



WCPFC E-Reporting and E-Monitoring Working Group

31 May 2024

Chairs Thoughts on Workshop Agenda Items

Paper by ERandEM WG Chair

Dear ER/EM Intersessional Working Group members,

1. Further to Circular 2024/23 which was sent on the 3 May 2024, the purpose of this note is to follow up on some of the broader matters relevant to the progression of Electronic Monitoring (EM) work within the WCPFC.
2. This note should be considered alongside the Agenda for the 31 May 2024 Workshop of the ER/EM IWG and Circular 2024/23.

Management / Monitoring objectives

Context

3. You will recall from the earlier circular the criticality that I place on monitoring objectives, i.e., these drive the number and position of cameras, the quality of the EM records collected, the timeliness of footage submission and review, and the rate and nature of footage review.
4. I noted that it is important that these are driven by the Commission, and fortunately the Commission has already given us clear direction through various Conservation and Management Measures, and other procedural documents (e.g. WCPFC ROP Minimum Standard Data Fields and Scientific Data to be provided to the Commission) as to the types of information that it needs to have (or have verified).

Chairs thoughts

5. While individual CMMs often focus in on particular data attributes (e.g. the Tropical Tuna CMM implies a focus of verification of retained longline catch of BET) , there was a strong interest from some WG members in ensuring the EM standards reflect the range of potential areas where EM could be called upon to provide either data or verification.
6. This suggests that for longline the starting point could be a benchmarking exercise against the established ROP minimum standard data fields. Many countries and RFMOs have conducted in this type of undertaking and I am aware that currently the FFA and SPC members are undertaking this type of exercise through their Data Coordination Committee.
7. I propose that there are a range of important factors to consider when undertaking this type of exercise.
8. First, simply because a field exists for an observer programme it does not necessary mean that it is necessary for it to be collected through EM. Therefore, I argue that any data field considered a MUST to be collected through EM must stand on its own merits (i.e., assessed against Commission decisions mandating its collection).
9. Second, the cost structures differ between collection of data by observers and EM analysts. For an observer, the fixed cost of deploying them is considered higher than the variable cost of volume of information they collect, therefore observers are often tasked with collecting as much information as their time allows. Alternatively for EM analysts costs a primarily variable, i.e., the more fields collected the higher the costs. Therefore, when considering whether a field should be collected through EM it is important to assess the costs of collecting it, e.g., will it require additional cameras and/or specific camera settings, and what speed of review (and therefore amount of time) would be reasonable to accurately collect the relevant information. In some instances it could be decided that collecting the information is not cost effective, but

in other situations it could be determined that there are most cost effective ways to collect the necessary information.

10. Third, even for information that can be collected, does it need to be collected for all fishing events? For example, many EM programmes collect data for 'all fields' on a small subset of fishing events (e.g. 5-10%), but collect data for critical fields (e.g. for New Zealand this would be protected species interactions) for a larger proportion of fishing events. Therefore, we need to be flexible to whether all fields are collected for all reviewed fishing events.
11. Ultimately a MUST | COULD | SHOULD exercise will help support the Commission in adoption of EM minimum data standards, but it is also something that could benefit from harmonization with other RFMOs. I am interested in Working Group members views on how to progress this.

Status of the EM standards

Context

12. At its 20th session the WCPFC agreed to the following actions:

The Commission noted the Report of the ER&EM WG (WCPFC20-2023-ERandEM-IWG-02) and agreed to adopt the Schedule of Work set out in Appendix 1 of the report (Attachment 5).

The Commission tasked the ER&EM WG to develop a set of interim EM standards for adoption at WCPFC21 in 2024.

The Commission noted the need for cooperation with IATTC in the development of EM procedures for WCPFC.

13. Further, in adopting an updated Tropical Tuna CMM (CMM 2023-01), EM was specifically called out in Table 3 of Attachment 1. The use of EM (or increased observer coverage) could allow some members an increased BET longline catch limit.

Chairs thoughts

14. As the Commission have specified that our task is to develop a set of interim EM standards for adoption, I expect that they will be 'living' standards that could be subject to further review / refinement in the future. For example, this could align with cross-RFMO harmonization processes (see below).
15. In adopting (or considering adopting) EM standards other RFMOs have done so with an expectation that their EM standards would be of use to CCMs (or equivalent) who are testing/trialling/piloting EM technology. This also extends to ensuring that any CCM who wants to provide EM data to support the work of the Commission knows what they need to do (see section on Other Matters).
16. For this reason, I think it is important that our proposed EM Standards are as broad as possible to be most useful to CCMs who are in the early stages of their EM journey. However, the Commission has now also indicated that EM can be used to meet a CCMs obligations under a CMM (albeit that the CCM has to 'opt-in' to this obligation). For this reason, I suggest that it is important that the interim EM standards are BOTH broad AND prioritized.

17. The use of the MUST | SHOULD | COULD framework is an attempt to achieve these dual needs.

Assurance process

Context

18. Development of an assurance process is part of the agreed workplan
19. We received the full range of views regarding my initial thoughts on an assurance process. This was not unexpected and reflects valid positions from ‘starting slowly and learning’ through to ‘start the way we want to proceed’. There was clear support that the ROP audit process provides a useful framework for where the Commission might want to be once EM becomes a core tool in members meeting their obligations.

Chairs thoughts

20. I expect to discuss Appendix 2 from the original circular but suggest that there is value in us separating (1) information that a CCM would provide; from (2) how the Commission might treat that information. are meeting the Commission’s expectations.

Harmonization

Context

21. WCPFC20-2023-ERandEM IWG-02 identified that Harmonization of some key Standards, Specifications and Procedures (SSPs) across RFMOs and sub-regional arrangements will support a more effective WCPFC EM programme. This was specifically picked up by WCPFC20 in its direction regarding cooperation with IATTC.
22. Further, in receiving feedback from ER and EM IWG members there were requests to ensure that our interim EM Standards should not be inconsistent with those from IOTC and ICCAT, with one CCM suggesting that the IOTC materials were a preferred starting point to those I have provided to the Working Group.

Chairs thoughts

23. Harmonization remains critical for fishers, providers, and governments who operate across multiple RFMOs. The most important part of the harmonization process is avoiding EM Standards that are not in disagreement (e.g., something not required by one RFMO is a MUST for another). Perhaps more challenging is that I am aware that the ‘breadth’ of current EM Standards (i.e. what they cover) varies greatly across RFMOs.
24. Last month I was pleased to hear that the ISSF is responsible for a Common Oceans ABNJ II – Tuna project on EM regional standards. One of its activities is to convene and conduct a workshop designed to harmonize EM minimum standards and best practices for EM use in tuna RFMOs. As part of this work, they aim to prepare a “harmonization” analysis of the EM technical standards across RFMOs.

25. This workshop is currently scheduled to occur in mid-December 2024, i.e., after WCPFC21 when the Commission will adopt interim EM standards. I envisage products flowing from this workshop being considered by the ER and EM IWG members in 2025.
26. This does not reduce the importance the work we are undertaking during 2024, I expect that both our 'working drafts' and the more extensive range of SSPs produced by FFA members will contribute strongly to this broader exercise.

Other matters

27. Given the direction provided at WCPFC20, I would be interested in views on whether work to update / create templates, e.g., for Part 1 and Part 2 reports and creating an EM version of the minimum data standards be undertaken in parallel with our work on interim EM standards or consecutively (i.e., after the interim standards have been agreed).