



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE  
NINETEENTH REGULAR SESSION**

Koror, Palau  
16 –24 August 2023

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**Work Priorities and Method of Communication for the IWG-ROP**

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**WCPFC-SC19-2023/ST-IP-09**

**IWG-ROP<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Intersessional Working Group on Regional Observer Programme



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

**Circular No.: 2023/53**

**Date: 28 June 2023**

**No. pages: 8**

**Work Priorities and Method of Communication for the IWG-ROP**

Dear All,

Greetings and hope all is well.

Following the deadline on 16 June 2023 for close of comments on the IWG-ROP draft work plan and for further nominations by members, I would like to acknowledge the members who responded and provided inputs to the draft work plan. Your support and active engagement will help to achieve the goals tasked to the IWGROP by the Commission and TCC. I have worked with the Secretariat in finalizing the work plan for 2023 and the forward years, as I am eager to get discussions underway.

The IWG-ROP work plan is attached; noting that the IWG-ROP will develop working and information papers to report to the SC19 as well as TCC19 later this year on the chosen priority tasks. To commence work for the IWG-ROP I have selected the key work plan tasks, "Observer data fields for "Species of Special Interest" **1(b)** and "Consider removal of redundant ROP data fields" **1(d)**. Information papers on these subjects will be sent soon.

Because of time constraints on many CCMs, I have chosen the main method of communications for the IWG-ROP will be through use of email with responses to be forwarded to the Chair and the following email addresses listed below. The Secretariat has set-up a webpage to support the intersessional activities of the IWG-ROP, this is where copies of relevant documents circulated by email to the IWG participants will be posted. link <https://www.wcpfc.int/iwg-rop> "

I look forward to working closely with you all.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harold Vilia", is placed over a light grey rectangular background.

Harold Vilia  
Chair of the IWG-ROP

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## IWG-ROP WORK PLAN 2023 – 2024/5

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June 28 2023

### 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.

### IWG-ROP priority tasks

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 -2025 years is provided for IWG participants.

### 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 , [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-ROP5 Priority Tasks.**

IWG-ROP Work Plan Priority Tasks	2023	2024	2025	TCC/IWG linkages & References
<b><i>1. Review and recommend draft modifications to ROP Minimum Data Fields</i></b>				
<p><b>1a.</b> 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 CCMs particularly 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 on 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 – Observer Trip Monitoring Summary</a></p>
<b><i>1a Status</i></b>				

IWG-ROP Work Plan Priority Tasks	2023	2024	2025	TCC/IWG linkages & References
<p><b>1b.</b> Prioritize work on issues such as a solution to identifying 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>Review and provide advice on improvements to the 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 CCMs particularly SIDS, to implement observer programs, including training and data management.</p>			<p><i>Expected to contribute to TCC Workplan Priority Specific Task (j) 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 – Species of Special Interest</a></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>1b 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><b>1c.</b> 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 (CMM 2006-07 Attachment 1 2(vii))</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>1c 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 CCMs particularly 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.</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>May contribute to work being undertaken by <b>Intersessional Work on Crew Labour Standards</b></p>
<p><b>1d.</b> Also, where opportune, consider if streamlining and updating of other ROP data fields could be beneficial and develop draft recommendations and advice (CMM 2006-07 Attachment 12(vii))</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>1d 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><b>1e.</b> Review and where needed develop draft recommended modifications to ROP data fields for Observer transshipment monitoring. (WCPFC19 Summary Report para 466 (iv and v))</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 the data fields required to be collected by carrier vessels to complement the data to be collected by observers, as referenced in the MDF for Observer Transshipment Monitoring - 2023.</p> <p>Consider and provide advice on training and capacity needs of CCMs, particularly 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>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 as referenced in the MDF for Observer Transshipment Monitoring - 2023.</p>	<p>Continue to review based on implementation experience, the <a href="#">Minimum Data Fields for Observer and Transshipment Monitoring - 2023</a> (Data fields in FC-1, FC-2, and whether any revisions are necessary to the MDF for Observer monitoring.</p> <p>Review and 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 as referenced in the MDF for Observer Transshipment Monitoring - 2023.</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>1e 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 disembarkation of the observer.</p>			

IWG-ROP Work Plan Priority Tasks	2023	2024	2025	TCC/IWG linkages & References
<p><b>1f.</b> 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>1f 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>
<b>2. Review and Consider ROP observer coverage</b>				
<p><b>2a.</b> 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 12(viii))</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>2a Status</b></p>	<p>Consider and develop draft recommendations and advice on the potential to increase ROP observer coverage, considering the current status.</p> <p>Provide advice on ROP observer coverage and the current status "of ROP Observer Programmes and other means of collecting data required by the Commission. Consider and provide advice on training and capacity needs of CCMs particularly SIDS, to implement observer programs, including training and data management.</p>	<p>Consider and finalise draft recommendations and advice on the potential to increase ROP observer coverage, considering the status of ROP Observer Programmes and other means of collecting data required by the Commission.</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 verified independently from available data sources. TCC18 recommended that WCPFC19 task the Secretariat to develop a 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>



IWG-ROP Work Plan Priority Tasks	2023	2024	2025	TCC/IWG linkages & References
<p><b>2b.</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>
<p><b>2b Status</b></p>		<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>				
<p><b>3a.</b> Provide recommendations to the Commission regarding safety standards to be met for carrying observers (<b>CMM 2006-07 Attachment 1 2(xvi)</b>)</p>	<p>Consider and 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.</p>	<p>Consider and 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.</p>		<p><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. <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 &amp; ROP Guidelines</i></p>
<b>3a. Status</b>				
<b>4. Considerations related to emerging technology</b>				
<p><b>4a</b> 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.</p>	<p>Consider updates from national and subregional observer ER and EM programmes, and IFOMC23, on recent developments, and provide advice and recommendations where appropriate.</p>	<p>Consider updates from national and subregional observer, ER and EM programmes, and others, on recent developments, and provide advice and recommendations where appropriate</p>	<p>Consider updates from national and subregional observer, ER and EM programmes, and others, on recent development and provide advice &amp; recommendations Where appropriate</p>	<p><i>Expected to consider and contribute to work being undertaken by <b>ER and EM</b> IWG</i></p>
<b>4a Status</b>				