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**COMMENTS ON SC3-GN WP-6: WCPFC DATA STANDARDS FOR REGIONAL  
OBSERVER PROGRAMME**

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**WCPFC-SC3-Informal Small Group/WP-4**

Paper prepared by David Itano

**Subject:** Comments to SC3 GN WP-6: **WCPFC DATA STANDARDS FOR REGIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAMME.**

**From:** David Itano

**Date:** 13 August 2007

Most of my comments will relate to my particular field of expertise and interest in fulfilling the Terms of Reference of the Fishing Technology SWG. To this end, observer data collection duties useful for effort standardization and increased targeting (with subsequent reduction in bycatch, wastage and undersize tuna) are of particular interest.

Point (b) of the **Summary Report of the second regular session of the WCPFC Scientific Committee**, under Data and Information, Observer Programme, Recommendations are relevant (SC3 ST WP-2):

*b) To collect data to allow the standardisation of fishing effort, such as gear and vessel attributes, fishing strategies, the depths of longline hooks, FAD use and setting activities of purse seiners, and other factors affecting fishing power;*

I agree fully that these points should be generalized to apply to all gear types, including small gears. For example, in point (b), the recommendation on data collection for “*the depths of longline hooks*” can be easily amended to read “*the effective fishing depth of fishing gear*”.

Example: for purse seine gear, it is suggested that the maximum net depth and length are supposed to be collected. This information will provide a rough estimate of fishing depth but a purse seine does not fish to nearly the depth of the maximum hung depth of the net. This recommendation therefore would imply that observer programmes should employ other means to record how deep purse seines are actually pursing closed. This can be accomplished with net depth recorders, archival tags, TDRs or in some cases, depth sounders.

A significant role of observers is to document vessel attributes that are not regularly updated in registers and operational characteristics and fishing modes that can not be recorded in port. Important information includes the depth that purse seine nets close, the maximum depth of longlines, the depth of baited handlines, the baitwell capacity of pole-and-line vessels plus the refrigeration method and fish hold capacity of all vessel types.

If observers are to collect data that will truly allow fleet characterization and fishing power, the following recommendations should be considered:

**Table 1. Vessel and trip information**

1. A description of auxiliary vessels should also be made. This can be incorporated into the existing Tables by an indication if the description applies to the catcher vessel or to a significant auxiliary vessel. For example, an essential component of the domestic purse seine vessels operating on anchored FADs in PNG and the Philippines operate with ranger vessels that assess fish abundance on FADs, tie up to FADs to reserve them for setting and can be used to light the FAD, tow it away from the set, supply the catcher with food and crew, etc. Larger vessels are used to deploy, maintain and repair FADs. Other significant auxiliary vessels may include light boats, supply boats or search boats.

2. A number of items that appear in specific gear type tables can be combined into Table 1, such as
  - a. Refrigeration method
  - b. Cruising speed (only appears in Table 4 for purse seine)
  - c. Well capacity (cubic meters)
  - d. Well utilization (catch storage, live bait, fuel, water) For example, refrigerated fish holds in purse seiners can hold fuel or fresh water and later be used to freeze catch and the total capacity of fish hold space is a recognized measure of fishing capacity currently used by the IATTC.

**Table 2. Longline information**

1. Gear attributes: should include
  - a. Setting speed
  - b. Line shooter speed (m/sec)
  - c. Hook interval (time in seconds or distance in m)

Note: this information in combination with other data will allow better estimates of hook depth
2. Bait condition (dead/alive)

**Table 3. Pole-and-line**

1. baitwell capacity
2. baitwell automated pumping system (Y/N) eg Indonesian pole and line boats do not use mechanical pumps in their baitwells
3. Number of crew poling should be accompanied by “number of automatic poles used during operation”

**Table 4. Purse seine**

1. Pursing depth of net during operation
2. Gear Attributes: should include specific information on FADs and FAD use or encounters with any floating object, natural or man-made.
  - a. FAD characteristics (components, dimensions, depth, etc)
  - b. FAD setting strategies
  - c. Locating equipment (buoy type, light, etc)
  - d. Prior origin of FAD (current vessel, just deployed, other vessel with consent, other vessel without consent, etc)

Note: See SC3 FT WP-3.

**Table 5: Species of special interest**

1. Species code of “marine reptile, marine mammal or seabird” should be changed simply to “Species code”. This is not leading or limiting as whale sharks, manta rays and other large marine organisms should be included here.

**Note: what about handline and troll ? These can be easily described in relation to numbers of lines fished, fishing depth, bait, etc.**

**Also agree that a description of bait caught can be applied to most fisheries.**

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In relation to the science-based management of WCPO fisheries and