

TO ALL COMMISSION MEMBERS, COOPERATING NON-MEMBERS,  
PARTICIPATING TERRITORIES, AND OBSERVERS

Circular No.: 2026/86  
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**Subject: Progressing the EM Audit and Assurance Framework**

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you to the ERandEM IWG (“IWG”) for your continued intersessional engagement and valuable input as we advance the EM audit and assurance process. Your collaboration helps us strengthen the process and stay well aligned moving forward.

I wish to advise members that I intend to convene an ERandEM IWG meeting (IWG10) in early November to reach agreement on the audit questionnaire and assurance process. The meeting will focus on consideration of the attached papers and proposed processes described further below.

An update on the IWG's status and objectives for the remainder of the year will be provided to TCC22. TCC will be invited to note the report and the progress made intersessionally, and to provide feedback on the updated ERandEM IWG Workplan for the next few years.

I would also like to convene an informal working group in the margins of TCC22, to respond to any questions and gather initial feedback on the papers referenced in this Circular. Coordination is underway with the TCC Chair to identify a suitable time slot. Recognizing that members are busy preparing for TCC22 and that time is limited to fully review these documents, this meeting aims to maximize our time in person to initiate discussions and gather initial feedback ahead of IWG10.

The purpose of this circular is to provide the IWG with the following papers for review and consideration. Further detail on each of these papers is provided below.

- i. Considerations for a WCPFC EM Program Audit and Assurance Process;
- ii. Proposed Revisions to the Interim EM Technical Standards;
- iii. Indicative EM Programme Audit Requirements and Cost Estimates for EM Programme Audit; and
- iv. Revised and Restructured Audit Questionnaire.

To support this path forward, I invite you to provide feedback on the documents no later than 19 October 2026. All documents referenced above will be available in due course on the **Electronic Monitoring and Electronic Reporting** section of the [Explore WCPFC's M&E Tools](#) webpage on the

WCPFC website. Please send responses to me ([lesley.hawn@noaa.gov](mailto:lesley.hawn@noaa.gov)), and to WCPFC Compliance Manager, Matt McGregor ([Matthew.McGregor@wcpfc.int](mailto:Matthew.McGregor@wcpfc.int)).

*i. Considerations for a WCPFC EM Program Audit and Assurance Process*

This paper brings together the key components, logical dependencies, and outstanding decisions needed to establish a robust audit and assurance framework for the WCPFC EM Program. Building on previous ER&EM IWG discussions, it emphasizes the distinction between internal quality assurance where national or regional EM programs re-analyze a portion of EM records to check completeness and analyst accuracy and external quality assurance, which involves an independent review conducted under Secretariat authority to verify overall data accuracy.

To show how these key components fit together, the document is organized into four main sections:

- a. Proposed modifications to the WCPFC Interim EM standards to capture data quality assurance requirements;
- b. Proposed processes and key decisions regarding an audit framework;
- c. A draft audit questionnaire; and
- d. Proposed processes for independent data quality assurance reviews.

By connecting these pieces, this paper will help members understand how each component fits into a cohesive framework, providing the clear path needed for the IWG to review, refine, and ultimately adopt the complete audit and assurance process.

*ii. Proposed Revisions to the Interim EM Technical Standards*

This most recent draft takes into consideration the outcomes and recommendations arising from the FAO/ISSF Harmonization Workshop (2024), as well as relevant information contained in the FFA Electronic Monitoring Standards, Specifications, and Procedures (EM SSPs), [WCPFC19-2022-DP-08](#).

Section SSP2b of [WCPFC19-2022-DP-08](#) describes the process for internally verifying and validating EM records by the relevant DRC as a quality-control measure. While the section outlines a process for an EMP and provides detail on both verification and validation procedures, it also offers useful background for the IWG on how an EM Data Quality Reviewer could review EM records and the EM data produced by the EM analyst.

More importantly, this draft absorbs the comments and suggestions from IWG members to allow me to present a clean draft for consideration. Member feedback has been comprehensively documented in a summary table immediately preceding Annex 1.

*iii. Indicative EM Programme Audit Requirements and Cost Estimates for EM Programme Audit*

This discussion paper by the Secretariat aims to help the IWG consider the financial resources needed to maintain an EM Program Audit scheme. Based on experience with the Regional Observer Program audit process, the Secretariat has provided best-effort estimated figures for

the indicative costing. However, these estimates should not serve as the basis for an operationalized program without further cost investigations.

*iv. Revised and Restructured Audit Questionnaire*

Subsequent to reaching agreement on the audit questionnaire, a further request from some IWG members to take another look at the structure of the questionnaire and consider whether there may be opportunities to further enhance its clarity and usability. I have taken this into consideration, and the proposed layout now establishes a more direct link between the audit questions and the applicable SSPs, specifically the MUSTs. This would provide a clear line of sight between the audit questions and the relevant compliance obligations and may offer a more intuitive and transparent way for members, programs, and auditors to navigate and apply the questionnaire.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lesley Hawn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lesley Hawn  
**ERandEM IWG Chair**