



Statement by ISSF on a Comprehensive List of Authorized Tuna Fishing Vessels

International Workshop on Improvement, Harmonization and Compatibility of Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Measures

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The International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) is concerned about the lack of decisions for the creation of a comprehensive list of authorized tuna fishing vessels. A comprehensive list was a key course of action identified by the First Joint Meeting of Tuna Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs) (Kobe, 2007) and ISSF is convinced that such a list is one of the most critical tools needed to combat IUU fishing and for the effective management of fishing effort.

The so-called Kobe process resulted in instructions to the RFMO Secretariats to undertake the technical work required to determine how permanent and unique vessel identifiers (UVIs) can be developed. The Secretariats did their work, in collaboration with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), IHS-Fairplay (IHS-F) and FAO, and presented a comprehensive report to the Second Joint Meeting (San Sebastian, 2009).

The RFMOs require various vessel descriptors for their authorized vessel records, however not all RFMOs require the same descriptors. In addition, even where those descriptors are required to be provided, compliance is frequently inadequate. The route identified by the Secretariats towards a comprehensive vessel list is to have each of the RFMOs collect the same number of descriptors for each vessel. With the complete information for all vessels, the RFMOs would then work with IHS-F to generate UVIs (in essence, IMO numbers). None of the RFMOs has taken action to collect the additional vessel information that would be needed.

There is a second possible route, which is for the RFMOs to carry out a one-off exercise of creating a combined list¹, assign all those vessels a tuna RFMO unique identifier, and to agree on a protocol for centralizing the recording of new entrant vessels with the issue of the unique identifier. That would require either one of the RFMOs, or an external agency, to maintain the centralized list of identifiers for authorized vessels. The authorization process would remain in each RFMO, the centralized role would be that of issuing of a UVI and could also be to maintain the global list.

Both routes mentioned above have some costs, which are minor compared to the potential benefits. The first route has the advantage that it would be easily integrated within any global list developed by FAO². The second route has the advantage that it can be implemented soon, without requiring many additional fields of information; however, currently required fields must be provided.

In summary, there are no technical impediments to the creation of a comprehensive list of authorized tuna fishing vessels, but there seems to be a lack of political will. ISSF urges RFMO members to pursue the creation of a comprehensive list without delay. ISSF is willing to work with the RFMO Secretariats to determine what administrative and data support ISSF Participating Companies could contribute to the effort and to make a financial contribution towards the start-up costs of creating and maintaining a comprehensive list.

Further, ISSF has issued a conservation measure (10-01) to refrain from trading or purchasing tuna from vessels without a unique vessel identifier issued by IMO by May 31, 2011, so long as the vessel is capable of IMO registration and is of a size to be subject to RFMO active vessel registration requirements.

¹ The Secretariats have already done this exercise a few times by collating the existing vessel lists. The last one was prepared in June 2009 and is available at <http://tuna-org.org/GlobalTVR.htm>

² See <http://www.fao.org/fishery/topic/18021/en>