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Inputs of the WS2024-OBS for further consideration by the Scientific Committee

Convener of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) Workshop on the Harmonisation of Scientific Observers (WS2024-OBS)

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Abstract	<p>The Scientific Committee Workshop on the Harmonisation of Scientific Observers (WS2024-OBS) was held via Zoom videoconferences on Tuesday 6th and Wednesday 7th of February 2024 and convened by Dr. Sebastián Rodríguez Alfaro (EU).</p> <p>The Workshop requested the Convener prepare a working paper collecting the inputs of the Workshop for further consideration by the Scientific Committee.</p> <p>This paper gathers the recommendations from the WS2024-OBS to the Scientific Committee together with the comments received from the participants on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the logbooks,• the draft CMM 2024/xx: Conservation and Management Measure for the implementation of the SIOFA framework for scientific observation of fishing activities in the Agreement Area (Observer Framework) and• the cruise report.

¹ Restricted documents may contain confidential information. Please do not distribute restricted documents in any form without the explicit permission of the SIOFA Secretariat and the data owner(s)/provider(s).

² Documents available only to members invited to closed sessions.

Recommendations

- The SC to **consider** the recommendations arising from WS2024-OBS and **provide** their own recommendations.

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Key points for the SC to consider	2
2.1. Observer logbook templates and observer cruise report.....	2
2.1.1. From the WS2024-OBS Report.....	2
2.1.2. Comments received from the WS2024-OBS participants.....	2
2.2. Draft CMM “Conservation and Management Measure for the implementation of the SIOFA framework for scientific observation of fishing activities in the Agreement Area (Observer Framework)”	3
2.2.1. From the WS2024-OBS Report.....	3
2.2.2. Comments received from the WS2024-OBS participants.....	4
2.3. SC Work programme.....	4
2.3.1. From WS2024-OBS Report.....	4
2.4. Observer coverage	5
2.4.1. From the WS2024-OBS Report.....	5
2.5. Observer code of conduct.....	5
2.5.1. From the WS2024-OBS Report.....	5

1. Introduction

The Scientific Committee Workshop on the Harmonisation of Scientific Observers (WS2024-OBS) was held via Zoom videoconferences on Tuesday 6th and Wednesday 7th of February 2024, from 07.30 UTC to 11.30 UTC.

The Workshop requested the Convener (WS2024-OBS Report Para 30 ([SC-09-33](#))) “*prepare a working paper collecting the inputs of the Workshop for further consideration by the Scientific Committee*”.

This working paper gathers the recommendations from the WS2024-OBS to the Scientific Committee (SC, referring to their original paragraph numbering in the report) together with further comments received from the participants on the logbooks, the draft CMM “Conservation and Management Measure for the implementation of the SIOFA framework for scientific observation of fishing activities in the Agreement Area (Observer Framework)” and cruise report.

2. Key points for the SC to consider

2.1. Observer logbook templates and observer cruise report

2.1.1. From the WS2024-OBS Report

28. The Workshop considered that the observer logbook templates content might benefit from a closer review at SC9, and that the Scientific Committee could consider a focused session to address this review.

31. The Workshop recommended that the Scientific Committee

- a. identify those fields in the cruise report that are to be considered as essential and that should be transmitted to the SIOFA Secretariat to be included in the SIOFA database. Further considerations need to be made regarding the workload of the Secretariat and its ability to handle this data.
- b. discuss and identify the recipients and nature (voluntary/compulsory) of the observer cruise report, and the process by which the cruise report is electronically transmitted after being compiled.
- c. discuss the additional information that could be required to be recorded by observers.
- d. further consider the consistency and overlap between the observer and the vessel logbooks.

32. The Workshop recommended that the Scientific Committee

- a. consider the information that it realistically needs for its work and would need to be collected by Scientific Observers, and how to ensure that there would be the capacity to collect and process those data.
- b. consider revising observer data submission timelines, as the current data submission deadlines mean that these data only become available to the Scientific Committee with a one year delay.
- c. review the proposed CMM and the observer logbooks to ensure that they are aligned.

2.1.2. Further comments received from the WS2024-OBS participants

a) On the observer logbook – demersal longline:

- The view of the spreadsheet should be in freeze mode.
- The data collection should all start at the same excel row, making things easier to populate and extract (as this is likely to become the data entry to data base).
- To have all the validation within the file to comment on them, including the drop-down menu referring to a table containing all the items.
- Conversion Factor table needs good instructions on how to enter data (CCAMLR has recently made significant changes).

- Many fields need to have clear instructions, for example, the tag site condition needs to have pictures illustrating what we mean etc. Hyperlinks could be a way to link columns to related instructions in a table within the logbook instead of having a separate document, that would make the observer tasks easier. It could use a comment that is displayed when the mouse pointer is on the cell (to have short explanation as in the template).
- It is needed a version control table and a clear identifier of the version, crucial both for populating the file and extract data for data base. This version identifier must be in a table in a cell and must never be moved in the next versions.
- Set ID must be clarified. When does it start at 1 again? When landing fish, changing area? Must be clear and consistent between skipper and observers.
- On the Vessel and Observer Details: To include the targeted species.
- On the Gear: The Line Weight units to be changed to g/m.
- On Fishing Operations: Setting start and ends columns to be split into deg and min; Bait species FAO code should allow for more than one species and the proportion. The number of hooks set should be aligned with the CMM proposal.
- On the Observed Catch: Number retained should specify if refers to with or without tags.
- On the Biological: Standard length could consider fork length used for some species. To consider if it worth mentioning the species in the headers, rather offer possibilities and instructions will tell what to do for what species.
- On the Conversion Factor: The processing code should identify the cut type.
- On the VME Indicator: Columns are missing for "photo", "VME", "sample" and "presence". Volume and weight to be considered depending on the structure of the organisms.
- On seabird abundance: Add visibility conditions.
- On ETP species: need to add a "presence" column. On number released, what is the difference with released alive? When alive, injured is missing.
- On Cetacean: does not match the current template and CMM 02 annex E (and even the logbook instruction).
- On Tagging: The tag release position to be included if different from set and hauling data.

b) On the observer cruise report:

- Date of entry: Considering all the entries and exit into SIOFA? Might not be fishing every entry though.
- Lost fishing gear: This data request should appear in the logbook not in a word format but as a numerical field to be uploaded in a data base.
- Catch summary time of embarkation: Should this include bait?
- ETP interactions: Bird bands should appear in the logbook not in a word format but as a numerical field to be uploaded in a data base. Would be good to know if the bird is alive or not.
- Additional information: On the educational material include benthic organisms.

2.2. Draft CMM "Conservation and Management Measure for the implementation of the SIOFA framework for scientific observation of fishing activities in the Agreement Area (Observer Framework)"

2.2.1. From the WS2024-OBS Report

32. The Workshop recommended that the Scientific Committee

- c. review the proposed CMM and the observer logbooks to ensure that they are aligned.

2.2.2. Further comments received from the WS2024-OBS participants

- A common fishing operations identifier between observer and declarative data is needed.
- Integrated weight (g/m) in the Main Line to be kept.
- Reconsider “model number” when noting hook types: models’ names change all the time and if the observer does not collect the data there will be no way to have them at all. Another option would be to take a picture of the label on the hook boxes plus a picture of the hook on a millimetre grid paper.
- Main line length, number of hooks, percentage of hooks baited to be kept in the Start and End setting for each haul and Hauling Observations sections.
- On the Detailed catch composition and biological sampling (tally period) reassess the feasibility of some of the data fields to be collected such as: number discarded dead, Observed number cut off at surface alive/dead.
- On toothfish tagging: the Position (Lat/Lon) of release to be kept as it could be different from the set position. The Animal status at release (injured/uninjured) should be kept.

2.3. SC Work programme

2.3.1. From the WS2024-OBS Report

39. The Workshop noted that SC8 did not identify specific observer-related topics on their medium-term workplan and recommended that the Scientific Committee consider including this in its future work plan.

47. The Workshop considered the work in the SEC2022-OBS1 project to identify potential future work and recommended that the Scientific Committee further prioritizes the Scientific rather than the Structural list of projects for further discussion (see paragraph 46 of this report).

48. The Workshop recommended that a prioritization and tentative timeline (e.g. a staged process) of the projects would be beneficial in drafting a mid-term plan for the Scientific Committee to address these issues. The Workshop further recommended that the timeline for these projects would be on the scale of 2 years.

49. The Workshop recommended that the Scientific Committee note that it will be important to keep this process of development as iterative, with periodic checks and reassessment, including on the timeline, to optimize the outcomes given the available resources.

50. The Workshop recommended that the Scientific Committee consider further work on developing an accreditation process for SIOFA.

51. The Workshop recommended that the Scientific Committee should consider the requirements for observer coverage in all its fisheries, and also for exploratory fisheries once the Meeting of the Parties progresses this topic.

52. The Workshop recommended that the Scientific Committee should develop a document describing how the observer program is structured and run.

53. The Workshop recommended that the Scientific Committee should consider how the proposed data to be collected by observers will be used in fisheries assessment or other analyses relevant to the Scientific Committees work.

2.4. Observer coverage

2.4.1. From the WS2024-OBS Report

43. The Workshop supported the suggestions expressed by consultants (WS2024-OBS-01) in the SEC2022-OBS1 project on considering 100% observer coverage, as all fisheries in SIOFA currently lack the information on distribution, abundance and demography to allow an estimate of the potential yield of the target species or to evaluate the potential impacts on non-target and associated or dependent species, but recommended that the Scientific Committee could prioritize their consideration on those fisheries that currently had sparse information (e.g. the pelagic longline fisheries).

2.5. Observer code of conduct

2.5.1. From the WS2024-OBS Report

57. The Workshop noted that a proposal for an Observer Code of Conduct would need to be progressed by a CCP to the Meeting of the Parties, and recommended the Scientific Committee to consider the drafts in WS2024-OBS-01 and SC-07-INFO-08 to aid the development of such a proposal.