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Proposal to use "number of operations" to compute observer coverages for Japanese tuna longline fisheries operated in the Indian Ocean

Japan

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Abstract

Japan proposes to use the "number of operations" to compute the observer coverages for the Japanese tuna longline fisheries operated in the Indian Ocean and Japan also requests to use the official annual coverages rates to be provided by Fisheries Agency of Japan.

Background

Japanese observer program in the Indian Ocean under the IOTC ROS (Regional Observer Scheme) initiated in July 1, 2010 by following IOTC Resolution 11/04. IOTC ROS requested to use "number of hooks" to compute observer coverages of tuna longline fisheries in the initial stage and now requests to use "days-at-sea" which was recommended in the last WPDCS09 (2013).

However, Japan has difficulty to use "days-at-sea" for computing the observer coverage rates by following reasons:

- In order to save observers' expenses, Japan normally utilizes transshipment boats to take observers back to the ports or to bring them to longliners in the fishing grounds. But this will produce lower observer coverage rates if "Days-at-Sea" were used as coverage rates including non-fishing days.

- Main activity of scientific observers is to monitor and collect information on "fishing activities/operations". However, "Days-at-Sea" includes non-fishing days such as cruising between ports and fishing grounds, bad weathers, searching fishing grounds etc.

- In Japanese logbook database, it is impossible to monitor the location of the vessels when they are cruising (not operating). So, if a vessel operated both in IOTC area and another area (e.g. WCPFC) during one fishing trip, "days-at-sea" in IOTC area can't be calculated.

As for the Japanese tuna longline fisheries, Japan Observer Program Committee (JOP) has been using "number of operations" to compute the observer coverages in general because the following reasons:

- "Number of operations" can be easily and accurately computed as they are directly relates to fishing operations and activities;

- "Number of operations" is related to stock assessments, which is one of essential requirements in the observer program, which can be proxy to number of hooks;

- "Number of operations" is more practical and convenient to compute observer coverage rates than number of hooks and days-at-sea, especially in terms of logistics and budgets.

- "Number of operations" is also used in other tuna RFMOs;

- "Number of operations" is the most essential and basic information, thus observers will not miss count to monitor and collect this information, although to count 5% of hooks or Days-at-Sea is more difficult to count and monitor practically.

Proposal

Japan would like to propose to use "number of operations" to compute the observer coverage rates for Japanese tuna longline fisheries as the alternative unit of "Days-at-Sea" recommended by WPDCS09 (2013).

Official coverage rates

Fisheries Agency of Japan will provide the annual official observer coverages from now on and Japan requests IOTC Secretariat to use these observer coverages rates. In this connection, Japan would like to request to use the following official coverage rates based on “number of operations”.

Table Official observer coverage rates of the Japanese tuna longline fisheries based on the number of operations provided by Fisheries Agency of Japan

year	Coverage rate	Basic background statistics (Number of operations covered by observers)/(Total number of operations)
2010 (July 1-)	6.9 %	328/4,770
2011	6.3 %	558/8,804
2012	4.8 %	461/9,635
2013	4.7 %	424/9,094
Average	5.7 %	