Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

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Mitigation of Seabird Interactions in the trawl sectors of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery of Australia

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SUMMARY

An innovation project is underway in Australia aimed at reducing the number of seabird mortalities due to interactions with trawl fishing vessel warps.

Mitigación de las interacciones entre las aves marinas y los sectores de pesca de arrastre de la pesquería de tiburones y peces del sudeste de Australia

Se está efectuando un proyecto de innovación en Australia, orientado a reducir las tasas de mortalidad de aves marinas debido a las interacciones con los cables de arrastre de los buques pesqueros.

Atténuation de l'interaction des oiseaux marins dans les secteurs de la pêche au chalut de poissons à écailles et de requins dans le Sud et l'Est de l'Australie

Un projet d'innovation est en cours en Australie visant à réduire la mortalité des oiseaux marins liée aux interactions avec les funes des bateaux de pêche au chalut.

1. Innovation Grant

The South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association Limited (SETFIA) has recently received AUD 356,840 Innovation Grant from the Australian Government. Innovation Grants are designed to give farmers, fishers, groups and businesses more tools to implement sustainable practices, reduce farm costs and build productivity. The grant provides funding for the project: *Mitigation of Seabird Interactions in the trawl sectors of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery (SESSF)*. These funds will enable SETFIA, in collaboration with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, to trial innovative mitigation measures to reduce the number of seabirds getting caught by wires on trawl fishing vessels.

2. Innovation Project Aims

The SETFIA innovation project aims to minimise interactions with Threatened, Endangered and Protected (TEP) species of seabirds in the SESSF trawl sectors by:

a. trialling and proving innovative mitigation measures to reduce interactions

b. educating young skippers in best practice international mitigation techniques

c. creating young industry champions committed to reducing interactions with TEP seabirds in the long term

d. promoting those techniques through port visits and industry workshops

e. building social licence with the general public by communicating this work.

A key feature of this innovation project is its approach to engagement. Trawl fishing operators have been asked about their ideas for seabird mitigation devices and techniques. A panel of experts has been established to select, from these the best devices and techniques to be tested. A group of trawl fishers has travelled to New Zealand to learn more about seabird mitigation measures in trawl fisheries. Extensive at sea trials are planned using commercial fishing vessels and AFMA observers of the effectiveness of each device and technique against existing methods for seabird bycatch mitigation in trawl fisheries. The research findings will be disseminated throughout the trawl sectors of the SESSF through industry newsletters, port visits and industry workshops, and made available widely to the general public.

3. Potential Seabird Mitigation Devices and Techniques

The innovation project has identified potential seabird mitigation devices and techniques:

a. a device that sprays water at the warp wires (‘Water Sprayers’)

b. a set and forget seabird deflector (‘Raft’)

c. a seabird deflector that can remain attached to the warp, but be easily removed (‘Rubber Mat’)

d. a seabird deflector formed by a ring of buoys around the stern of the vessel (‘Brickle Curtain’).

4. Next Steps

The potential seabird mitigation devices and techniques will be subject to initial trials at sea. The results of the trials will provide a basis for deciding which of the latter devices and techniques will be taken to full trials. The project already envisages full trials of water sprayers.

The Seabird Bycatch Working Group will be kept informed about the progress and results arising from this innovation grant.