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**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMISSION  
PART 1: INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH AND STATISTICS**

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**WCPFC-SC21-AR/CNM-36  
5 July 2025**

**PANAMA**

**REPUBLIC OF PANAMA**

**AQUATIC RESOURCES AUTHORITY OF PANAMA**

**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE WESTERN & CENTRAL PACIFIC FISHERIES  
COMMISSION (WCPFC)**

**2024**

**PART I**

**INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH AND STATISTICS**

**Submission: July 4, 2025**

## 1. Abstract/Summary

The Republic of Panama, located in Central America, is an isthmus bordered by the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean, encompassing approximately 1,581 islands and islets. Its territorial waters extend up to 200 nautical miles, over which Panama exercises full sovereignty and sovereign rights, including over the seabed. Since 1997, Panama has exercised strict control over fishing vessel operations by mandating that all fishing and fishing support vessels operating on the high seas must obtain a fishing license.

Panama reaffirms its commitment to fulfilling all obligations under the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), including reporting, participation, communication, and cooperation, while consistently strengthening compliance with the Commission's requirements. The national framework for fisheries management is governed by Fisheries Law No. 204 of March 18, 2021, which regulates fishing, aquaculture, and related activities. This legislation promotes sustainable fishing practices and introduces key measures to ensure the long-term sustainability of marine resources for future generations.

Since 2008, Panama has implemented a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) by domestic regulation, originally through Executive Decree No. 17 of June 30, 2008. This has since been updated and strengthened by Executive Decree No. 13 of November 1, 2023. The installation of VMS devices and the transmission of position reports to Panama's Fisheries Monitoring Center (FMC) is mandatory for all vessels applying for or holding a fishing or fishing support license for international operations.

As part of its firm stance against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, Panama has adopted several key legal and policy measures. These include the National Maritime Strategy and the approval of the National Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate IUU Fishing via Executive Decree No. 98-A of November 17, 2009. Panama also ratified the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA) through Law No. 43 of September 14, 2016. Furthermore, Executive Decree No. 130 of April 14, 2020, established an Interagency Commission dedicated to the prevention, deterrence, and elimination of IUU fishing.

### ***Panama's Participation in Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs).***

Panama actively participates in various Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), demonstrating its commitment to international cooperation and sustainable fisheries management.

#### ***As a Contracting Member:***

1. Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC): Panama became a contracting party through Law No. 24 of 1954 and also ratified the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP) via Law No. 75 of 1998.
2. International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT): Panama acceded through Law No. 74 of 1998.
3. South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO): Panama became a full member on July 7, 2022, following the approval of Law No. 265 of 2021.

#### ***As a Cooperating non-Contracting Party (CNCP):***

In line with its policy of cooperation and compliance with international fisheries management measures, Panama participates as a Cooperating Non-Contracting Party (CNCP) in the following RFMOs during the 2024 period:

- Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)
- North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC)

### ***Other International Agreements:***

Panama adopted the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) through Law No. 1 of 2013 and participates as an adherent member.

Furthermore, Panama has fulfilled its annual financial contribution obligations within the established deadlines, thereby supporting the effective functioning of these regional organizations and demonstrating its commitment to the responsibilities arising from its participation.

## **ANNUAL FISHERIES INFORMATION**

### **2. Tabular Annual Fisheries Information**

In accordance with Panama's participatory rights in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO), the activities authorized during 2024 were limited to the operation of carrier vessels and bunker vessels. These rights also extend to vessels supplying provisions such as food, water, and spare parts to carrier vessels engaged in transshipment activities, provided such vessels do not engage in any operations supporting fishing vessels, including the provision or servicing of Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs).

### **3. Background**

The Republic of Panama is a Cooperating Non-Contracting Party (CNCP) to the WCPFC. In 2024, a total of 131 Panamanian-flagged vessels were authorized to operate in the Convention Area, including vessels engaged in fishing-related and support activities. However, only 79 vessels were actively operating during that period.

All Panamanian-flagged vessels operating in the WCPFC Convention Area are regulated under national legislation and must be duly licensed. Their operations are in strict adherence to the recommendations of the Commission and in compliance with the responsibilities of effective flag State control, ensuring that all vessels respect the provisions of the Convention.

### **4. Flag State Reporting**

For the year 2024, Panama authorized a fleet composed of fishing-related vessels, consistent with its participatory rights under the WCPFC. These vessels include refrigerated cargo vessels and oil tankers, which operate solely in support roles (e.g., transshipment, refueling), and do not engage in direct fishing activities.

Number of active fishing vessels in WCPFC Area.

<b>Year</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
No. of registered Vessels	96	90	124	84	167	163	173	166	144	131
No. of Active Vessels (Fished)	28	74	59	58	87	84	92	90	83	79

### **5. Coastal State Reporting**

N/A. Panama is not a coastal State within the WCPFC Convention Area.

## **6. Socio-economic factors**

Between January and December 2024, Panamanian exports from the agricultural, industrial, agro-industrial, and fisheries sectors totaled B/. 964.3 million, representing a 7.4% increase in FOB value compared to 2023. This growth is also reflected in budget allocations to government entities responsible for primary sector activities. However, such budgets generally focus on operational needs and often face limitations in research, investment, and human capital development.

Panama serves as a key hub for international fish trade, encompassing imports, exports, and re-exports of fishery products. This activity generates substantial employment opportunities through its vessel registry, crews, processing facilities, and associated commercial profits.

Fishery products rank as the third most important item in Panama's export market. Data from the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic shows a 42.9% increase in seafood exports in 2024, signaling strong performance in the fisheries sector. These figures reinforce Panama's position as a regional leader in sustainable and value-added fisheries trade.

The comparative analysis for 2024 shows shrimp as the leading product, with a FOB value of B/.92.5 million, a growth of 69.16%. Fresh and frozen fish and fillets followed, with B/.78.6 million and an increase of 40.95%. Other seafood products, such as fishmeal and fish oil, also reported significant growth, consolidating the sector's diversification.

Thanks to sustained private sector investment and a national commitment to sustainability, Panama has gained access to exclusive and demanding international markets, which in turn has led to better product pricing and global positioning.

In this context, the Aquatic Resources Authority of Panama (ARAP) remains committed to ensuring compliance with Fisheries Law No. 204 of March 18, 2021, to guarantee that fishing activities are conducted in a responsible and sustainable manner.

## **7. Disposal of Catch**

N/A. Panama does not operate fishing vessels that harvest catch within the WCPFC Convention Area.

## **8. Onshore Developments**

Panama is not a WCPFC coastal State and does not operate processing plants or other support facilities within the WCPFC Convention Area.

## **9. Future Prospect of the Fishery**

Panama will seek the Commission's approval to authorize Panamanian-flagged vessels to operate within the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), through appropriate bilateral arrangements with those countries and in full compliance with WCPFC requirements.

Panama confirms that such operations will be governed by the Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) and the Third Implementing Arrangement of the Nauru Agreement (FSM Arrangement), as set out in CMM 2023-01, including effort limits (VDS fishing days), observer coverage, electronic logbook reporting, VMS reporting, and the FAD closure period from 1 July to 15 August.

Should such activities be authorized by the WCPFC Commission during 2026, Panama commits to reporting them in full through its Annual Report Part 2 (ARPt2), in accordance with paragraph 25.3 of CMM 2024-05, including vessel identification, fishing days used, observer coverage, and all compliance measures associated with access to the EEZs of PNA States.

#### **10. Status of the Tuna Fishery data collection systems**

Refrigerated carrier vessels and oil tankers authorized to conduct transshipment and fuel transfer operations within the Convention Area must maintain an onboard logbook or fishing log to record their daily activities carried out in said area.

Panamanian-flagged vessels authorized to operate within the area regulated by the WCPFC Convention and in ports under the jurisdiction of Members or Cooperating Non-Members (CNMs) of the Commission must obtain prior authorization from their flag State before undertaking any activity, such as transshipment or fuel transfer operations.

Carrier vessels must comply with the WCPFC regional observer program, ensuring the presence of a regional observer on board during any transshipment activities conducted within the high seas areas of the Convention. Additionally, in accordance with national regulations adopted by Panama in October 2024, Panamanian-flagged vessels conducting transshipment of fishery products in the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of third countries or in ports not covered by the Commission's conservation and management measures for regional observers are required to carry a national observer from Panama's National Observer Program.

All carriers must also submit transshipment data using the Commission's prescribed formats, including the prior notification of the transshipment event, the final declaration of actual quantities transshipped, and the unloading at port.

Oil tankers must submit daily reports of each fueling operation using the designated formats (BDN and BRN).

All data must be submitted in the prescribed formats and through the official communication channels to both the Commission and the competent national authority. These reports must include detailed records of transshipments and supplies provided to fishing vessels, containing the necessary information to support research, statistical analysis, and scientific databases for the sustainable management of tuna resources.

#### **11. Research Activities Covering Target and non-Target species**

Panama reports its statistical data and records on all transshipment, offloading, and supplying activities involving fishery products regulated by the WCPFC in the Convention Area, including ports, EEZs, and high seas, in accordance with both domestic and international measures.

The Aquatic Resources Authority of Panama (ARAP) is responsible for verifying information related to the catching, transshipping, transporting, landing, exporting, and importing of fishery products, including biometric information of target species, which supports the development of the country's fisheries sector.

No research activities targeting or covering non-target species were conducted by Panama within the WCPFC Convention Area during the reporting period

**CMM 2009-03 [Swordfish], Para 8**

N/A

## OBSERVER COVERAGE [WCPFC 11 decision – para 484(b)]

Panama informs the Commission that, in accordance with the conservation and management measures regulating transshipment, all authorized and active Panamanian-flagged carrier vessels operating within the WCPFC Convention Area were subject to 100% observer coverage during 2024.

Panama applied the metric of coverage by vessel-authorized operation per year, achieving effective 100% coverage through the deployment of an observer from the WCPFC Regional Observer Program (ROP) on board during all high seas transshipment operations.

## CMM 2009-06 [Transshipment], Para 11 (ANNEX II)

Annex II (a): Total quantities, by weight, of highly migratory fish stocks that were transshipped by carrier vessels:

a) offloaded and received;	b) transshipped in port, transshipped at sea in areas of national jurisdiction, and transshipped beyond areas of national jurisdiction	c) transshipped inside the Convention Area and transshipped outside the Convention Area;	d) caught inside the Convention Area and caught outside the Convention Area;	e) Species	f) Product Form	g) Fishing gear
offloaded	960.00	269,249.00		ALB		
	18,285,903.17	3,436,765.00		BET		
	97,422,364.47	4,067,008.00		YFT		
	0.00	190,065.00		SWO		
	671,672,352.93	59,237.00		SKJ		
	0.00	27,464.00		MLS		
	0.00	45,899.00		BUM		
	43,786,072.03	285,900.00		OTH		
received	102,041.00	549,740.00		ALB		
	12,612,426.00	6,423,135.00		BET		
	117,256,023.50	4,563,823.00		YFT		
	760,685.00	410,321.00		SWO		
	687,609,476.00	361,641.00		SKJ		
	111.00	134,287.00		MLS		
	0.00	139,294.00		BUM		
	1217,053.00	224,967.00		OTH		

Annex II (b): Number of transshipment involving highly migratory fish stocks covered by this measure by carrier vessels ... broken down by

a) offloaded and received	b) transshipped in port, transshipped at sea in areas of national jurisdiction, and transshipped beyond areas of national jurisdiction	c) transshipped inside the Convention Area and transshipped outside the Convention Area	d) caught inside the Convention Area and caught outside the Convention Area	e) fishing gear
offloaded	246	8		
received	1097	131		

**CMM 2011-03 [Impact of PS fishing on cetaceans], Para 5**

N/A

**CMM 2018-03 [Seabirds], Para 13**

N/A

**CMM 2006-04 [South West striped Marlin], Para 4**

N/A

**CMM 2015-02 [South Pacific Albacore] Para 4**

N/A

**CMM 2018-03 [Seabirds] Para 13**

N/A

**CMM 2019-03 [North Pacific Albacore], Para 3**

N/A

**CMM 2023-03 [North Pacific Swordfish], Para 4**

N/A

Panama remains committed to enhancing its monitoring, control, and surveillance systems, and to strengthening coordination with WCPFC Members and CNMs in order to prevent and deter IUU fishing. Through continued institutional reforms and interagency cooperation, Panama aims to ensure full compliance with WCPFC conservation and management measures.



## **CMM 2019-04 CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURE FOR SHARKS**

### **Annex 2**

The Republic of Panama, as a Cooperating Non-Member (CNM) of the WCPFC, has participation rights limited to vessels engaged in fishing-related activities such as carrier vessels and tankers, without direct involvement of fishing vessels. Nevertheless, Panama has adopted national regulations implementing the National Plan of Action for Sharks and Rays, as well as regulations prohibiting shark finning.

Resolution ADM/ARAP No. 052 of October 5, 2021 adopts the conservation and management measures in force by the WCPFC, including CMM 2019-04. Article 3 of this resolution states that any future measure adopted by the WCPFC that modifies or replaces the existing ones will be automatically incorporated into the national regulatory framework.

Through Resolution ADM/ARAP No. 014 of May 7, 2018, Panama adopted the National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks and Rays – 2017, with the purpose of protecting and ensuring the long-term sustainable use of these marine resources. The plan applies to all vessels engaged in directed or incidental fishing of sharks and incidental capture of rays. It aligns with the principles of the FAO's International Plan of Action for Sharks (IPOA-Sharks).

The plan responds to the vulnerable state of shark and ray populations at the national level, affected by a historical lack of effective management and the slow natural recovery of these species.

The Plan establishes five strategic objectives:

1. Promote knowledge, research, and monitoring of sharks and rays, involving technical personnel, academia, NGOs, and the productive sector.
2. Strengthen regulatory and management capacity to ensure sustainable use and/or conservation of these species and their critical habitats.
3. Implement control and surveillance programs to ensure compliance with existing regulations.
4. Disseminate information on conservation and sustainable use initiatives, with emphasis on government and fishing sectors, through inter-institutional and multisectoral coordination.
5. Obtain the necessary funding and institutional support for effective implementation of NPOA Sharks and Rays projects and activities.

In compliance with paragraph 8 of CMM 2019-04, Panama adopted Law No. 9 of March 16, 2006, which prohibits the practice of shark finning in its jurisdictional waters. The law expressly prohibits removing the shark fins and discarding the body at sea, promoting full utilization of the captured specimen.