Special Requirement Fund (SRF). FFA, holds a grant arrangement between FFA and Australian, UNDP OFMPIO, PEUMP and WB PROPER.

FFA and WCPFC both noted that some funds are limited to specific countries e.g World Bank however other funds such as the SRF are not country specific but there is a requirement for applicants to follow necessary processes. All activities and expenditures must be reported back.

NR highlighted that one possible issue is the need to report the securing and expenditure of funds. NR also questioned the possibility to request funding for resources such tablets for Observers. FFA explained that there are a number of sources including PEUMP and through the FFA / AU grant arrangement. SPC expressed the popularity ER and EM by donors and noted there are opportunities available.

FJ questioned the format for applying for funds within FFA. FFA explained there are project managers responsible for the management of these funds, interested persons may email FFA

directly and connections can be made with the relevant project manager. SB sought clarification on seeking funds through the Commission. FFA confirmed that programmes need to use their Official Contact.

WS and KI queried access to the SRF noting that additional funding is required to train Observers in sea safety. FFA confirmed that the SRF can be used for sea safety training of Observers and proposals may include the cost of enrolment fees and travel. WS further queried the original proposal for training asking if there is potential for compliance officers to also utilise the funds for sea safety training. FFA advised that the primary target is Observers however if the programme lacks the number of observers originally proposed then it can be utilised for other relevant fisheries officers.

PG asked for information regarding which members had benefited from these members. FFA highlighted a report accessible on the WCPFC website.

24. PACIFIC MARINE SPECIMEN BANK

SPC Caroline Sanchez presented an update on the Pacific Marine Specimen Bank

FSM and MH queried the payment of the white tag explaining the experience of two weeks for the finder to receive the reward. SPC noted that payments for the tag are facilitated by MRAG. MH further sought clarification on the payment for biological sample.

SB acknowledged the questions regarding payments and agreed these are concerns and also encouraged Members to continue this collaboration with SPC due to its value to the region

SPC confirmed that Observers are paid 8 US\$ per fish with a maximum of 30 fish sampled per trip. In Port Observers are paid 5 US\$ per fish sampled.

25. PACIFIC TUNA TAGGING PROGRAMME

SPC continued to provide an update on the Pacific Tuna Tagging Programme.

PNAO thanked SPC for the presentation and remarked that a significant number of tags had come into the office and it was noted that the information relating to the tags was not always accurate. PNAO informed the participants that tag numbers are mix of letters and numbers and all of this information must be supplied on the form to be accurate. It was advised that the Debriefing process could pick up these issues.

NR requested training.

26. TRANSHIPMENT MINIMUM DATA STANDARDS

SPC SFA reflected on the historical background of collecting data from transshipments. SPC explained that at this time the DCC have been tasked to look at the data needs and the practicality of gathering this information.

KI noted they are using FC forms on LL carriers and this work is performed by Compliance Officers.

TV explained they are placing Observers on carriers. Observers are trained on the FC forms and being experienced Observers, they are competent in completing the forms. SPC sought to clarify if they are copying the data from the transshipment declaration forms. TV acknowledged yes this is occurring. TV also informed the participants that they have developed debriefing and score sheet forms in order to determine paying Observers.

WCPFC advised that the forms that are being sent on have been well completed.

SPC noted there is a discussion that the FC forms are temporary until such time an APP is developed.

SPC asked MRAG of the practicality of requiring observers to independently verify species. MRAG advised that while the forms are straight forward independent verification would be difficult. It was acknowledged observer transshipment activities is a long exercise.

SPC also noted there are discussions of aligning electronic forms with other forms

PNA noted that in meeting with Members there was a decision to leave out the FC3 due to this refers to the first landing of the. PNAO clarified that they modified the FC3 to be used by the operator at the point of landing.

FFA noted the discussion are evolving on the use of FC3 for use by the operator. FFA is keen to understand if Members are collecting data for FC1 and FC2

WCPFC acknowledged the fact that Observers are copying the declaration forms and after discussion with MRAG A and with a view to Observer independent verification, there may be procedures for identifying processed species.

TV noted in terms of practicality TV observers are monitoring PS and LL transshipment and it is very difficult to monitor in the event if an LL cannot fill the carrier then they might take from the PS. It was also noted that in some instances not all of the catch is transferred.

POA agreed with the difficulties with getting an independent verification of species and have asked an Observer, currently on a trip, to report back on the practicalities of this process.

FFA raised the possibility of training for the four transshipment providers to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the mandatory and optional fields that must be completed and also the time within which the forms must be passed to the Commission.

SPC SFA noted there was limited time and that the programmes should meet to ensure standard processes were being used. Potentially involving MRAG branches that cover transshipments also.

Recommendation:

1. Indicate the data currently collected by transshipment observers.

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Make recommendations regarding the fields to be implemented for observer transshipment monitoring form FC-1 FC-2 and comment of fields in FC-3.3. Standardise processes among the programmes placing transshipment observers |
|--|

27. TRAINING OBSERVER FOR ELASMOBRANCH SAMPLING

SPC SFA presented a report and update on elasmobranch sampling. A shark expert consultant would be hired to provide protocols for sampling and these would be trialled in 2023. This would be funded under Project 109.

There were no discussions.

28. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

28.1. Fastrack PIRFO Debriefers and Trainers and Assessors

FFA acknowledged the request to assist Fiji and Samoa to ensure that Debriefers and Trainers and Assessors are provided with opportunities to become certified.

Samoa shared the need to train up a new Debriefer due to immanent loss of their current Debriefer. SPC acknowledged the need for the certification of Debriefers in WS and FJ. WS sought to clarify on the pre-requisite to enter the Debriefer training and do sea days on other vessels count. SB confirmed that prior to Debriefing training an Observer must have 150 PS sea days or 75 LL sea days and TV clarified that this can be reduced if experience on other vessels has been logged.

28.2. Increased Debriefer's rates

FFA acknowledged this discussion during the meeting and informed participants that this rate is set at the national level and participants are encouraged to discuss this with their executive.

28.3. Observer salary

FFA introduced the discussion of raising the salary for Observers. FFA explained that salary survey will be carried out in 2023.

28.4. NOPs National Cost Recovery

FFA acknowledged Vanuatu's request to FFA for assistance to develop a cost recovery policy. VU confirmed that this work remains in progress.

28.5. Observer retiring age

During discussions the need for Observers to be fit and healthy for deployment was recognised and NOPs are encouraged to implement a health and fitness medical check and referred to the regional medical form. It was also encouraged to use experienced Observers, who are not in a position to work on vessels, to undertake roles in EM analysing and biological sampling.

PG noted that a majority of their Observers are over the age of 40 and would like to propose a redundancy or retirement package for Observers when they retire. FFA noted the request and suggested that PGOB work with PNG's Fisheries Union to address the retirement benefits at the national level.

TV shared their retirement age is 55 years and noted they have some Observers reaching this age. TV explained that all Observers must contribute to the national superannuation fund and the Observer Programme must also contribute a portion for the Observer, this is to ensure a financial package for the Observer on retirement.

FJ thanked the Chair for raising the issue of insurance and FJ welcomes more details relating to the insurance standards most notably the medical insurance company.

28.6. Privatisation of NOPs

The meeting noted that PNG will be privatised in the years to come and private providers.

28.7. Funding Support

Participants were reminded that FFA is available to assist with proposal development if funding is required from either WCPFC or FFA.

28.8. CE Trip Payments

It was noted that many non-PNA countries requested CE training and it was confirmed that there is no additional payment for Observers undertaking CE activities.

WCPFC clarified that the IATTC is not seeking for PIRFO Observers for monitoring duties, it is the UST vessels that requests CE Observers as a way to save time and money in the event they cross over. In the event that an extra payment is to be persuade NOPs are advised that it would be UST vessels that would be responsible for this payment.

28.9. PIRFO Identification Card

NOPs were reminded to send passport style photos of each Observer in order to develop a PIRFO Identification Card.

28.10. PIRFO Trade Mark

FFA updated the meeting that the PIRFO trade mark activity was stopped until such time there was direction from FFC and HOF to undertake this activity. At this time this work remains incomplete.

28.11. National Migration Requirements

PNA requests a formal communique from the Chair of the FFC Ministerial to the various responsible Immigration and Customs Authorities to seek exemption for Observers to enter without visas when performing monitoring duties on a vessel.

Attachment 1

Table 1: PIRFO Observer E-Reporting Status 2023

	Longline	Purse Seine	Equipment	Training provider	Comments
CK	OLLO	n/a	Cf: FFA	SPC	Interested in OLLO trials
FJ	OLLO	n/a	Samsung Active Tab Pro	SPC	Interested in OLLO trials
FM	OLLO	FIMS e-obs PS	Cf: FFA	SPC	Interested in OLLO trials
FP	OLLO	n/a	Samsung Active Tab Pro	SPC	100% implementation OLLO
KI	OLLO	?	Cf: FFA	SPC	Interested in OLLO trials
MH	FIMS e-obs LL	FIMS e-obs PS	Cf: FFA	FIMS/MRAG	FIMS e-obs LL on trial
NC	OLLO		Samsung Active Tab Pro	SPC	100% implementation OLLO
NR	n/a	FIMS e-obs PS	Cf: FFA	FIMS/MRAG	Interested in FIMS e-obs PS trials
PG	OLLO	FIMS e-obs PS	Cf: FFA	FIMS/MRAG	100% implementation on PS - Interested in OLLO trials
PW	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Need to train observers first
SB	OLLO	FIMS e-obs PS	Cf: FFA	SPC	Interested in OLLO trials
TK	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
TO	OLLO	n/a	Samsung Active Tab Pro	SPC	100% implementation OLLO
TV	n/a	FIMS e-obs PS	Cf: FFA	SPC	LL vessels monitored by FJ observers
VU	OLLO	n/a	Cf: FFA	SPC	Interested in OLLO trials
WS	OLLO	n/a	Samsung Active Tab Pro	SPC	Interested in OLLO trials

