



Virtual Meeting 1 of HSBI WG

4 March 2025 10:00am – 1:00pm (Pohnpei time)

Chair's Summary Report

Issued: 21 March 2025

Agenda Item 1. Opening of Meeting

1. The first Meeting of the Voluntary HSBI Regional Guides Intersessional Process (HSBI-WG01) was held virtually on 4 March 2025, from 10:00am to 1:00pm Pohnpei time. The Chair of the Voluntary HSBI Regional Guides Intersessional Process, David Power (Australia), called the meeting to order at 10:00am.
2. The Chair referred to the [Commission agreed process for the HSBI WG](#) and outlined that the scope of the working group was intended to complement the implementation of the WCPFC High Seas Boarding and Inspection Scheme. The Chair noted that the Secretariat had provided the administrative arrangements to support the virtual meeting, and there also was a dedicated page on the WCPFC website where information and documentation from the intersessional process will be posted (https://www.wcpfc.int/develop_hsbi-guides).
3. The WG adopted the agenda without amendment (Attachment 1). The Chair expressed appreciation to the various Members who had offered to provide presentations under Agenda Item 4. He confirmed that the list of presentations remained open, and the session was intended to provide an opportunity for sharing of experiences and for questions.
4. Participants in HSBI-WG01 included representatives from Australia, Canada, China, France, Japan, New Zealand, Chinese Taipei and United States, as well as the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency and the Secretariat. A list of participants is provided in Attachment 2.
5. The Chair expressed appreciation to the participants that had registered and attended the virtual meeting. He noted that there were some additional CCMs and observers who had expressed interest in participating in the intersessional process but were not present for HSBI-WG01. The Chair confirmed that CCMs and observers may still submit nominations for inclusion on the distribution list for the intersessional process, and contributions, particularly written submissions, from all interested CCMs and observers would continue to be welcomed throughout the intersessional period.

Agenda Item 2. Introduction and Opening Remarks

6. The Chair invited participants in the HSBI-WG01 to provide any opening remarks.

7. Japan provided opening remarks, expressing appreciation to the Chair and the Secretariat for the preparations and arrangements for HSBI-WG01. Japan noted that it intended to participate in the intersessional process both from the perspective as an inspecting CCM with vessels on the Register of Authorised Inspection Vessels and as a responsible flag State. The guides are to set out practices that should be followed but also are voluntary. Japan suggested there may be a need for the intersessional process to consider including guidance on an indicative prioritization of items for inspection, noting that during at-sea inspections the available time for inspection is limited. Japan requested that the Chair also consider that ample time is needed to consult on the HSBI Guides, including with inspectors who are directly involved in the at-sea inspection activities.
8. The Chair acknowledged the importance of time to consult on the draft Guides. He confirmed that the proposed schedule for the intersessional process and early development of draft Guides should hopefully provide this opportunity. Confirming the scope of the list of guides at HSBI-WG01, would also be important to ensure the workload for the intersessional process is manageable.

Agenda Item 3. Discuss Framework for the List of HSBI Tools

9. The Chair introduced the framework document, which had been distributed on 14 February 2025 ([HSBI-WG01-WP01](#)). The framework was prepared by the Chair to provide the intersessional process with a base point for collecting and determining information for the set of HSBI guides. In considering the proposed approach, the Chair referred participants to the WCPFC21 agreed outcomes, which confirmed that:
 - The HSBI Guides will accommodate, to the extent possible, any existing HSBI guidance shared by CCMs that have established HSBI procedures.
 - The application of the HSBI Guides will be voluntary and apply to HSBI activities within the WCPFC area of competence.
 - The HSBI Guides will set out voluntary procedures for HSBI Inspectors to follow and will include, but are not limited to, data collection and sampling protocols.
 - The development of HSBI Guides will complement the existing HSBI CMM 2008-06 and other related CMMs that impose obligations relevant to HSBI activities (e.g. bycatch mitigation measures). However, under no circumstances shall the development of these guides contravene the provisions of CMM 2006-08 and related CMMs, nor shall it produce a discriminatory effect on members conducting HSBI.
10. The Chair invited participants in the virtual meeting to provide feedback and comments on the draft HSBI guide framework document ([HSBI-WG01-WP01](#)). The Chair noted that the framework includes some introductory language, and currently contains a brief outline for the following six components:
 - i. DNA testing Guide
 - ii. Weight estimation Guide
 - iii. Measuring tool calibration Guide
 - iv. Bycatch mitigation measuring Guide

- v. Photo and Video Evidence Guide
- vi. Standardized Multi-language Questionnaire

11. China provided an opening comment on the need to ensure that evidence collected during inspections can be used by flag CCMs in their own evidential processes. A potential issue was raised regarding the implications of DNA testing results taking time to be completed, should fishing operators be encouraged to record catches as “species unknown” until the results of the DNA testing is received? This suggests there could be a potential for misreporting. There is also a need to update the multilanguage questionnaire to include questions related to the marine pollution CMM, and weighting estimate methodology used by some Inspection CCMs also needs more study.
12. Key points raised in the discussions included:
 - Acknowledging that a priority for fishing operators is to ensure that any handling of their catch maintains the quality of the fish, and it would be important that the development of HSBI guides consider potential impacts of at-sea inspection procedures on fresh vs frozen fish products. For example, fresh products need to be kept in ice-water, so it may be hard to estimate weight.
 - A question as to whether there was the potential for an imbalance between the opportunity that a fishing master and captain has to identify tuna species, compared to the inspectors who are using DNA testing. It was noted that existing reporting obligations are unchanged, and fishers are required to identify and report their catch in their logbooks.
 - Some participants indicated their interest in learning more about some of the approaches used by at-sea Inspectors, such as the DNA testing technique, that are to be presented under Agenda Item 4.
 - Reiterating that the purpose of the intersessional process is to develop voluntary HSBI guides, and that the development of these guides needs input from participants.
 - Confirming that the hosting of this initial virtual session early in the year was intended to provide the opportunity for sharing of information and approaches, and early development of guides so as to ensure adequate time for consultations to take place.
13. Some participants confirmed their interest in reviewing and as needed updating the Standardised Multilanguage Questionnaire, noting that it was developed some time ago. Some CCMs currently use the Questionnaire in guiding fishing operators on what to expect when HSBI inspections occur.
14. Some participants indicated their expectation that the HSBI guides development process will provide an opportunity for sharing experiences and improving understanding of HSBI procedures used by Members, and how they support flag CCMs in ensuring the implementation of CMMs in the high seas. The guides could also give confidence to inspectors in their procedures, potentially limiting subjectivity and bias in the conduct of inspections.
15. The Chair thanked participants for their contributions and encouraged them to identify additional areas to be considered in the framework. He hoped the scope and list of guides could be confirmed under Agenda Item 5.

Agenda Item 4. HSBI Tools Presentations

16. The Chair opened Agenda Item 4, reiterated appreciation for the participants who had prepared presentations and requested that, where possible, they provide copies of the presentations for sharing through the HSBI-WG01 meeting site.

Presentation by Australia: DNA testing in HSBI

17. Emily Lawson (Australia) provided a presentation of Australia's biopsy DNA testing approach used during HSBI. A copy of the presentation was posted to the HSBI-WG01 page [[DNA Sampling during HSBI](#)]

18. Key points raised in the discussions included:

- Noting that the DNA biopsy sampling technique was intended to support the work of at-sea inspectors, and to aid the identification of species of tuna, billfish and sharks as often inspectors are inspecting vessels with catches that are frozen and processed.
- Concerns were raised about potential species misreporting by fishers, particularly between similar tuna species. It was noted that DNA testing enables independent confirmation of species identity.
- It was suggested that the process should include guidance on the transfer of DNA samples for testing, and the qualifications and accreditation of recognized laboratories for DNA testing.
- One CCM noted that their Domestic DNA testing procedures include taking multiple DNA samples of the same fish during at-sea inspections to strengthen the process through enabling re-testing of samples.
- Practical challenges were raised regarding the handling of fish in different conditions (fresh vs. frozen). It was noted that the DNA biopsy tool works effectively on fresh and frozen samples and sampling procedures should ensure that catch is not adversely affected.
- In response to a query, Australia confirmed that the cost of DNA testing of a sample varied between providers, and although currently it is AUD\$20 per sample it had previously been AUD\$200 per sample.
- CCMs noted the need to consider the delay in receiving DNA sampling results and how this related to timelines for inspection reporting and investigations of potential infringements.
- CCMs noted that a key benefit of DNA testing is the ability verify species identification and confirm that operators are reporting correctly in logbooks and not taking prohibited species. This can include cases where frozen tuna look similar, or to verify that prohibited shark species such as silky shark and oceanic white tip are not retained.

19. In response to a question, the Chair clarified that environmental DNA sampling was another technique currently undergoing trial in Australia, such as sampling from water in fish holds to identify what mix of species were present in that area. Australia confirmed their intent that this draft HSBI guide would be based on biopsy sampling only at this stage.

20. In summary, the Chair noted that as a next step, the HSBI Guide for DNA testing would focus on the biopsy sampling technique, and the initial draft prepared by Australia ([HSBI-WG01-DP01](#)) would be updated to take into account the points raised during HSBI-WG01.

Presentation by New Zealand: Logbook quantification and catch estimation

21. Justine Duder (New Zealand) presented an overview of the learning aids and training material produced by New Zealand to support logbook quantification and catch estimation. It was confirmed that most of New Zealand MPI's materials are online training sessions designed as interactive modules to support learning for boarding and inspection, including HSBI. The presenter indicated that it would be possible to provide some materials in pdf or document format if this would be helpful. A copy of the presentation was posted to the HSBI-WG01 page [[Voluntary HSBI Regional Guides - Logsheet Analysis and Catch Quantification & Seabird Mitigation and Tori Line Assessments](#)]

22. Key points raised in the discussions included:

- The importance of the new daily catch and effort reporting requirements CMM (CMM 2022-06) to improve catch reporting by vessels.
- In response to a question, NZ indicated that their experience had been that before HSBI were conducted they had found little logbook reporting and low accuracy, noting CCMs had worked hard to provide quality data for science and management purposes.
- The importance of access to multiple sources of information on the vessel in addition to logbooks that can improve the quality of catch estimations for example, stowage methods, hold schematics, access to holds and equipment. Discussions with the master and crew on how they estimated catch were also very important before assessing how to estimate catch during an inspection.

23. Whether a minimum level of discrepancy between the logbook record and inspectors catch estimate should be included in the HSBI guides? One participant noted that a minimum discrepancy of 10% could be useful to consider. Another participant indicated that the conversations on the vessels about how estimations are done can be useful during at-sea inspections.

- One CCM described an approach to weight estimation applied by IATTC where observers reported differences in catch which required the flag CCM to investigate using, for example reported landed weights.
- The importance of HSBI-WG participants sharing what information they have on the different methodologies which may be available to support the development of the applicable HSBI guide.

24. In summary the Chair noted that as a next step, the development of the Guide for Weight Estimation, would need input from HSBI-WG participants on the available methodologies for

comparing logbooks and catch estimation through inspections, and encouraged participants to share relevant material.

Presentation by New Zealand: Inspection of tori lines

25. Justine Duder (New Zealand) provided a presentation that overviewed the learning aids and training material produced by New Zealand to support bycatch mitigation measure reviews during inspections. A short video was shown¹ indicating how inspectors can complete their review of tori line length and aerial extent during at-sea inspections, which should be used along with the relevant CMM. A copy of the presentation was posted to the HSBI-WG01 page [[Voluntary HSBI Regional Guides - Logsheet Analysis and Catch Quantification & Seabird Mitigation and Tori Line Assessments](#)]

26. Key points raised in the discussions included:

- Following confirmation, there is a guide developed by SPC, titled Longline terminal gear identification guide (<https://coastfish.spc.int/component/content/article/347-longline-terminal-gear-identification-guide>), which covers the correctly identify hooks, swivels, weights, trace lines, and baits used in pelagic longline fishing.
- A participant noted their intent to shortly start testing different lengths for tori lines.
- Noting that information related to how tori line length and aerial extent is measured will need to consider the current WCPFC Seabird CMM, which contains the required specification measures.
- Participants indicating their interest in potentially accessing some of the training guides and the video.

27. In summary the Chair noted that as a next step, the development of the Guide for Bycatch mitigation measuring would need input from HSBI-WG participants in the form of available documentation and texts.

Presentation by Canada: Photography and Video Evidence

28. Dustin De Gagne (Canada) provided a presentation on Canada's Procedures on Photographic and Video Evidence Collection for Fisheries Investigations.

29. A key point raised in the discussions included that the baseline for the guide should be to ensure that the case packages are sufficiently robust for each Flag CCMs' evidentiary standards, potentially necessitating some more detailed discussions, for example on the types, formats and sizes of data and information types.

30. A question was raised about the extent of video recording during Canada's HSBI operations—whether the entire process is recorded or only portions. It was clarified that video is typically

¹ Measuring a tori line video: <https://youtu.be/Wqykl4k6y8c?si=pJkhinWJKuLt15Jd>

used on a targeted basis to capture evidence, rather than continuously throughout the operation.

31. The Secretariat was asked whether it had considered or could consider potentially hosting an online server to support sharing and transfer of large files that are often part of HSBI case packages. One participant noted the importance of evidentiary processes and security being considered in the approach for this type of support from the Secretariat.
32. The Secretariat confirmed that there is currently some capacity to include attachments and URL links as part of the supporting documentation in the online WCPFC CCFS. The Secretariat also confirmed that the development of the WCPFC's CCFS and other website hosted systems are secure and based on individual-based login authentication. The costs of online storage were coming down and the WCPFC's base IT infrastructure was expected to be able to accommodate such a concept to support HSBI Inspections and associated Flag CCM Investigations. It was confirmed that additional details on the specific requirements for the server would assist the Secretariat scoping the feasibility and providing information about potential costs for development and ongoing system support.

33. In summary, the Chair noted as the next step, the development of the Photo and Video Evidence Guide which would need input from HSBI-WG participants in the form of available documentation and texts.

Presentation by France OT: Weight estimation

34. Francois Amaudric du Chaffaut (France) provided a presentation on Catch validation using volumetrics. The presentation included information from a guide on how volumetrics and measurement of the fish hold area on a vessel can be used as a catch validation tool by fisheries officers.
35. Key points raised in the discussions included:
 - A question for other participants as to whether there were other catch estimation techniques
 - Noting that there could be some experience and documentation from outside the Pacific region, in other RFMOs such as NAFO which could support the development of a guide covering catch estimation techniques.
36. The Chair was asked whether there are any additional tools such as infra-red tools for estimations. It was noted that there currently were no presentations on calibration tools and techniques, and one participant confirmed their keen interest in receiving additional information about measuring tool calibration techniques used by fisheries inspectors.

37. In summary the Chair noted that as a next step, the development of the Measuring Tool Calibration Guide would need input from HSBI-WG participants of their guides and information about their methodologies used in at-sea inspections for estimating weights of catch onboard, including measuring tool calibration.

Presentation by Secretariat: Introduction to Standardized Multi-language Questionnaire

38. Eidre Sharp, Deputy Compliance Manager (WCPFC) introduced the current version of Standardized Multi-language Questionnaire ([latest version is 6 February 2009](#)). TCC3 and WCPFC4 (2007) discussed the HSBI Procedures, prepared with reference to similar existing questionnaires and interview with vessel masters. At the time of the development of the questionnaire it was acknowledged that the use of questionnaire need not limit the scope of inspections, nor prevent inspectors from following a national set of procedures using an order that differs from that in the questionnaire. The Secretariat confirmed that recently there has been some feedback collated by the Secretariat and presented in the Annual Report on the WCPFC High Seas Boarding and Inspection Scheme, which includes views from some Members that the HSBI questionnaire may need to be updated to take into consideration an updated list of CMMs. A copy of the presentation was posted to the HSBI-WG01 page [[Background to Standardised Multi-language Questionnaire: Key points from Commission decisions and outcomes](#)].

39. Key points raised in the discussions included:

- Acknowledging that some CCMs had presented views to the Secretariat that there was a need to update the HSBI questionnaire.
- The suggestion that the questionnaire, although adopted in 2009, still provides a workable basis, because it is quite general.
- Noting the risk that including more detailed requirements about CMMs in the questionnaire could mean that annual updates to the questionnaire are required, and this might be challenging for WCPFC to maintain. Some CCMs noted that the questionnaire included pre-boarding interactions and did not currently cover specific CMMs in any detailed way and could be most useful with that focus.
- Indicating that in practice, there could be a need to support safety and notifications to the vessel over VHF radio before the inspection can commence. A suggestion was made about the need for some inspecting authorities to have access to additional available audio files to support initial VHF communications with vessels.
- A suggestion that a question about marine pollution and storage of garbage might be an example of a gap in the current questionnaire.
- One CCM noted that there were also some multilanguage cards that could be an approach for more detailed questioning.

40. In response to a question, Australia providing a short introduction to their application that is used for HSBI inspections since 2023. The Fish Talk APP is developed by AFMA, and it is available via Apple and Android stores – currently has Chinese, Korean, Indonesian, Japanese and Spanish languages. The Fish Talk APP includes predefined questions and an image library to support fishing inspections.

41. In summary the Chair noted that as a next step for participants to consider whether limited amendments to the multilanguage questionnaire were necessary, and to provide drafting suggestions during the intersessional period.

Agenda Item 5. Programme of Work and Next Meeting

42. The Chair requested that all HSBI-WG participants provide text that documents the current procedures and could form the basis of HSBI Guides. The Chair noted that Australia had provided a draft of a guide for DNA ([HSBI-WG01-DP01](#)), and that this draft would be updated taking into consideration the points raised during the HSBI-WG session. The Chair encouraged other participants to consider sharing copies of their procedures in word format, so that they can be used in collating information that will form the basis of each of the HSBI Guides.

43. Some additional summary points that the Chair had noted from the discussions for further consideration included:

- Questionnaire: invite participants and CCMs to share any comments on the questionnaire, including specific text.
- Overarching process around prioritisation: The HSBI-WG can consider relative priorities for each of the HSBI guides at the next meeting along with them process for providing recommendations to TCC.
- Chain of custody and evidentiary requirements may also need to be considered in the development of the HSBI guides, as a minimum standard.

44. The Chair noted that an additional consideration for HSBI in the future, could be to consider some suggestions made during HSBI-WG01 about ways to strengthen processes and thresholds used in flag State investigations of HSBI alleged infringements.

45. The next steps for the Intersessional Process outlined by the Chair included:

- I. HSBI-WG participants collating existing material and submitting it to the Chair and to the Secretariat.
- II. The Secretariat to upload material to WCPFC website (https://www.wcpfc.int/develop_hsbi-guides)
- III. The Chair will aim to send out a Chair's report of the meeting as soon as possible after the meeting.
- IV. All participants are encouraged to share comments and questions via email to progress work ahead of the next virtual meeting.
- V. The Chair will work with participants to draft text for each of guides over the next few months that will be shared in advance of the second virtual meeting.

46. The Chair sought views of participants on the proposed scheduling of a second HSBI-WG meeting in early part of May 2025. One participant indicated a concern with holding a virtual meeting in early May and suggested that good progress could be made over email. The Chair noted his expectation that some progress could be made via email, and the Chair undertook to also consult with participants who had expressed concern, to find a suitable date.
47. In response to a question raised by a participant, the Chair confirmed that as per the WCPFC21 agreed intersessional process, the aim is to develop a set of HSBI guides which can be recommended to the TCC20 for consideration in 2025. It was acknowledged that there could be some value in updates being provided for the awareness of the Northern Committee and Scientific Committee where it is possible to do so. The agreed Intersessional Process had indicated there would be a report back to WCPFC21 in December 2025, and the process would be presenting some HSBI Guides for adoption.

Agenda Item 6. Summary and Close of Meeting

48. The Chair expressed appreciation to all participants and confirmed that additional updates would be provided electronically. The meeting closed at 1.18pm Pohnpei time.



Virtual Meeting 1 of HSBI WG

4 March 2025 10:00 – 13:00 (Pohnpei time)

Adopted Agenda

1. Opening of Meeting

2. Introduction and Opening Remarks

3. Discuss Framework for the List of HSBI Tools

4. HSBI Tools Presentations
 1. Australia: DNA testing in HSBI
 2. New Zealand: Logbook quantification and catch estimation
 3. New Zealand: Inspections of tori lines
 4. Canada: Photography and Video Evidence
 5. France OT: Weight estimation
 6. Secretariat: Introduction and context for the current version of Standardized Multi-language Questionnaire ([latest version is 6 February 2009](#))

5. Programme of Work and Next Meeting

6. Summary and Close of Meeting

**FIRST MEETING OF HSBI WG
ONLINE**

4 March 2025

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