

ISSF Workshop on Rights Based Management, Capacity and Buybacks in the EPO

Mexico City, 17 April, 2012

The Workshop was held as a forum for participants from the Mexican fishing industry and Mexican authorities to review examples and economic cases of rights based management (RBM) systems for potential application in tuna fisheries in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO).

The Workshop reviewed issues relating to overcapacity and its management in all tuna fisheries, especially the EPO, examples of how rights-based management may be developed in the EPO, the use of buybacks, and examples of how rights based management might be used to address particular issues in the EPO tuna fisheries.

The main discussions are summarized below. The Workshop recognized that the process established for introducing RBM would need to carefully consider the complexities of international, multi-species tuna fisheries such as those in the EPO.

Discussion and Recommendations

Participants welcomed the presentations on RBM systems and buyback programs that have worked successfully elsewhere, and thanked ISSF for promoting this dialogue. However, they noted a number of issues that should be taken into consideration in moving forward:

- Global market: Purse seine fisheries in the EPO are expensive to conduct compared to other regions due in part to the high costs of monitoring and more stringent overall controls to ensure sustainable fisheries. Capacity reductions may require a substantial investment by the fishing industry in the region, thus making the cost of fishing even higher. Thus, a regional industry-financed buyback program may create competitive disadvantages in the global market if similar efforts are not made in other ocean regions. Overall, a more equal footing platform amongst fisheries is highly desirable.
- RFMO management systems: There are important differences in the way that different RFMOs manage tuna fisheries. Therefore, an IATTC program to reduce fishing capacity should consider whether the management system in place in other RFMOs could weaken its effectiveness.
- Developing coastal states: Any RBM system needs to take into account coastal states' sovereign rights over the management of highly migratory fish stocks within their EEZs.
- Subsidies and overcapacity: Buyback programs should take into consideration the fact that some parties' fisheries have been built through subsidies, directed to vessel construction, tax exemptions and other subsidies such as infrastructure (sometimes hidden) so that undue burden is not placed on the sectors of the industry that have not benefitted from such subsidies.

- Monopolies: RBM systems should be designed to avoid the concentration of rights into a few hands. Industry participants expressed a strong desire to ensure that the size of the Mexican fleet is not reduced from its current level.

- Fairness and transparency: An RBM system should be designed from the onset to ensure that all participants have a clear perception of fairness and transparency.

- Fishing modes: The purse seine fishery is heterogeneous depending on set type. Some vessels tend to concentrate more on tuna-dolphin associations to catch large yellowfin, while others tend to concentrate more on floating object associations to catch skipjack. A buyback program should take these differences into account.

- Managing fishing mortality: A capacity limitation in the form of total cubic meters of well volume is not sufficient to prevent increases in fishing mortality. Industry participants expressed concern that the increased use of FAD sets, especially in the southern part of the EPO, has resulted in increased fishing mortality and a shift in selectivity towards smaller tuna. It was argued that this increase in FAD usage was equivalent to having had an increase in the number of vessels or in well volume. Therefore, it was suggested that capacity limits on well volume need to be accompanied by other types of effort controls, such as limits on FAD usage.

Finally, participants noted that the platform for discussion provided by the ISSF currently constitutes the most comprehensive and participatory forum for the analysis of RBM at the World/all oceans level. ISSF was praised for such effort.

Participants

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Robin Allen (Chair)
Jose Carranza
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