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Implementation report of CMM2022-04 (revised)

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Submitted by JAPAN

Implementation report of CMM2022-04 in accordance with paragraph 11
(This document was submitted for TCC20 and revised for WCPFC21)

1 Overview

Japan recognizes that sharks are important fishery resources and play an important role in the marine ecosystem as higher-level predators. In several regions in Japan where sharks are landed in a decent amount on a constant basis, shark products have been fully utilized. The shark meat is used as a common cooking ingredient, skins are used as materials for high-grade leather products and cooking apparatus, and bones are used for pharmaceutical products. Sharks are used with little waste in Japan.

The Fishery Act and related regulations require distant-water tuna longliners, offshore tuna longliners, and coastal tuna longliners to possess all parts of the shark excepting head, guts and skins, to the point of the first landing.

In addition, the Fishery Act and related regulations require that, in the WCPFC convention area, tuna longliners retain all sharks with fins naturally attached to the carcass. As an exception, however, the Fishery Act and related regulations allow fishermen to take either of alternative measures stipulated in paragraph 9 of CMM2022-04.

The Fisheries Agency confirmed through survey and inspection activities that, in 2023, some Japanese tuna longliners with freezing capacity used one of the alternatives, option (3) on paragraph 9 of CMM2022-04 (i.e. Use of identical tags attached to the shark carcass and its corresponding fins to be stored in a manner easily identified by inspectors etc.) .

This report serves as Japan's report required by paragraph 11 of CMM 2022-04, on the implementation of paragraphs 8 and 9.

2 Compliance and monitoring

The Fishery Act and related regulations require fishermen to report all catch of shark species including incidental catch. Through this report, the Fisheries Agency can identify which fishing vessels caught what species of sharks during their trip.

The Fisheries Agency conducted port inspections into two longliners that employed one of the alternatives at landing ports. During the port inspections, the inspectors checked fins, bodies and the records which show where the fins and their corresponding bodies were stored, and no technical difficulty to check the compliance has so far been recognized, although there were rooms for improvement in the implementation (clearer display of tags etc.).

At the TCC20, some CCMs noted their enforcement difficulties in ensuring the compliance with the alternative measures stipulated in paragraph 9 during their High Sea Boarding Inspection (HSBI) and other surveillance activities.

Japan has also been carrying out a series of HSBIs on various fishing vessels, and sometimes encountered difficulties in checking compliance with certain requirements from conservation and management measures, particularly in confirming actual catch amounts, no-retention of prohibited species, proper handling of marine pollutants on board fishing vessels. In such cases and when necessary, Japan has contacted the flag states to seek further investigation.

It is the due process set forth in the Convention Article 25 as well as CMM 2006-08 that the inspecting CCM contacts the flag CCM for further investigation by reporting a case of “potential” non-compliance detected, in view of ensuring the effectiveness of inspection on board a fishing vessel of a different flag.

We consider that similar steps could be taken when a CCM detects inspection difficulty in fully checking the compliance with paragraph 9 of CMM 2022-04.

