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Chinese Taipei - Report on practical and technical constraints for small vessels
to seabird mitigation in the north Pacific – Chinese Taipei

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Report on practical and technical constraints for small vessels to seabird mitigation in the north Pacific

by

Chinese Taipei

Paragraph 10 of CMM 2012-07 indicates that “the TCC will evaluate the constraints and opportunities for small vessels to employ seabird mitigation measures in the North Pacific, and the Commission will consider appropriate seabird mitigation requirements for vessels less than 24m in length in the North Pacific.” As one of the CCMs with vessels fishing in the northern area, we stated in TCC9 that we would present a report on practical and technical constraints to seabird mitigation at TCC10.

Our scientist presented a report titled “Seabirds and sea turtles bycatch of Taiwanese tuna longline fleets in the Pacific Ocean” (WCPFC-SC10-2014/EB-WP-06) at SC10, in which the seabird bycatch of Taiwanese distant water longline fleets were estimated based on the observers’ data between 2008 and 2013. In accordance with this report, the seabird bycatch was mostly from albacore large-scale tuna longline vessels (LSTLVs), followed by bigeye LSTLV. Seabird bycatch of the small-scale tuna longline vessels (SSTLVs) was very low. In addition, there were no seabirds caught incidentally west of 160°E and south of 30°N in the NPO.

Not only for the purpose of crosschecking information from the abovementioned report, but also for exploring and learning about practical and technical constraints to seabird mitigation for vessels less than 24m in length operating in the area north of 23°N, we conducted a survey program to collect information regarding seabird bycatch and operation practice of small-scale longline vessels. The interviewees of this program were 20 fishermen with fishing activities in the area north of 23°N, and the questions of interview included the basic information of the interviewee and fishing vessel, fishing location and operation period, type of interaction with seabirds, mitigation methods used now and used before, effectiveness evaluation of mitigation method from their point views, and the obstacles of deploying mitigation method as well. The results of this survey are summarized as following:

1. Fishing location and period

These 20 fishing vessels, which are all less than 24m in length, operate in the area around 23°N-26°N and 122°N-124.5°N from April to September. The duration of their fishing trips was about 2 to 3 weeks.

2. Type of interaction with seabirds

These fishermen replied that they had ever sighted seagulls in the area north of 23°N, however they had never seen any albatross in that area. Furthermore, there was no seabird caught by them during their operations.

3. Mitigation methods used

Taiwan Fisheries Agency encourages longline fishing vessels less than 24m in length to use tori lines for mitigating seabirds bycatch rate. However, due to these fishermen's experience of little interaction with seabirds and technical concern, they replied their difficulties in deploying tori lines. These fishermen set their lines near sunset or at night. Also, they usually discharge offal right after retrieving the lines. Nevertheless, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of this seabird mitigation measure for the reason of little seabird distribution in the south of 30°N.

4. Obstacles of mitigation methods

Though night setting is a major operation practice for these SSLTVs operating in the northern area, not all of our SSLTVs conduct night setting.

Moreover, these 20 fishermen complained that tori lines will sink at vessel speed less than 4 knots when setting or retrieving and entangle with the main line/branch lines. Some fishermen even said that they suffered loss because of using tori lines. As for branch line weighting, they also expressed their concerns on the risk of hitting crewmembers while retrieving the lines.

In conclusion, there is only little distribution of endangered seabirds in that area in accordance with our scientist's report. Moreover, the mitigation methods including tori lines and branch line weighting, have some technical constraints and safety concern when deployed in small-scale longline fishing vessels. Nevertheless, further information collected from our E-monitoring program deployed on these vessels will be reported to the Commission once our E-monitoring trial is completed. We think that seabird mitigation measures for small-scale longline fishing vessels less than 24m would be more practical and deployable while more information of mitigation techniques are collected from fishermen and experts.