

**TO ALL COMMISSION MEMBERS, COOPERATING NON-MEMBERS AND  
PARTICIPATING TERRITORIES AND OBSERVERS**

**Circular No.: 2023/41**

**Date: 18 May 2023**

**No of pages: 12**

**Commencing the IWG-ROP intersessional activities for 2023 and Request for  
Comments on a Draft Workplan for the IWG-ROP 2023-2025**

Dear All,

Thank you to all CCMs for their support in confirming my appointment as Chair of the IWG-ROP, and for nominations that have been received to date in response to WCPFC Circular 2023-23.

I am pleased to provide for your consideration a draft workplan to guide the work of the IWG-ROP through 2023 and forward years.

The draft workplan is based on the TCC18 and WCPFC19 agreed tasks for the IWG-ROP, and the updated TCC Workplan 2023 – 2025. Additionally, and noting that it has been some time since the IWG-ROP held its last meeting, I have worked with the Secretariat to also consider the original Terms of Reference for the IWG-ROP (from CMM 2006-07).

In the proposed workplan I am suggesting that following its re-activation, the IWG-ROP would aim to consider tasks within the following four main areas during the 2023 – 2024/5 period:

1. Review the existing ROP data collection, to further identify, and discuss improvements to the current processes that support independent monitoring by Observers.
2. Review the ROP Observer coverage with considerations to increase coverage
3. Recommend ROP Standards and
4. Consider use of emerging technologies to support Observer work

With reference to these tasks, CCMs and IWG-ROP participants are requested to provide their views on the priorities and suggested amendments to the attached draft work plan by close of business on Friday 16 June 2023. I will consider the feedback received with a view to finalising the workplan and will at that stage provide additional information.

Furthermore, for the purpose of facilitating email communications amongst the members of the IWG-ROP I request that any additional interested members to submit nominations to [arlene.takesy@wcpfc.int](mailto:arlene.takesy@wcpfc.int) . The Secretariat will also be setting up an IWG-ROP page on the WCPFC website to support our intersessional work, and this will be confirmed in due course.

WCPFC19 supported the re-activation of the IWG-ROP. Therefore, efficient, and effective discussion to provide advice to the Commission on the functions and roles of the Regional Observer Program is important.

I look forward to working closely with you all, and would welcome your comments and suggestions via email: [hvilia@fisheries.gov.sb](mailto:hvilia@fisheries.gov.sb), with cc to the Regional Observer Programme Coordinator, Karl Staisch [karl.staisch@wcpfc.int](mailto:karl.staisch@wcpfc.int) .

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Hvilia".

Harold Vilia  
Chair of the IWG-ROP



## Draft IWG-ROP WORK PLAN 2023 – 2024/5

### Function of the Regional Observer Programme

The Regional Observer Programme (ROP) was established pursuant to Article 28 of the Convention and has the stated function “to collect verified catch data, other scientific data and additional information related to the fishery from the Convention Area and to monitor the implementation of the conservation and management measures adopted by the Commission.” The TCC and the Scientific Committee (SC) have a joint responsibility to recommend to the Commission the priorities and objectives of the ROP, and to assess the results of the programme (Convention Articles 12 (2f) and 14(2c)).

### Reactivation of the IWG-ROP in 2023

The Commission and TCCs current work program include reviews of key CMMs and the development of new CMMs that have and will impact the ROP. Also, experience with existing ROP data collection and the processes this independent monitoring supports has also identified areas that need review. In December 2021 at WCPFC19, the Commission supported TCC’s recommendation that there was a need to reactivate the IWG-ROP to provide advice to assist in Commission discussions, ensuring the ROP can continue to optimize its contribution to the Commission’s independent monitoring and verification programme and achieve the Commission’s objectives as set out in the Convention.

The IWG-ROP was established in 2006 in accordance with the terms of reference in CMM 2006-07. Below are the original terms of reference as adopted by the Commission in 2006, which led to the establishment of the Regional Observer Programme through adoption of CMM 2007-01.

#### **IWG-ROP Terms of Reference –**

##### **Excerpts from CMM 2006-07- Para 3 & Attachment 1 para 2 and 5**

3. The Commission hereby establishes an intersessional working group to develop the regional observer programme (IWG –ROP). The TOR for the IWG-ROP shall be those adopted by the Second Regular Session of the Technical and Compliance Committee and are attached as Attachment 1.

##### Attachment 1

2. The TCC further recommended that the IWG-ROP should *inter alia*:

- i comment on the adequacy of near- and long-term objectives for the design of the ROP.
- ii. consider the institutional and financial arrangements necessary to support the ROP and its implementation.
- iii. consider science, technical, compliance-related, practical, and economic elements of the programme and their feasibility.
- iv. develop a detailed strategic plan, including a practical time table, for the development and phased implementation of the ROP, taking into account the characteristics of each fishery.

- v. develop procedures for deployment observers under the ROP.
  - vi. consider a list of tasks for ROP observers for each fishery.
  - vii. consider standard and harmonized procedures for observers, including data and reporting formats and debriefing procedures.
  - viii. consider ROP observer coverage taking into account other observer programmes and other means of collecting data required by the Commission.
  - ix. consider operational procedures and guidelines for security of observer data.
  - x. develop, in cooperation with main existing observer programmes in the Convention Area, a draft observer provider certification standard and procedure, to include inter alia:
    - a. Recruitment, selection, qualifications and training of individuals;
    - b. Capability to implement the technical and operational protocols for the observer role and tasks, including data management issues, as required by the Commission;
    - c. Day to day management of observers, including all personnel and financial matters, and the co-ordination of all logistical components;
    - d. Capacity to handle efficiently, effectively and safely the deployment and recovery of observers;
    - e. Capacity to arrange for debriefing of observers and primary checking and validation of data collected and reports prepared;
    - f. Safety policies and procedures; and
    - g. Maintenance of good communications links with client States, companies and vessels receiving observers.
  - xi. prepare guidelines for the rights, duties, and responsibilities of observers.
  - xii. develop a procedure for facilitating the development of national observer programmes to achieve Commission certification.
  - xiii. consider data management needs for the ROP.
  - xiv. prepare standards for safety at sea course for observers.
  - xv. consider a code of conduct for observers and procedures for monitoring observer's compliance with the code;
  - xvi. provide recommendations to the Commission regarding safety standards to be met for carrying observers.
5. In order to address the Terms of Reference in Paragraph 2, the TCC recommended that the IWG-ROP should work inter-sessionally and to the maximum extent possible, conduct its work by electronic means.

### Key Reference Documents for the Regional Observer Programme

- Conservation and Management Measure for the Regional Observer Programme ([CMM 2018-05](#))
- Conservation and Management Measure for the protection of WCPFC Regional Observer Programme Observers ([CMM 2017-03](#))
- WCPFC Regional Observer Programme Standards & ROP Guidelines ([suppl\\_CMM 2018-05-1](#))
- Guideline [WCPFC ROP Vessel Safety Check Form](#)
- Minimum ROP data fields
  - For Longline and Purse Seine: [Table of ROP minimum standard data fields 2016](#) and E-reporting standards [Standards, Specifications and Procedures for Electronic Reporting in the WCPFC - operational catch and effort data + observer data](#)
  - For Transshipment Observers: [Minimum Data Fields for Observer Transshipment Monitoring - 2023](#)

**IWG-ROP priority tasks as listed in the TCC Workplan and Recommendations by WCPFC19 and TCC18**

The table below lists the specific WCPFC19 and TCC18 taskings to the IWG-ROP. Linkages to the “TCC 2022-2024 Work Plan” and other IWG activities that are presently underway are also noted. The table gives tasks for each year and references CMMs, and other relevant documents and information linked to the suggested task. An initial suggested priority across 2023 and 2024 years is provided for consideration of IWG participants.

IWG-ROP Work Plan Priority Tasks	2023	2024	2025	TCC/IWG linkages & References
<b>1. Review and recommend draft modifications to ROP Minimum Data Fields</b>				
<p>a. Development of draft recommended modifications to ROP data fields with the intention of allowing for more useful consideration of ROP data in the CCFS and in the Compliance Monitoring Scheme processes. <b>(WCPFC19 Summary Report para 451 (ii))</b></p>	<p>Consider improvements to the Observer Trip Monitoring Summary data fields, which trigger pre-notifications to better align with the Commission’s priorities in terms of compliance.</p> <p>Consider and provide advice on training and capacity needs of SIDS, to implement observer programs, including training and data management.</p>			<p><i>Expected to contribute to TCC Workplan Priority Specific Task (j)</i></p> <p><i>Review and provide advice improvements to the ROP data fields, including those in ROP pre-notifications, to allow for more useful consideration in the compliance case file system and compliance review process [TCC task with assistance from Secretariat</i></p> <p><a href="#">ROP Minimum Data Fields</a> – Observer Trip Monitoring Summary</p>
<p><b>1a Status</b></p>				
<p>b. Prioritize work on issues such as a solution to identifying</p>	<p>Review and provide advice on improvements to the</p>			<p><i>Expected to contribute to TCC Workplan Priority Specific Task (j)</i></p>

IWG-ROP Work Plan Priority Tasks	2023	2024	2025	TCC/IWG linkages & References
<p>interactions with whale sharks and cetaceans, and on the inclusion of ROP data fields that were identified in the TCC Workplan 2022-2024 project specific task (j), and to identify any CMM that should also be prioritized in this work. <b>(WCPFC19 Summary Report para 451 (iii))</b></p>	<p>ROP minimum standard data fields for whale sharks and cetaceans – to allow for a distinction between an interaction and a possible infraction in the compliance case file system.</p> <p>Review and provide advice on improvements to the ROP minimum standard data fields for sea turtles and seabirds to allow for use of ROP data in the compliance case file system, taking into account overall workloads of observers.</p> <p>Consider and provide advice on training and capacity needs of SIDS, to implement observer programs, including training and data management.</p>			<p><i>Review and provide advice improvements to the ROP data fields, including those in ROP pre-notifications, to allow for more useful consideration in the compliance case file system and compliance review process [TCC task with assistance from Secretariat</i></p> <p><a href="#">ROP Minimum Data Fields</a> – Species of Special Interest</p> <p><a href="#">CMM 2011-03</a> – CMM for Protection of Cetaceans from Purse Seine Fishing</p> <p><a href="#">CMM 2022-04</a> – CMM for Sharks (paragraph 23)</p> <p><a href="#">CMM 2018-04</a> CMM of Sea Turtles</p> <p><a href="#">CMM 2018-03</a> CMM to mitigate the impact of fishing for highly migratory fish stocks on seabirds.</p>
<p><b>1.b Status</b></p>	<p>Secretariat paper <a href="#">TCC18-2022-17</a> Supporting paper for TCC18 consideration of potential improvements to the ROP Minimum Standard Data Fields for impacts of fishing on whale sharks and cetaceans.</p>			

IWG-ROP Work Plan Priority Tasks	2023	2024	2025	TCC/IWG linkages & References
<p>c. Review and where needed provide draft recommendations and advice on standards and procedures, including for debriefing, with the intention of allowing for more useful consideration of ROP data in monitoring the implementation of CMMs <b>(CMM 2006-07 Attachment 1 2(vii))</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>1.c Status</b></p>	<p>Develop advice and draft recommendations for more useful consideration of ROP data for CCFS and Compliance Monitoring purposes.</p> <p>Develop advice and draft recommendations for more useful consideration of ROP data for Transshipment monitoring.</p> <p>Consider and provide advice on training and capacity needs of SIDS, to implement observer programs, including training and data management</p>	<p>Develop advice and draft recommendations on ROP data fields to support a future CMM on Crew Labour Standards, if required.</p>		<p><a href="#">CMM 2018-05</a> CMM for the Regional Observer Programme  <a href="#">suppl CMM 2018-05-1</a> - WCPFC Regional Observer Programme Standards &amp; ROP Guidelines</p> <p><i>May contribute to work being undertaken by <b>Intersessional Work on Crew Labour Standards</b></i></p>
<p>d. Also where opportune, consider if streamlining and updating of other ROP data fields could be beneficial and develop draft recommendations and advice <b>(CMM 2006-07 Attachment 1 2(vii))</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>1.d Status</b></p>	<p>Consider opportunities to remove redundant ROP data fields</p>			<p><a href="#">CMM 2018-05</a> CMM for the Regional Observer Programme  <a href="#">suppl CMM 2018-05-1</a> - WCPFC Regional Observer Programme Standards &amp; ROP Guidelines</p>

IWG-ROP Work Plan Priority Tasks	2023	2024	2025	TCC/IWG linkages & References
<p>e. Review and where needed develop draft recommended modifications to ROP data fields for Observer transshipment monitoring. <b>(WCPFC19 Summary Report para 466 (iv and v))</b></p>	<p>Consider the <a href="#">Minimum Data Fields for Observer Transshipment Monitoring - 2023</a> and whether any revisions are necessary to the minimum data fields for Observer transshipment monitoring.</p> <p>Consider the <a href="#">Minimum Data Fields for Observer Transshipment Monitoring - 2023</a> (FC-3 form) and if there are data fields that should be required to be collected by carrier vessels to complement the data to be collected by observers. Consider and provide advice on training and capacity needs of SIDS, to implement observer programs, including training and data management.</p>	<p>Continue to review based on implementation experience, the <a href="#">Minimum Data Fields for Observer Transshipment Monitoring - 2023</a> (ROP data fields in FC-1 and FC-2 data fields) and whether any revisions are necessary to the minimum data fields for Observer transshipment monitoring.</p> <p>If needed, consider the <a href="#">Minimum Data Fields for Observer Transshipment Monitoring - 2023</a> (FC-3 form) and if there are data fields that should be required to be collected by carrier vessels to complement the data to be collected by observers</p>		<p><a href="#">Minimum Data Fields for Observer Transshipment Monitoring - 2023</a> – encompasses the “ROP data fields from FC-1, FC-2 and FC-3 forms”</p> <p><i>Expected to contribute to TCC Workplan Priority Specific Task (q) Review and consider updates to improve the effectiveness of CMMs related to transshipment at sea and compliance with their provisions and to work being undertaken by TS-IWG Review of CMM 2009-06.</i></p>
<p><b>1.e Status</b></p>	<p>Agreed <a href="#">Minimum Data Fields for Observer Transshipment Monitoring - 2023</a> are to be collected by transshipment observers during transshipment events, and submitted to the Secretariat within 90 days of</p>			



IWG-ROP Work Plan Priority Tasks	2023	2024	2025	TCC/IWG linkages & References
	disembarkation of the observer.			
<p>f. Review and where needed develop draft recommended modifications to ROP minimum data fields related to FADs, particularly monitoring of non-entangling and biodegradable FAD implementation in the future, to improve data quality in this area. <b>(TCC18 Summary Report para 249</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>1.f Status</b></p>	<p>Consider and provide advice on current data fields in the minimum standard data fields on FADS and develop fields for recording non-entangling and biodegradable FAD information</p>	<p>Consider and provide advice on current data fields in the minimum standard data fields on FADS if there are FAD data fields identified that should be required to be reported by vessel operators to complement the data to be collected by observers.</p>		<p><a href="#">ROP Minimum Data Fields</a> – Purse seine fishery FADs</p> <p><a href="#">CMM 2021-01</a> Conservation and Management Measure for Bigeye, Yellowfin and Skipjack Tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (paragraph 17)</p> <p><i>Expected to contribute to work being undertaken by FAD Management Options IWG</i></p>
<p><b>2. Review and Consider ROP observer coverage</b></p>				
<p>a. Consider ROP observer coverage taking into account other observer programmes and other means of collecting data required by the Commission <b>(CMM 2006-07 Attachment 1 2(viii))</b></p>	<p>Consider and develop draft recommendations and advice on the potential to increase ROP observer coverage, considering the current status of ROP Observer Programmes and other means of collecting data required by the Commission.</p> <p>Consider and provide advice on training and capacity needs of SIDS, to implement observer programs, including training and data management</p>			<p><i>Noting that WCPFC19 endorsed the following recommendations of TCC18.</i></p> <p><i>(i) TCC18 noted the imbalance between the information available for monitoring compliance between the longline and purse seine fisheries and recommended that the Commission recognize the need to address this imbalance.</i></p> <p><i>(ii) TCC18 noted that compliance with some obligations cannot be independently verified from available data sources. TCC18 recommended that WCPFC19 task the Secretariat to develop a</i></p>

IWG-ROP Work Plan Priority Tasks	2023	2024	2025	TCC/IWG linkages & References
<b>2.a Status</b>				<p><i>paper, which identifies those obligations for which there is a lack of independently verifiable data, as well as potential sources of data that could provide independent verification of those obligations, for review by TCC19. (WCPFC19 Summary Report para 351(i) and (ii))</i></p>
<p>b. Provide advice on cross-endorsement procedures for transshipment observers with other RFMOs</p>		<p>Consider and develop draft recommendations and advice on systems and procedures necessary to operationalize the <a href="#">2016 Transshipment Memorandum of Cooperation between WCPFC and CCSBT</a></p>		<p><i>Expected to contribute to TCC Workplan Priority Specific Task (q) Review and consider updates to improve the effectiveness of CMMs related to transshipment at sea and compliance with their provisions and to work being undertaken by TS-IWG Review of CMM 2009-06.</i></p>
<b>2.b Status</b>		<p>Noting the adoption of WCPFC <a href="#">Minimum Data Fields for Observer Transshipment Monitoring - 2023</a> as of 1 April 2023, it could be possible to further progress to operationalize the MoC</p>		

IWG-ROP Work Plan Priority Tasks	2023	2024	2025	TCC/IWG linkages & References
<b>3. Standards for ROP Observers</b>				
a. Provide recommendations to the Commission regarding safety standards to be met for carrying observers ( <b>CMM 2006-07 Attachment 1 2(xvi)</b> )	Provide recommendations and advice on Observer CMM issues and matters raised at TCC or WCPFC meetings on observer safety. Review observer training for observer safety and related issues.	Provide recommendations and advice on Observer CMM issues and matters raised at TCC or WCPFC meetings on observer safety. Review observer training for observer safety and related issues.		<i>Expected to contribute to TCC Workplan Priority Specific Task (I) Development, improvement, and implementation of the Commission's measures for observer safety and related issues.</i> <a href="#">CMM 2017-03</a> - Conservation and Management Measure for the protection of WCPFC Regional Observer Programme Observers <a href="#">CMM 2018-05</a> CMM for the Regional Observer Programme <a href="#">suppl CMM 2018-05-1</a> - WCPFC Regional Observer Programme Standards & ROP Guidelines
<b>3a. Status</b>				

IWG-ROP Work Plan Priority Tasks	2023	2024	2025	TCC/IWG linkages & References
<b>4. Considerations related to emerging technology</b>				
a. Provide recommendations and advice to TCC and to the Commission regarding opportunities that ER and EM technology could provide to supporting and streamlining the work of observers	Consider updates from national and subregional observer programmes, and IFOMC2023, on recent developments, and provide advice and recommendations where appropriate	Consider updates from national and subregional observer programmes, and others, on recent developments, and provide advice and recommendations where appropriate.	Consider updates from national and subregional programmes, and others, on recent developments, and provide advice and recommendations where appropriate	<i>Expected to consider and contribute to work being undertaken by ERandEM WG</i>
<b>4 a Status</b>				