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Evaluating increases in bigeye longline catch limits under CMM 2023-01

WCPFC22-2025-IP12
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Submitted by the Secretariat and SPC-OFP

Purpose

1. This paper updates advice to the Commission on the future review of increased observer monitoring where increased bigeye catch limits apply in longline fisheries ([CMM 2023-01 Attachment 1, Table 3](#)).¹ This paper is provided for reference to assist discussions by the Commission at WCPFC22.

Background

2. The footnotes to [CMM 2023-01 Attachment 1, Table 3](#) provide opportunities for certain CCMs² to notify that they will increase their bigeye longline catch limit by committing to a proportionate increase in observer coverage level (i.e., human observer and/or Electronic Monitoring (EM)) above the minimum 5% ROP coverage level.
3. The option for certain CCMs to increase bigeye longline catch limits under CMM 2023-01 originated from a WCPFC20 delegation proposal from PNA and Tokelau to amend CMM 2021-01 ([WCPFC20-2023-DP04](#)). The PNA and Tokelau proposal conditioned any agreement for increased longline bigeye catch limits on increasing longline monitoring either by observers or EM to a 30% coverage level. The text of the footnotes to [CMM 2023-01 paragraph 38 Attachment 1, Table 3](#) represents a negotiated outcome, within the package of obligations that were agreed by the Commission in CMM 2023-01, the Tropical Tuna CMM.
4. SC20 and TCC20 discussed interim steps to support reviews of increased observer coverage through proposed additional reporting requirements and updated Audit Points that would clarify how higher coverage levels would be verified, without pre-empting outcomes from the ERandEM IWG where

¹ Refer to [SC20-ST-WP-09 Interim steps for evaluating increases in bigeye longline catch limits under CMM 2023-01 – A discussion paper](#), for previous advice.

² In accord with CMM 2023-01, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Indonesia, and Chinese Taipei are provided the opportunity in 2024 – 2026, to notify an increase in their annual bigeye longline catch limit. The United States annual bigeye longline catch limit was increased as part of the negotiation of CMM 2023-01, so no further catch increase is allowed.

CCMs wished to use EM to increase longline monitoring of their increased catch limit. While there was no formal decision reached, CCMs recognised the need for interim arrangements to verify compliance with the requirements for increased observer coverage requirements in the absence of finalised electronic systems and standards and that once operational, there should be some standards that are equivalent across human and electronic data collection.

Notifications Received

5. In 2024, the Secretariat received notifications from the Republic of Korea and Chinese Taipei indicating that they would apply the option set out in footnotes to CMM 2023-01 Attachment 1, Table 3 to increase their bigeye longline catch limit for 2024 by committing to a proportionate increase in observer coverage level. In 2025, these two Members as well as China provided a notification to the Secretariat of their intent to increase their ROP coverage to support an increase in their bigeye catch limits as follows:
 - **Republic of Korea** – increase bigeye tuna catch limit by 10% in 2024 and 2025, through achieving the necessary increase in observer coverage with human observer and EM coverage.
 - **Chinese Taipei** - increase bigeye tuna longline catch limit by 2% in 2024 and 2025, with a commitment to increase collective observer coverage by the end of year from 5% to 6%.
 - **China** - increase bigeye tuna longline catch limit by 10% in 2025 with a commitment to maintaining a minimum of 5% observer coverage under the ROP through human observers and increasing an additional 5% coverage through EM systems or human observers.
6. The Secretariat has published adjusted bigeye longline catch limits for these Members on the CMM section of the WCPFC Monitoring and Evaluation webpage, with notes that reflect the notification received from the relevant Member (see [CMM 2023-01 38](#)). This, together with the cumulative monthly bigeye catch reporting from these Members for 2024 and 2025 (year to date), is summarised in **Table 1** and **Table 2** below. A review of reporting for 2024 shows that both Members achieved the required observer coverage rate.

Table 1: Summary of adjusted bigeye longline catch limits in **2024** for Republic of Korea and Chinese Taipei based on CMM 2023-01 paragraph 38 notifications and the cumulative bigeye longline catch reporting.

	CMM 2023-01 Att 1 Table 3 longline bigeye catch limit (CMM 2018-05 Annex C 06 minimum ROP coverage rate)	2024 adjusted longline bigeye catch limit (adjusted minimum longline observer coverage, including 5% ROP coverage)	2024 observer coverage achieved (SPC ACE Tables)	Cumulative monthly reporting (1 Jan – 31 Dec 2024)
Republic of Korea	13,942 MT (5%)	15,336 MT (10%)	14.6%	12,349 MT (80% of catch limit)
Chinese Taipei	10,481 MT (5%)	10,691 MT (6%)	7.2%	9,343 MT (93.4% of catch limit)

Table 2: Summary of adjusted bigeye longline catch limits in **2025** for Republic of Korea, Chinese Taipei, and China based on CMM 2023-01 paragraph 38 notifications and the cumulative bigeye longline catch (as of 30 August 2025).

	CMM 2023-01 Att 1 Table 3 longline bigeye catch limit (CMM 2018-05 Annex C 06 minimum ROP coverage rate)	2025 adjusted longline bigeye catch limit (adjusted minimum longline observer coverage, including 5% ROP coverage)	Cumulative monthly reporting (1 Jan-30 Aug 2025)
Republic of Korea	13,942 MT	15,336 MT (10%)	6,572.674 MT
Chinese Taipei	10,481 MT	10,690.62 MT (2%)	5,753 MT
China	(8224 + 500) 8,724 MT	9,596 MT (10%)	2,200.1 MT

Information to support future TCC assessments and linkage to interim EM standards

7. The footnotes to CMM 2023-01 require TCC to recommend a *priority non-compliant* status if a CCM does not meet observer coverage requirements in the year it increases its bigeye longline catch limit.
8. The Commission updated the audit point for the increased catch limit to reflect CMM 2023-01 paragraph 38, but the audit point for the 5% ROP observer coverage requirement (CMM 2018-05 Annex C 06) has not been revised to recognise coverage above 5% achieved through EM.
9. Consequently, updated audit points are needed to ensure consistent and equitable assessments of compliance with bigeye catch limits and observer coverage standards, including to support Members applying the flexibility in CMM 2023-01 allowing human observer or EM coverage.
10. At WCPFC21 in 2024, the Commission adopted voluntary interim minimum EM standards as part of development of [EM Standards, Specifications and Procedures](#) (SSPs). This is important progress however, the current interim standards do not yet provide the data or assurance needed to evaluate compliance or ensure equivalency between EM and human observers.
11. Further work is required to finalise the EM SSPs, define EM data and assurance requirements, and develop an EM CMM. In the interim, if CCMs intend to use EM to meet increased observer coverage, the Commission could develop temporary guidance on data and reporting requirements to support future compliance evaluations. This would provide the opportunity to consider and align, where necessary and useful, bigeye longline reporting across workstreams through the ROP IWG and the ERandEM IWG. The proposed workplans for the ROP IWG and the ERandEM IWG are to be considered by the Commission under Agenda Items 9.2 ([WCPFC22-2025-11](#)) and 9.3 ([WCPFC22-2025-12](#)), respectively.

Potential interim approach to support compliance evaluations

12. As an interim measure, the Commission could request that any Member notifying of an increase to its bigeye longline catch limit provide:
 - a. a plan describing how it will achieve the observer coverage beyond the minimum 5% ROP requirement; and
 - b. a supplementary report in AR Pt1 for CMM 2018-05 Annex C 06 (RP) detailing the additional observer coverage achieved above 5%.

The reporting would build on existing metrics provided for EM and ROP coverage reported by CCMs and compiled each year in the Status of ROP Data Management report compiled by the SSP (SPC)³ and would need to reflect relevant ROP data fields and submissions standards to ensure equivalency. These details would be considered further as part of the development of the interim process, noting more information is available in previous advice.⁴

13. Table 3 in **Annex 1** outlines possible changes to audit points as an interim step for Members that apply an increased bigeye catch limit, and reporting against these would be reviewed through TCC. This approach is not intended to preempt the outcome of ERandEM IWG deliberations.

³ Refer to [TCC21 WCPFC-TCC21-2025-IP03 Status of ROP Data Management](#)

⁴ Refer to [SC20-ST-WP-09 Interim steps for evaluating increases in bigeye longline catch limits under CMM 2023-01 – A discussion paper](#) for previous advice.

Annex 1 Table 3: Current Audit Points and possible revised Audit Points which could be applied to support TCC CMR assessments of CMM 2023-01 until the Commission’s EM program and data standards are more fully developed.

	Current Audit Points (2024/25)	Possible revised Audit Points (2026?)
Bigeye longline catch limit	<p>CMM 2023-01 38 (QL)</p> <p><i>The CCM reported its total bigeye longline catch in its AR Pt2 and the Secretariat can verify the CCM’s reported catch level and confirm that the allowable limit has not been exceeded.</i></p> <p><i>*FOR any CCM who chose to increase its BET catch limit with a proportional increase of observer coverage, the Secretariat can confirm that the CCM notified the Secretariat by the end of February of the year of fishing operations and can verify and confirm, through ROP/EM data received by WCPFC, that the required observer coverage was achieved according to agreed upon minimum data standards for human and/or electronic monitoring.</i></p>	<p>CMM 2023-01 38 (QL)</p> <p><i>a. The CCM reported its total bigeye longline catch in its AR Pt2 and the Secretariat can verify the CCM’s reported catch level <u>and where applicable, any allowed increase</u>, and confirm that the allowable limit has not been exceeded.</i></p> <p><i>b. <u>The Secretariat confirms that each CCM that increased its bigeye longline catch limit by committing to a proportionate increase in observer coverage has submitted the following information:</u></i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>i. a plan on how the observer coverage over and above the minimum 5% ROP observer coverage rate is to be achieved; and</i> <i>ii. a report in AR Pt1 quantifying the observer coverage achieved for the previous year, that identifies the additional cover above the minimum 5% ROP observer coverage rate.</i>

<p>ROP 5% Observer coverage</p>	<p>CMM 2018-05 Annex C 06 (RP)</p> <p>a. <i>The Secretariat confirms receipt by the CCM in AR Pt1 of the required information contained in WCPFC11 reporting procedure of previous year longline observer coverage achieved using the chosen metric and in the agreed format.</i></p> <p>b. <i>The Secretariat can verify, through ROP data received by WCPFC, that the CCM did meet the minimum observer coverage rate of 5% for its flagged, non-PS vessels</i></p>	<p>CMM 2018-05 Annex C 06 (RP)</p> <p>a. <i>The Secretariat confirms that the CCM has provided the required information on longline observer coverage achieved in the previous year using the chosen metric and in the agreed AR Pt1 format. For CCMs that notified an increase in their bigeye longline catch limit based on a proportionate increase in observer coverage, the Secretariat also confirms receipt of the AR Pt1 report detailing the additional observer coverage (e.g., observer and/or EM) achieved above the minimum 5% ROP requirement.</i></p> <p>* <i>“required information” is in accordance with the WCPFC11 reporting procedure</i></p> <p>b. <i>The Secretariat can verify, through ROP data received by WCPFC, that the CCM met the minimum observer coverage rate of (i.e., 5% + any additional coverage associated with a nominated increase in bigeye catch limit) for its flagged, non-PS vessels (i.e., <u>observer coverage + EM</u>) achieved.</i></p>
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