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NATIONAL REPORT

NEW CALEDONIA

Following France's accession to the Honolulu Convention in April 2005, New Caledonia was designated as a participating territory in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. It therefore made the commitment to send the Commission all necessary information concerning management and conservation of migratory resources it shares with the States and Territories of the region and over which it has jurisdiction in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Jurisdiction over management and conservation of biological resources in the EEZ, which was transferred to New Caledonia by France in 2000, leads to the adoption of a fisheries policy in August 2001. This policy is the legal framework for all fishing activity by the local tuna fleet operating in the EEZ.

The measures taken by the Government of New Caledonia within this framework concern three main aspects:

- annual fishing licences ;
- obligation to fill out logsheets including operational data, in return for a fishing licence;
- putting in place a VMS.

Added to these measures are the development of a port sampling programme and a long term scientific observer programme.

Fishing licences for the EEZ:

In addition to existing regulations pertaining to foreign fishing vessels, a text was adopted in 2001 which creates the obligation for each New Caledonian fishing vessel to hold, for the current year, a fishing licence specifying the species it is authorised to catch.

On that basis, since the end of 2001 the number of fishing licences delivered to New Caledonian tuna vessels has evolved as follows:

- 2001: 18 longliners
- 2002: 25 longliners
- 2003: 29 longliners
- 2004: 29 longliners
- 2005: 28 longliners

For 2005, all information concerning the technical characteristics of these vessels was officially sent to the Commission on 7 October 2005.

Logsheets:

Regular presentation of logsheets by those registered owners which hold an annual fishing licence for the EEZ is a mandatory condition for validity and renewal of that licence.

In association with the Provinces and high seas fishermen, the Government of New Caledonia created a “Socio-economic high seas fisheries observatory” in mid 2003. It is in charge of collecting technical, sociological, economic and financial data on the local high seas fishing fleet.

All year round, the Observatory collects the fishing forms from captains or registered owners. These forms are standardised following a model suggested by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). Those companies which possess a fish processing centre also give the results of weighing after each trip. All registered owners participate in this programme and statistical coverage is total since 2003.

The fishing forms are then transmitted to SPC, which uses them for evaluating regional stocks.

VMS:

In 2004, it was decided to develop a VMS for local vessels, which would be put in place from January 2005 onward. The necessary software was installed over the first quarter of the year and from April onward, New Caledonian vessels are tracked thanks to the VMS.

The system is currently being finalised, after which it will be possible to trace Inmarsat-C and Argos beacons. New Caledonia’s regulations allow both types of beacon to be used by New Caledonian vessels operating in the EEZ.

Port sampling and scientific observers:

Since 2002, a data collection programme concerning local tuna fishing, using port sampling of catches when unloading and observation campaigns on board longliners, is funded in the framework of the European PROCFish programme. Observation commenced in June 2002. Sampling in the Port of Nouméa has already been in place for more than 10 years, but PROCFish has allowed a new programme to start in the Port of Koumac where a fleet is based since 2001.

As of August 2005, nearly 1,200 fishing campaigns have been sampled, for an average of 340 samplings each year and a total of over 140,000 fish. The operation consists of measuring the length of the fish, from the upper jaw to the fork of the caudal fin (fork length), in the majority of cases, or from the pectoral fin for marlins. The main aim of these operations is to know the spread of resources by age (length) and also to compare size and weight by species.

Over the same period (February 2002 – August 2005), 34 scientific observation campaigns were carried out. They represent more than 410 days at sea and 250 observed sets. The main aim of these campaigns is to observe all catches made and to measure them when they are

taken on board. The observer also notes diverse characteristics of the fishing method, such as the number of hooks by basket, the number of baskets, the quantity and type of bait used etc. This information is useful for better knowledge of the fishing effort.

Conclusion:

Since adoption of the Honolulu Convention and in light of its participation in the WCPFC, New Caledonia has created regulations and tools which will allow it to fulfil its commitments in terms of management and conservation of those resources covered by the Convention.

This participation should, in return, allow for recognition of New Caledonia's legitimate rights, as a participating territory, to develop its local fishing fleet within the scope of the fisheries policy adopted in 2001.