



COMMISSION
Twentieth Regular Session
4-8 December 2023
Rarotonga, Cook Islands (Hybrid)

UPDATE AND PROPOSED WORK PRIORITIES FOR THE ER AND EM IWG

WCPFC20-2023-ERandEM IWG-02
16 November 2023

Prepared by the ER and EM IWG Chair

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide a summary of:
 - a. relevant activities that I have undertaken in my time as Chair;
 - b. the key things that I have heard which I believe will be important for the development of an Electronic Monitoring Program (EMP);
 - c. propose ways of working for the IWG; and
 - d. recommended work priorities and a workplan for the IWG for the period 2024-25.

Chair's activities

2. First, I would like to again acknowledge the leadership of the previous Chair, Ms Claire van der Geest and all those who have contributed to the work of this IWG in recent years. Much of my time in recent months has been spent reviewing the great progress made by the group and speaking with many of the participants. I want to thank the Commission for its patience whilst I did this and to determine how best to progress the work of the IWG.
3. In late June 2023 New Zealand provided its nomination¹ for me to take on the role of Chair and in August I reached out² to Members, CNMs and Observers to seek opportunities for informal dialogue and written feedback on the work of the IWG.
4. No formal meetings of the IWG have yet occurred and my interactions to date have been informal. To date I have met (either in person or online) with delegates from:

¹ <https://www.wcpfc.int/doc/circ-2023-52/chair-electronic-reporting-and-electronic-monitoring-intersessional-working-group>

² <https://www.wcpfc.int/doc/circ-2023-65/message-chair-erandem-iwg>

- a. Australia, European Union, Federated States of Micronesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Chinese Taipei, and United States of America;
 - b. International Seafood Sustainability Foundation, Pew Charitable Trust, World Wildlife Fund for Nature;
 - c. Secretariat staff and/or Chairs of EM-related working groups from Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna, International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, Indian Ocean Tuna Commission; and
 - d. The Pacific Community, the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, and Parties to the Nauru Agreement.
5. Across all these conversations, I have made some general observations:
- a. There is near universal acceptance that EM is a very promising tool that is expected to assist with data collection, monitoring and verification;
 - b. There is an expectation that it will be an important tool in the Commissions toolbox, and likely that of many countries for domestic fleets operating in waters under their own jurisdiction;
 - c. CCMs are at very different places in terms of their actual experience with EM, e.g., whilst many CCMs have had small trials or pilot programs, very few have taken the next step of putting in place regulated (legally required) programs; and
 - d. Those who have put in place regulated programs (or are attempting to do so), have very important lessons to share on how to navigate the complexity of the task.
6. These all point to the importance of a staged approach to EM within the WCPFC as flag and coastal States first trial EM technology, before beginning to roll it out as a requirement. I see the role of this IWG to help guide this development and enable the WCPFC to formally utilize the benefits of EM as soon as possible.

Considerations for the development of a WCPFC Electronic Monitoring Programme

7. Very few of these 'considerations' below will be new to those who have been involved in EM, either through this IWG, other RFMO processes, or your own domestic EM program, but by including them here I hope to provide the justification for the proposed work priorities in this area over the next two years. I expect many of these to not be contentious, but others are closer to the edges (and perhaps beyond) of the Terms of Reference for this IWG (<https://meetings.wcpfc.int/node/9069>) and therefore will best be progressed through the Commission itself and its formal subsidiary bodies.
8. **There is a clear recognition within WCPFC of the need to increase the level of data collection, monitoring and verification of some fleets or activities.** SC19 recommended ([SC19 outcomes paragraph 19](#)) that the Commission explore options to expand the observer

coverage on longline vessels through both human and electronic approaches in the WCPO so that the SC can provide better estimates of bycatch levels and other metrics from these fleets. Likewise, TCC19 reaffirmed ([TCC19 outcomes paragraph 20](#)) the importance of increasing monitoring and observer coverage in the longline fishery, including through the implementation of electronic monitoring. Finally, EM is likely to be valuable in the future as the Commission considers the necessary data collection and monitoring requirements to support the implementation of Harvest Strategies (see [WCPFC20 Working paper 14](#)).

9. **Harmonization of some key Standards, Specifications and Procedures (SSPs) across RFMOs and sub-regional arrangements will support a more effective WCPFC EMP.** Many fishing vessels operate in one or more EEZs and on the high seas. Further, there will be vessels that participate in fisheries in different RFMOs – often within the same trip. As noted above, many flag and coastal states are currently trialing EM technology, many with an expectation to make its use mandatory in the future. It will be important for the IWG to identify those SSPs for which harmonization should be sought (for example, those related to hardware requirements), versus those that may be specifically tailored to the WCPFC (e.g., those related to quality assurance processes).
10. **Assurance will be critical regardless of whether a program with a WCPFC EMP is centralized or is run through a national or sub-regional program.** It is expected that within an individual EMP there will be SSPs relating to assurance that the program is meeting expectations. This could relate to hardware performance or the ability of reviewers to detect known events. However, what will be critical to a WCPFC EMP is assurance over the performance of the individual components. At a minimum this would involve ensuring that WCPFC-agreed SSPs were being properly implemented, but for a centralized system one could imagine assurance over value for money as an example. There may be examples that could be drawn upon, for example, in the ROP the WCPFC Secretariat authorizes observer providers which includes an assessment as to whether the ROPs standards are being maintained.
11. **There are many lessons from the WCPFC Regional Observer Program (ROP) and Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) that will be relevant for developing the WCPFC EMP.** In addition to the ROP assurance process described above, there are other examples that should be drawn upon in developing a WCPFC EMP. It is critical that technological and data standards are clearly defined to ensure that the right information can be collected in the right format and stored in a way that ensures that it can be used to progress the work of the WCPFC. Again, there is the recognition of the importance of harmonization, where appropriate, with national and subregional programs.
12. **However, there are some critical areas where the challenges of an EMP will differ to that of the ROP and VMS and these need to be considered.** Information collected from EM differ to that from VMS and the ROP in two important ways: (1) volume; and (2) sensitivity. One minute of footage from a single camera is likely to exceed the volume of VMS and ROP data that might come from a one-month trip on a fishing vessel; and while we might expect

transmission and storage costs to reduce over time, these costs will still be substantial. A fishing vessel is not just a place of work for the crew on fishing vessels, it is also their home. Many countries have recognized how sensitive footage is and the protections that need to be in place to ensure that privacy is protected whilst allowing the footage to be used to fulfill its primary purpose.

- 13. EM can allow collection of some information better than observers, but some things can't be recorded; an EMP should consider the range of data collection and verification tools that are available.** In my opinion observers have been, and will continue to be, a critical tool wherever good fisheries management is occurring, but EM has three generally acceptable advantages over observers: (1) Cameras can be looking at different parts of a fishing vessel at the same time; (2) You can rewind, play, and pause in order to ensure you can confirm what you think you have seen; (3) You can go back in time to review footage (if you collected it), whereas you can't go back in time and place an observer! Conversely, it is equally well understood that it is very difficult to collect biological data from EM. When information needs have been considered in some national programs, and some other RFMOs, consideration is given as to whether EM should complement or supplement human observers. A critical part of those considerations is the range of data collection, monitoring and verification tools that are available to ensure that – whatever decision is made – that all necessary data are collected. This will build on the Commissions current broader taskings in consideration of data needs and gaps to support monitoring and verification.

Proposed ways of working for the ER and EM IWG

- 14. The primary modes of working for this IWG will be electronic and work will be progressed throughout the year both email and virtual meetings.** It is anticipated that a virtual meeting will be scheduled in the period late April / early May to make progress ahead of SC and TCC. I am interested in views as to the potential to have a short in-person in the margins of the TCC. Meetings, either virtual or in-person, will be announced via a circular, whereas when feedback is sought from IWG participants, it will be done through email to those who have registered their interest.
- 15. All material related to the IWG, including 'for information' resources, will be found on the dedicated page within the WCPFC website <https://www.wcpfc.int/erandem-iwg>.** Both formal documents of the working group and other material that I have found useful when considering either the development of the WCPFC EMP or our own national program in New Zealand.
- 16. We will use WCPFC subsidiary bodies to review work progressed through the IWG and these should provide recommendations to the Commission.** Key documents produced by the group will be sent to SC and/or TCC as appropriate to seek views of the broader membership. Examples of the documents that are expected to be produced can be seen in the work plan.

17. **We will draw on expertise from other IWGs, regional agencies and other RFMOs as appropriate.** A WCPFC EMP will touch upon the work of other IWG's, in particular those covering ROP and Transshipment-related matters, and as discussed above, some degree of harmonization across RFMOs is likely to be necessary given that many vessels fish across RFMOs. I also anticipate updates to key data-related documents, including the *Scientific Data to be Provided to the Commission*, and *Rules and Procedures for the Protection, Access to, and Dissemination of Data Compiled by the Commission* amongst others and will expect to draw upon expertise from both the WCPFC Secretariat and the Pacific Community as appropriate.

PROPOSED work priorities for the development of the WCPFC Electronic Monitoring Programme

18. **The following key work areas are proposed below and a schedule for the work is provided as Appendix 1:**

- a. **Identification of priority Standards, Specifications and Procedures and relevant materials (e.g., FFA member CCMs³ and those from other RFMOs).** It is proposed that development of SSPs be staged, i.e., some SSP areas would be prioritized for early work, and others the IWG may decide should be completed later and/or after receiving further guidance from the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. It is anticipated that these initial SSPs will be described in a paper for SC20 and TCC20 in 2023.
- b. **Confirm information needs for longline and longline transshipment (as first priorities), identifying any that cannot, or unlikely to (without significant cost) be achieved using EM.** This will build on the work from Project 93⁴ and include proposals for alternative data collection or verification approaches for those information needs that cannot be addressed using EM. It is anticipated that this assessment will be described in a paper for SC20 and TCC20 in 2023 and include liaison with the IWG-ROP and TS-IWG to ensure alignment.
- c. **Developed proposed assurance and associated SSPs, for a WCPFC EMP that might be centralized or draw upon multiple providers.** As part of (a) above SSPs cover assurance within an EM program (national or subregional), but this body of work will focus on assurance of a EM-provider program as a whole. It is anticipated that these SSPs will be described in a paper for SC20 and TCC20 in 2023.
- d. **Develop an initial draft CMM for a WCPFC EMP– highlighting critical questions that require the direction of the Commission.** The previous Chair identified key elements

³ <https://www.wcpfc.int/doc/wcpfc19-2022-dp08/information-paper-ffa-final-draft-em-ssps-endorsed-interim-guidelines>

⁴ <https://www.wcpfc.int/doc/wcpfc-erandemwg4-2020-04/outcomes-review-commissions-data-needs-and-collection-programmes-sc>

of a CMM for a WCPFC EMP. This will be reviewed and updated based on the progress of the group and feedback from SC20 and TCC20. It is anticipated that this will be provided to WCPFC21.

- e. **Finalise SSPs and propose changes to other WCPFC documents based on feedback from WCPFC21 on the Draft CMM for a WCPFC EMP.** Advice from the Commission will help identify the requirements for the overarching system-level SSPs for a WCPFC EMP. Further, there will be consequential changes to key WCPFC documents, e.g., those relating to data and electronic data standards and/or other Resolutions and CMMs. It is anticipated that this package of documents will be described in papers for SC21 and TCC21 in 2023.
- f. **WCPFC22 – adoption of CMM for WCPFC EMP and associated supporting documents and amendments.**

Appendix 1: Potential schedule of work based off the proposed work priorities

ER and EM Work Plan Priority Tasks	Timing	Mode of working	Outputs
a. Identification of priority Standards, Specifications and Procedures (SSPs)	Dec 23 – Feb 24	Via email	Key materials and priority SSPs identified
	Apr-May 24	Virtual meeting	Review of priority SSPs for inclusion in SC and TCC paper
b. Confirm information needs for longline and longline transshipment	Aug-Sep 24	SC and TCC consideration	Recommendation and advice from these two subsidiary bodies
c. Develop proposed assurance and associated SSPs	Dec 24	WCPFC-21	Agreement and/or feedback on SSPs
d. Develop an initial draft CMM for a WCPFC EMP	TCC	In-person session	Outline of draft CMM
	Oct- Nov 24	Via email	Draft CMM and key questions identified
	Dec 24	WCPFC-21	Feedback on draft CMM
e. Finalise SSPs and propose changes to other WCPFC documents	Dec 24 – Feb 25	Via email	Key activities and timelines for 2025 identified, including any consequential amendments required
	Apr-May 25	Virtual meeting	<i>To be confirmed</i>
	Aug-Sep 25	SC and TCC consideration	<i>To be confirmed</i>
	TCC	In-person session	<i>To be confirmed</i>
	Dec 25	WCPFC-22	Adoption of CMM on a WCPFC EMP 😊