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ROP-BFT REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The service provider for implementing year six (April 2015 / March 2016) of the ICCAT ROP-BFT comprises of a Consortium led by MRAG based in London and COFREPECHE in Paris assisted by regional partners located around the Mediterranean. This is the sixth year that the Consortium has been awarded the contract to implement the ROP-BFT and experience gained in previous years has been used to enhance systems in place for recruitment, training and deployment of observers and overall performance of the Programme.

The ROP-BFT allows the Commission to assess compliance with the regulatory framework. During year six of the ROP-BFT 141 observers have been trained, equipped and mobilised for 125 purse seine deployments, of which three were cancelled, and 29 deployments on farms to date, achieving 100% observer coverage on authorised purse seiners and farms, which included monitoring all fishing, transfer, caging and harvesting activities. This report describes the key issues faced in assessing compliance with the regulatory framework during implementation of year six of the ROP-BFT divided into operational and technical categories and focuses on issues that affect the observer role during deployments.

Estimating tuna transfers from video records: The key technical issue across all deployment types (on purse seiners and farms) was the inability to consistently estimate the amount of tuna transferred from video records. This was mainly a result of poor quality video records and/or viewing facilities [on vessels] or video availability immediately following the transfer operation. Many operators repeated transfers during caging operations because the initial video record was unsuitable for providing a means of accurately estimating the amount of tuna. Therefore further research/investigation is required to recommend a minimum standard of camera and viewing equipment for at-sea conditions. Such an investigation should also produce recommendations on procedures that should be followed by operators so that the video record covers the entire transfer process and produce a video record that could be provided to the observer immediately following the transfer to ensure they have sufficient time to review the footage during their deployment. It can also be very difficult for an observer to determine if video footage has been tampered with cuts in the video are hidden by cross fades, this problem is most likely when observers are not provided the video of the transfer immediately.

Improved consultation between CPCs, Secretariat, SCRS and ROP-BFT Consortium: During 2015 no meeting was held between CPCs, the Secretariat, SCRS and the Consortium. In previous years meetings were held which proved to be constructive in improving the Programme and the Consortium would propose that they be continued prior to the next fishing season.