

CCAMLR SCHEME OF INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC OBSERVATION

Scientific Observations Conducted in the 1997/98 Fishing Season

3.1 The Scientific Committee noted that there had been no international observer coverage of krill fisheries in the Convention Area during the 1996/97 and 1997/98 fishing seasons. However, observer data have been collected on occasion, particularly from the Japanese fleet (Annex 4, paragraph 2.13). These data had made a valuable contribution to the work of WG-EMM, and the Scientific Committee expressed its appreciation of the efforts made by Japan. The Scientific Committee endorsed the ongoing need for observer data from krill fisheries, and encouraged Members to collect such data, including krill fishing vessel activity (time budget data).

3.2 International and national scientific observers had provided extensive coverage of fishing of vessels licensed by Members and targeting *Dissostichus* spp. and *C. gunnari* in the Convention Area during the 1997/98 fishing season (Annex 5, paragraph 3.42). Observer logbook data and reports were submitted for longline fisheries in Subareas 48.3, 58.6, 58.7 and 88.1, trawling in Subarea 48.3 and Division 58.5.2, and a feasibility longline survey in Subareas 48.1, 48.2 and 88.3. In addition, two observers were aboard trawlers in Division 58.5.2 at the time of the meeting. Observers had been deployed by four Member countries: Argentina in Subareas 48.1, 48.2 and 88.3; Australia in Division 58.5.2; South Africa in Subareas 48.3, 58.6, 58.7 and 88.1; and the UK in Subareas 48.3, 58.6 and 58.7 (Annex 5, Table 11). The Scientific Committee thanked all scientific observers for the substantial amount of data and information they had collected under difficult, or at times extreme, conditions (paragraph 1.12).

3.3 The Scientific Committee noted the improved quality of logbooks submitted in 1998 compared with previous years. However, with the fishing season for many fisheries ending on or after 31 August and delays in the arrival of some logbooks and reports at the Secretariat, there had been a high data entry workload immediately prior to, and during, the meeting of WG-FSA (Annex 5, paragraph 3.43). In some cases, the late submission of data had resulted in WG-FSA using either incomplete datasets or non-validated data, or both. The Scientific Committee encouraged Members to ensure that observer logbook data and reports are submitted to the Secretariat within the time specified in the Scheme of International Scientific Observation (i.e. one month after the return of the observer to home base). Problems with meeting the submission deadline should be reported at the earliest opportunity to the Secretariat by the technical coordinators (Annex 5, paragraph 3.44).

3.4 An ad hoc task group had been formed to consider comments from scientific observers about the data recording forms and procedures currently in use for observations on board longline vessels (SC-CAMLR-XVI, Annex 5, paragraphs 3.33 and 3.34). The task group has worked intersessionally and collated comments and suggestions received from scientific observers. These comments were reviewed by WG-FSA, and further changes had been proposed. These included:

- (i) changes to data collection forms (Annex 5, paragraphs 3.52 to 3.57);
- (ii) collection of additional data (Annex 5, paragraphs 3.59, 3.73 to 3.76);
- (iii) concerns over methods for collecting data (Annex 5, paragraph 3.60);
- (iv) practical difficulties for observers spending long periods in exposed vantage points (Annex 5, paragraph 3.61);
- (v) need for electronic data forms (Annex 5, paragraphs 3.62 to 3.64);

- (vi) problems associated with the random sampling of fish on longlines (Annex 5, paragraphs 3.65 to 3.68);
- (vii) need for two observers aboard each vessel (Annex 5, paragraphs 3.69 and 3.70);
- (viii) awareness of fishing crews of conservation measures and the booklet *Fish the Sea Not the Sky* (Annex 5, paragraphs 3.77, 3.78 and 3.80); and
- (ix) observer training programs (Annex 5, paragraph 3.79).

3.5 The Scientific Committee noted these topics, and:

- (i) urged that scientific observers be granted adequate access to the vessels' logbooks and other relevant information (Annex 5, paragraph 3.50);
- (ii) encouraged the ad hoc task group to revise data forms (Annex 5, paragraphs 3.52 to 3.57);
- (iii) thanked Dr G. Robertson (Australia) for his offer to review the logbook forms concerning bird observations (Annex 5, paragraph 3.57);
- (iv) encouraged Members to find solutions to the practical difficulties encountered by observers working in exposed conditions (Annex 5, paragraphs 3.59 to 3.61);
- (v) endorsed the development of electronic data submission and a stand-alone database for entering data at sea (Annex 5, paragraphs 3.62 to 3.64); and
- (vi) encouraged Members to investigate work priorities and the feasibility of deploying two observers per vessel especially in light of the need to obtain as complete observations as possible both of the fishery and incidental mortality of seabirds during longlining (Annex 5, paragraphs 3.65 to 3.70).

3.6 The Scientific Committee noted that conversion factors, from processed to whole weight of *D. eleginoides*, determined by the observers were usually different from those used when calculating the catch taken by the vessel. Catch sizes calculated using available observer-determined conversion factors were estimated to be 10% greater than those reported from the vessels (Annex 5, paragraphs 3.73 and 3.74). The Scientific Committee endorsed the evaluation of a new procedure for estimating conversion factors (Annex 5, Appendix D).

3.7 The Scientific Committee acknowledged the importance of the observer logbook data and reports to the work of CCAMLR, and recognised that the wide distribution of observers amongst Member countries was central to the success of the CCAMLR Scheme of International Scientific Observation. In this respect, the Scientific Committee agreed that the ongoing refinements of the *Scientific Observers Manual* and the manual itself go a long way to ensuring that observer reports are standardised and of comparable quality.

3.8 The Scientific Committee noted with appreciation that a number of Members had instituted observer training programs to prepare observers for implementation of the tasks set out in the *Scientific Observers Manual*. However, Chile and Spain expressed their concern at being unable to deploy observers during the 1997/98 season in Subarea 48.3. Ukraine also noted its ability to provide a number of well-trained scientific observers experienced in working in the Antarctic.

3.9 The Scientific Committee indicated that the nationality of observers and their distribution amongst Members was not a scientific issue and is a matter for the Commission. The central issue was the scientific competence and performance of the observers.

Review of the Current Edition of the *Scientific Observers Manual*

3.10 The Scientific Committee noted that several changes and additions to the *Scientific Observers Manual* had been proposed by WG-FSA and the ad hoc task group. The Scientific Committee encouraged the task group to consider these modifications and, where feasible, update and distribute new logbook forms and instructions in loose-leaf format by February 1999.

3.11 In relation to discussion under this agenda item, Dr M. Naganobu (Japan) requested the deletion of improper wording relating to vessel type in paragraph 8.5 of WG-FSA's report (Annex 5) because the qualification of vessel type was not based on any scientific or rational categorisation. The Scientific Committee recognised that the description of the vessel alluded to in this particular paragraph was simply a transcript from an observer report and no clear categorisation of trawl vessel type was intended. Dr Naganobu also pointed out that subjective descriptions of this kind could lead to misunderstanding and confusion. He reiterated his request that the reference be deleted.

3.12 In response, the Chairman of the Scientific Committee indicated that the deletion of wording from a report which had been adopted would set an unfortunate and unacceptable precedent for the Scientific Committee. Subsequent translation by the Secretariat of the observer report had indicated that the reference was less categorical than contained in paragraph 8.5 of WG-FSA's report (Annex 5) and had alluded to the vessel as being 'similar to the Japanese construction'. Therefore, he stated that it was not proper to infer any reference to a national affiliation or improper action from the above observer report. He indicated that no improper action could be attributed to the identified vessel being under Japanese flag as this also could not be proven. He further indicated that such interpretations should not be the preserve of a scientific observer and that great care should be taken to ensure that reports of vessel activities by observers were based on fact. For further discussion on the Scientific Committee's view concerning the reporting of vessel activities by scientific observers please refer to paragraphs 3.13 and 3.14.

Advice to the Commission

3.13 In response to the Commission's request for advice (CCAMLR-XVI, paragraph 8.20), the Scientific Committee considered the role of scientific observers in collecting information on illegal and unregulated fishing. It agreed that scientific observers should only report on a factual basis, and that compliance activities should be left to CCAMLR inspectors.

3.14 The Scientific Committee endorsed the concept that the activities of scientific observers should be confined to gathering information and data in support of the work of the Scientific Committee. Factual data on sighting of fishing vessels during a fishing voyage, including vessel type identification, position and activity, would provide valuable information on the amount and distribution of fishing effort of the fleet, and as such would contribute to the stock assessments. This type of data would not be expected in real time, and should be submitted to the Secretariat at the end of a voyage in the observer report.