

5th Regional Tuna Data Workshop, 18–22 April 2011, Noumea, New Caledonia

With five workshops under its belt the “Regional Tuna Data Workshop” (TDW) is becoming an important annual feature on the region’s tuna fisheries calendar. The workshop is targeted at Pacific Island National Tuna Data Coordinators (NTDC) who are generally senior fishery officers who play a major role in compiling their country’s annual tuna catch statistics for submission to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). WCPFC requires that countries submit the annual tuna catch estimates for their national fleet before the 30th of April. Compiling annual tuna catch estimates for national fleets is the central focus of this workshop and for this reason the workshop is always held in mid-April. This timing allows participants to avail themselves of additional support to finalise their data submission before the WCPFC’s deadline.

The TDW attempts to offer participants an appropriate blend of plenary presentations and discussions, along with group and individual exercises to explore tuna data issues, but also sufficient time to compile their annual catch estimates and review any country-specific data management issues. Data Management and Fisheries Monitoring staff of SPC’s Oceanic Fisheries Programme (OFP) was again on hand to assist participants in compiling their data, estimating their catches, and offering database training and general guidance. Since its inception in 2006, the TDW has been a forum for offering participants the latest developments in database tools, presentations and reporting formats provided by OFP to streamline the job of compiling annual catch estimates.

That said, compiling annual catch estimates is not a simple step-by-step process. The key is to take time during the year to ensure that available data are acceptable, both in quality and quantity. The TDW takes the time to look beyond the preparation of catch estimates into the many processes that come beforehand and which affect the quality of available data. In the first instance, it is acknowledged that having strong legislative support is a fundamental first step in receiving timely and true data. The Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) representative at his year’s TDW explained the different elements of fisheries legislation, and encouraged participants to study their national legislation to see whether it contains the essential elements to support data submissions. The essential elements suggested included:

- a “Head of Power” statement (i.e. one that gives the government the authority to collect data, or places obligations on fishers to supply data); and
- a statement of requirements of what fishers are required to do: who, how, when and what).

These elements can be written into any of the different components of national legislation (e.g. fisheries act, regulations, licensing conditions). However, some thoughts on the most appropriate place for these statements were shared with the group. Finally, but most importantly, having appropriate penalties that are issued consistently

against incorrect and untimely submission of data will guarantee that fishers comply with data requirements. FFA noted that it will review national Fisheries Legislation in a number of countries this year and that it will also support attachments to its legal section to help with this work.

A major part of the workshop focused on the use of current database systems developed by OFP and offered to member countries. The latest developments in TUFMAN (Tuna Fisheries database Management for commercial vessels) — TUF-ART (for artisanal vessels) and TUBs (for observer data) — were presented, and exercises were used to reinforce newly acquired skills. The exercises were well received and some participants strongly voiced their recommendation that the proposed regional TUFMAN training workshop be conducted as soon as possible. A further session allowed participants to suggest the areas they would like future database development to focus on.

Auditing is a word that is mostly associated with financial systems, but the concept is also used in tuna fishery data to identify weakness and to suggest improvements to enhance data quality. The concept of self-auditing



Left to right: Vakuru Bola, Leontine Baje and Thomas Usa, from the National Fisheries Authority, Papua New Guinea.

SPC ACTIVITIES



*Alitia Cirikiyasawa (left) and Hilda Lobendahn (right)
from the Ministry of Fisheries and Forestry, Fiji.*

countries can identify them. The auditing topic evolved into a broader overview of how databases can be used to reconcile different data types and to identify data gaps. It included a presentation on the use of vessel monitoring system data to check the coverage of logsheet data submissions.

Invitations to the workshops are sent to all SPC member countries, as well as the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam, which also provide data and annual catch estimates to WCPFC. To further convey the ideas shared at the TDW, the information feeds into national tuna data workshops, and previous and current workshop material is made available on SPC's website at <http://www.spc.int/oceanfish/en/meetingsworkshops/tdw>

was first introduced in earlier workshops. To give participants practical experience in a self-auditing, an enjoyable practical session was offered during the 2010 workshop. Participants were asked to “audit SPC’s port sampling programme”. There were a few smiles when SPC’s Observer and Port Sampling Supervisor (Peter Sharples) threw in a few deliberate mistakes to see if participants could spot them. The theme of auditing continued at the 2011 TDW with a presentation on typical problems encountered in logsheet reporting and how

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Biological sampling workshop in Pohnpei

The first observer trainer training in the Pacific region was held in April in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). Nine participants from fishery departments in FSM, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands were trained in using biological sampling techniques and their related data recovery. Caroline Sanchez and Malo Hosken from SPC’s Oceanic Fisheries Programme delivered the courses and workshops. The objective was to teach and train participants in understanding the role of biological sampling and the importance of correct data collection for scientific studies and research.

The training included various seminar presentations and practical workshops, which were held at the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. Participants learned about the various types of biological information and samples that could be collected and their use in scientific assessments, as well as the importance of quality tag recovery data. The practical workshops demanded participants to demonstrate adequate skills for identifying and collecting suitable biological samples such as stomachs, gonads, and livers. The more challenging part of the training for participants was mastering different otolith¹ extraction techniques. Depending on whether the fish needs to be in high quality condition, or whole for market purposes, different techniques can be used to extract otoliths, using various tools such as drills, cutters or saws. Otolith analysis (generally, incremental counts)



*Trainees Elton Clodumar, Ramon Kyle Aliven and Benaia Bauro
preparing tagged skipjacks for biological sampling.*

¹ Otoliths are small bones in the cavities of a fish's head; they are sensitive to gravity and linear acceleration