



Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Fourth Meeting of Seabird Bycatch Working Group

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AC5 Report: Annex 9 — Summary advice statement for reducing impact of pelagic and demersal trawl gear on seabirds

Secretariat

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ANNEX 9: SUMMARY ADVICE STATEMENT FOR REDUCING IMPACT OF PELAGIC AND DEMERSAL TRAWL GEAR ON ALBATROSSES AND PETRELS

The most effective measure to reduce incidental take of seabirds in trawl fisheries is the effective management of offal discharge and fish discards through full retention of all waste material, or mealing (the conversion of waste into fish meal waste reducing discharge to sump water). In the absence of this it is critical not to discharge offal or fish discards during shooting and hauling.

Other measures shown to be effective are:

Cable strike

- actively deterring birds from trawl warps and netsonde monitoring cables (or 3rd wires) during trawling by means of bird scaring lines;
- installation of a snatch block, placed on the stern of a vessel, to draw the third-wire close to the water to reduce its aerial extent;

Net entanglement

- cleaning of nets after every shot to remove stickers and other benthic material to discourage bird attendance during shooting of gear;
- minimising the time the net is on the water surface during hauling through proper maintenance of winches, and good deck practices; and
- for pelagic trawl gear, net binding applied to meshes ranging from 120–800 mm, together with a minimum of 400 kg weight incorporated into the net belly.

Further measures include avoiding peak areas and periods of seabird foraging activity. It is important to note that there is no single solution to reduce or avoid incidental mortality of seabirds in trawl fisheries, and that the most effective approach is to use the measures listed above in combination. Avoiding fishing at peak areas and during periods of intense foraging activity has been used effectively to reduce bycatch in longline fisheries, and this principle is directly transferrable to trawl and other net fisheries.

Background

In recent years the focus on seabird mortality in longline fisheries has been broadened to include stern trawl fisheries, particularly in the Southern Hemisphere. This is reflected in the recently adopted FAO Best Practice Guidelines for IPOA/NPOA-Seabirds (FAO 2008), which includes trawl fisheries in addition to longline fisheries. The causes of mortality in trawl fisheries are varied and depend on the nature of the fishery (pelagic or demersal) and the species targeted, however, it may be categorised into two broad types: cable-related mortality, including collisions with net monitoring cables, warp cables and paravanes; and net-related mortality, which includes all deaths caused by net entanglement.

Global concern over the extent of seabird bycatch was a major reason for the establishment of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP). ACAP has comprehensively reviewed the scientific literature dealing with seabird bycatch mitigation in trawl fisheries and this document is a distillation of the review (available from the ACAP website)