

Original: English

REPORT OF THE EBCD TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (TWG)
(October 2015)

Introduction

The eBCD Technical Working Group (TWG) met three times throughout 2015; on 21-22 January in Vigo, Spain; 7-9 April in Brussels and 17-18 September in Madrid.

This report summarizes the main discussion points, an overall state of play of system development and the conclusions of the TWG's most recent meeting in Madrid.

Although details concerning decisions on the most technical discussions are appended to this report (**Appendix 1**), the overall matrix of all technical issues is not appended due to its size and complexity; nonetheless, it has since been updated in cooperation with TRAGSA and distributed in English to TWG members. This will be made available to any other CPCs upon request.

General state of play

In preparation for the meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures (IMM), the TWG met in January 2015. The report from that meeting and a draft recommendation from the Chair of the TWG can be found in the IMM Report (appendices 5 and 6, respectively). In summary, a significant number of technical issues were discussed although the TWG agreed to prioritize their work on the core issues required for system implementation. The importance to ensure the continuation of TRAGSA's work was also stressed, and the Secretariat was requested to initiate discussions for extending their contract until December 2015 (for system development).

To facilitate discussions of the IMM, the TWG met again on the margins of that meeting; the report of those discussions can also be found in the IMM report (appendix 7). In light of the discussions by the IMM group, it was agreed that the TWG should meet again as soon as possible to move ahead and initiate specifications for the development of the remaining core system issues.

The TWG met in Brussels on 7-9 April in which discussions were dominated with preparing the technical specifications for the core development items to be requested and potentially funded under the project extension budget ('flexible allotment', section 2.3 of the contract extension). In this regard, all new development was subject to an approval process between the TWG and the Executive Secretary prior to implementation by TRAGSA. In advance of authorizing any new development, the TWG requested a full cost and time estimate in order to inform decisions on possible implementation and prioritisation of core items.

In light of the decisions of the TWG, nine cost/time requests and the associated technical specifications were agreed and sent to TRAGSA in July/August. Two items were not agreed by the TWG; nonetheless, work began on the other 7 core items.

The objective of the most recent meeting in Madrid (held September 18-19, 2015) was to discuss the state of play of the development of the core items previously identified and a workplan for the finalisation of system development: Algeria, European Union (EU-ES, EU-FR and EU-PT), Japan, Tunisia and United States (US), TRAGSA and the ICCAT Secretariat attended.

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The main conclusion from that meeting is that the core system development is in its final stages. Notwithstanding unforeseen issues and/or new decisions of the Commission which may require additional development, TRAGSA confirmed that the remaining core development items will be completed no later than February 2016.

Nonetheless, it was agreed that the TWG needs to continue its work to steer ongoing the developments, to advance additional improvements that have been identified during previous TWG meetings or may be identified in the future, and to plan and implement training and international testing prior to full implementation of the system. In addition, the TWG will need to transform any decisions made by the Commission that affect the eBCD system in the forthcoming (2015) annual meeting into technical specifications for development by TRAGSA and follow-up on that development.

1. Technical issues

State of play of core technical issues

As mentioned, the TWG meeting in Brussels on 7-9 April was dominated with preparing the technical specifications for those items which would be requested and funded under the project extension budget ('flexible allotment', section 2.3). Following some further discussions by correspondence by the participants after the meeting these were agreed and sent to TRAGSA on 30 April. Responses to these requests and full costings and timescales were received from TRAGSA on 17 June. The TWG used a simple priority scoring system to rank these items in order of development. TRAGSA confirmed that the items could only be developed consecutively and not in parallel.

Following the receipt of the views of TWG members, 'Parallel transfers in live trade sector' and 'Grouping BCDs in trade section' were not agreed by one or more TWG members and further discussion was requested.

At the time of the September 2015 TWG meeting, only the first item had been implemented. Based on discussions, including input from TRAGSA, the Working Group decided to slightly amend the order of implementation of the items, as follows:

1. Trade of <3 fish/1 ton and paper BCD/eBCD conversion user profile
2. Domestic trade
3. Editing functionality
4. Data extraction queries/reports
5. CPC administrators editing new users/role applications
6. Re-export certificate (batch restriction)
7. Tag number search functionality

It was recalled that the technical specifications for item No. 2 'Domestic trade' included a number of technical options, a proportion of which may become redundant following decisions by the Commission in light of the provisions contained in the proposal by the Chair of the eBCD Working Group (Appendix 6 of the IMM Report). Hence, in order to be as expeditious and cost effective as possible, it was agreed that the work order would be as above with the exception of 'Domestic trade' which would remain 'floating' pending the outcome of discussions at the Commission's annual meeting. Any changes to the technical specifications in light of the decisions/discussions by the Commission may require a cost adjustment (assumed to be less).

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The Chair informed the TWG that Morocco preferred to withdraw their proposal for ‘Grouping BCDs in the trade section’; subsequently, the TWG agreed to delete this item from the core items requested under the project extension.

‘Parallel transfers in the live trade sector’ was re-discussed in light of its non-agreement for development by one or more TWG members. The complexities of these activities and their development in the system were noted; nonetheless, the TWG acknowledged the need to have the system accommodate the particularities of the fishery and existing ICCAT BCD requirements.

The technical requirements were updated in order to facilitate the trading of dead fish after caging, following natural mortality. This involved adding an optional trade possibility (section 8) after caging without the associated Regional Observer (ROP) signing/presence requirements. It was agreed that the Commission would need to approve this given the existing provisions under Recommendations [14-04] and [11-20] prior to initiating any development.

An analysis of the requirements for item No.1, Trade of <3 fish/1 ton and paper BCD/eBCD conversion user profile’ was presented by TRAGSA alongside the associated procedures for the new paper/eBCD conversion profile. A number of small adjustments were made by the TWG including: deletion of the ‘active box’ and changing of ‘Authorisation’ to ‘Activity period’. On the basis of these changes the TWG gave their agreement for implementation of this item.

TRAGSA presented an overall time plan for the completion of the outstanding development of core technical tasks to the Working Group (**Appendix 2**). It was noted that taking into account the re-ordering of the items requested by the TWG and the floating aspect of ‘domestic trade’ pending discussion at the annual meeting, all core development items would be completed no later than February 2016.

New/outstanding technical issues

Although it was agreed that the above-mentioned tasks were the top priorities for TRAGSA, there was discussion on other items either raised by TWG members and/or TRAGSA.

See **Appendix 1**.

2. International testing

Following previous decisions of the TWG, the benefits of another international testing was recalled; nonetheless, reservations on the most suitable time to implement it were noted.

It was decided that the second international test would be planned and initiated after the Commission meeting and only when the ongoing core development work underway by TRAGSA under the flexible allotment had been completed. In the meantime, bilateral testing between CPCs was encouraged to which TRAGSA confirmed their availability for support.

TWG members agreed to reflect on what specific operations in an international test would be of most interest for them and communicate them to the TWG prior to their next meeting/test planning.

TRAGSA noted that some test data remains in the production environment following the first international test and that this should be removed by CPCs before further testing.

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3. Training and manuals

Along the same lines as the international testing, the TWG decided that training specificities and the calendar for implementing the training requirement of the contract ('training for trainers') would be best discussed and implemented after the completion and testing of the core development work. Nonetheless, it was agreed that it was absolutely essential for this training to be completed prior to full implementation of the system.

In addition to the 'training for trainers' foreseen in the current contract (3 sessions of 4 days – totalling €27,000), the TWG agreed on the importance and utility of further training in the future directed to the full range of system users. There was general agreement that distance learning tools, in particular help videos, would be the most useful given their potential for greater dissemination, flexibility for adaption to different users and relatively lower costs.

It was confirmed that such training tools were not covered in the current contract and, hence, would need additional funding, if requested. Notwithstanding any general discussions on eBCD financing, the TWG noted that STACFAD should consider during its November 2015 meeting the need for additional funds to be provided in the short term to cover the costs associated with developing the required training tools.

For those manuals already developed, the TWG requested the circulation of word versions in order that editorial comments or language preference changes could be made directly and forwarded to TRAGSA by TWG members.

4. Implementation schedule

On the basis of remaining core development items and associated timetable presented by TRAGSA (**Appendix 2**), it was the view of the TWG that, notwithstanding any unforeseen complexities and possible development delays, the eBCD system could be available for full implementation by the spring of 2016.

Nonetheless, the TWG agreed that implementation must take into account possible development delays or technical difficulties encountered in the initial stages as well as the results of international testing and training.

Given that development work in the current contract only runs until 31 December 2015, a formal request will need to be sent to TRAGSA allowing them to finalise the development work at no additional cost (i.e. work undertaken between 31 December 2015 and February 2016).

5. State of play of contractual issues and future eBCD programme financing/support

Some TWG members recalled the importance of further discussing options for future programme support to facilitate the discussions of the Commission. Given that the contracts with TRAGSA both for support and maintenance and development will soon expire (31 December 2016) it was considered a pressing issue.

Although discussed in previous meetings/reports in more detail, the potential options for future programme financing/support included (or combinations thereof):

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- Costs reclaimed through eBCD issuance fee per certificate/quantity traded (e.g. per BFT ton)
- Apportioned to CPCs as per TAC % allocation key
- Voluntary contributions and publicity campaigns/merchandise
- Non-compliance contributions
- Fixed attribution(s) from the Working Capital Fund

The possible longer term funding approaches listed above are notwithstanding any decision taken in the meantime by the Commission concerning the further utilisation of the Working Capital Fund in the next biennial budget (2016-17).

The TWG stressed the importance to avoid significant increases in the administrative burden of the Secretariat in any chosen option(s).

6. Reporting to the Commission

It was agreed that a general report would be made available to the Commission on the current state of development of the system and progress made in resolving recent technical issues.

The full matrix of technical items will be updated between TRAGSA and the Chair of the TWG and circulated to TWG members prior to the 2015 ICCAT annual meeting.

Given the previous requests of the Commission for TRAGSA to be available for comment in the annual meeting, the TWG considered it essential that TRAGSA be present for at least part of the 2015 annual meeting. The ICCAT Secretariat was asked to follow this up with TRAGSA and also analyse how to finance their trip to Malta (given it was not included in the project expansion contract).

The TWG will meet on the margins of the 2015 ICCAT annual meeting, as needed. Notwithstanding any such meeting(s), it is expected that the TWG will need to meet after the annual meeting to transform decisions of the Commission into technical specifications, in particular those concerned with the proposal of the TWG Chair (Appendix 6 of the IMM Report and see also **PWG_408/2015**). In addition, the TWG will consider other previously discussed or new developments that will enhance eBCD system functioning without delaying system implementation.

Outstanding/New Technical Issues

1. Modification required by stereoscopic camera results (E-BFT)

There was discussion on how to deal with the required changes to eBCDs following analysis of the results of stereoscopic cameras in order to be compliant with paragraph 83 of Rec. 14-04.

It was agreed that the current system block generated by the ROP signature would be removed to allow CPC administrators to change the figures (number and weight) and a new check-box added to indicate when such changes had been made titled "*Figures changed in light of SC camera results*". The concerned section would not be recirculated to the ROP observer concerned in light of such changes.

TRAGSA were requested to provide a cost/time analyses for this function to which a specific cost/time request will be made.

It was noted that when farm flag CPCs made such changes to caging sections, Catching flag CPCs were also required to update related catch section figures. An automatic system update of the catch figures could be developed requiring only a simple acknowledgment/agreement by the CPC catching flags, nonetheless the TWG agreed that further discussion was needed by the Commission in light of existing ICCAT conservation and management measures.

2. Date issue caused by joint treatment of Sections 2 and 3 (catch and live trade)

The joint treatment of the catch and live trade sections previously agreed by the TWG and now reflected in the system was discussed, in particular the rationale to avoid excessive delays by purse seine vessels at sea prior to the first transfer.

However, in light of this, situations were reported to the TWG where the date of validation of the catch section was after the date of the live trade and which could be interpreted to be inconsistent with paragraph 12 of Rec. 11-20.

Although Japan requested time to reflect on this and notwithstanding any discussion on this issue by the Commission, TWG members felt no changes were needed to the system at this time.

3. Fishing season/year versus Calendar year

An issue was raised relating to the annual fishing campaigns in the system and actual open fishing seasons laid down in ICCAT conservation and management measures.

Annual fishing campaigns are defined in the eBCD system on a calendar year basis (1st January to 31st December) due to the requirements of other system parameters. In the case of Japan, however, the longline fishing season and, hence, their associated quota management regime, runs from August to July (i.e. one year's quota period spanning two calendar years); thus, the system currently considers the generation of eBCDs by Japan and the calculation of their annual quota utilisation incorrectly because Japan's fishing year spans two calendar years.

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The TWG agreed that the current campaign structure in the system needs amendment to cater for Japan's quota management, although they noted that the views of other CPCs, in particular those not present in the TWG meeting, would need to be taken into account before system changes are made.

The TWG decided that this issue would be reported to the Commission and, if needed, further discussed by the TWG should a meeting take place on the margins of the annual session. Although this was not considered a core item, it was agreed for a cost/time request to be sent to TRAGSA for its development.

TWG also discussed other issues related to the system's ability to track catches by calendar year and related quota consumption. In particular, there would be a problem with accurate accounting by the system in the case of fishing trips that span two calendar years. There could also be difficulties if catches are made at the very end of the year but not logged into the system until the start of the next calendar year. Currently the system does not allow fisherman to select a different fishing year/campaign other than the current one. The TWG discussed the possibility of allowing fisherman to select a previous fishing campaign if a catch is created during the first 2 months of a subsequent fishing campaign, e.g. in this case a catch on 30 December 2015 recorded on 2 January 2016 will be deducted from 2015 quota and have a 2015 eBCD code.

Aside from such system changes if implemented, it was agreed that training material needed to be clear to users that they must be careful to select the appropriate fishing campaign calendar year when entering data into the system.

4. eBCD generation by E-BFT 'Other' vessels

EBCD system functionality related to E-BFT bycatch was discussed despite having been discussed on a number of occasions including in the PWG/IMM intersessional meetings.

It was confirmed that users associated with vessels authorised as E-BFT 'Other Vessels' would be able to generate eBCDs, and there shall be no block in the system.

5. System alerts

TRAGSA indicated that currently the system only generates system alerts when 110% of a CPCs allocation and 90% of E-BFT individual vessels quota has been reached.

It was agreed that this system should be amended so that alerts are generated at 95% consumption (live weight) for both individual vessel quotas and overall CPC allocation consumption. It was recalled that the alerts shall only be displayed to the CPC authorities of the section concerned.

Following some further discussions on the general type, number and visibility of current system alerts, the TWG requested TRAGSA to prepare a document compiling all current alerts and system blocks so these are clearly understood and changes can be made if needed.

6. E-BFT transfers

TRAGSA indicated that currently no retroactive modification of fields in the transfer section was possible and any changes would require a deletion of the whole transfer section and re-completion by the responsible user concerned.

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The TWG discussed the procedures for eBCD treatment and validation of a number of joint activities related to live trade operations, included the joint treatment of Sections 2 and 3 already agreed.

TRAGSA performed an initial feasibility on some items discussed throughout the meeting; nonetheless, the TWG agreed that, given the implications of the suggested changes relative to the requirements of Rec. 11-20, further discussions were needed before cost/time requests would be requested for:

- Joint validation of catch/live-trade/farming (sections 2, 3 and 6).
- Joint validation of harvesting and trade (sections 7 and 8).

With respect to the first item, the EU explained that simultaneous validation is needed for the catch and live trade sections of the eBCD. The issue of the chronology of the catch, trade and validations is a redundant source of difficulties for importing and exporting CPCs and requires to be addressed in order to realistically reflect the constraints associated with these processes and the resulting practices. One of these constraints is linked to the need to rapidly transfer the fish from the seine to the transport cage to keep them alive, and therefore to proceed with the live trade. In addition, it is on the basis of the video of this transfer that a validation of the catch can be completed by the control authorities once they have established the number of fish being transferred. Live trade is therefore taking place before the validation of the catch section of the eBCD can occur. It was noted that validating the catch and live trade sections simultaneously would address this situation and that the provisions found under paragraph 3 of the Annex 1 of Recommendation 11-20 would have to be amended accordingly in the eBCD Recommendation. The WG discussed how a CPC could, after the live trade had already occurred and the product had changed hands, address a situation where it found a problem with the catch and could not validate the catch section of the eBCD. It was explained that there were other enforcement mechanisms that would be employed to address such situations.

Regarding the second item, the EU explained that the simultaneous validation of a harvest from a farm and the trade sections of the eBCD were needed as these activities also occur very closely in time and waiting for two validation processes could unnecessarily slow trade. In this case, the EU confirmed that physical movement of the fish would not take place until validations were complete.

7. W-BFT transshipment

Current ICCAT provisions only require a list of authorised ports in the E-BFT fishery; however, TRAGSA requested guidance from the TWG on transshipment procedures, in particular if E-BFT transshipments are likely to occur in western Atlantic ports.

In light of a range of potential possibilities and the need to avoid system blocks while taking into account current practices (some CPCs submit a list of western ports under the E-BFT while others do not) and the separate West/East management provisions, it was agreed that the port name field shall be changed from a drop down list to a free text field (W-BFT).

8. Non-ICCAT CPC access

TRAGSA requested an update of the state of play by the Commission/TWG on the issues related to access by non-ICCAT CPCs (items 9 and 16 in the global matrix of technical issues).

In light of previous discussions of the TWG and the Commission, TRAGSA were informed that trade between ICCAT CPCs and non-ICCAT countries would continue to be paper-based until such time as the Commission determines otherwise.

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In the context of eBCD, a suggested approach could be the development of a new user profile ‘Non-ICCAT member’ allowing only import/re-exports in an open access part of the system. TRAGSA noted that any such access by non-ICCAT members would require development and associated time/costs.

9. Data extraction tool

Given potential limitations to the current data extraction reports already requested under the flexible allotment, the TWG requested the possibility for CPC users to generate pivot tables providing them with significantly more options for data analysis.

It was agreed that the TWG would request TRAGSA to update the cost/time request for this item.

10. Importer/Buyer field in Trade Section

The TWG agreed to send a cost/time request for this item as previously discussed in January 2015; however, this was not considered a core item.

Calendar for Implementation of the Remaining Core Development Items

Appendix 2

Id	Task	Start	End	01/08/15		01/09/15		01/10/15		01/11/15		01/12/15		01/01/16		01/02/16
				03/08	17/08	31/08	14/09	28/09	12/10	26/10	09/11	23/11	07/12	21/12	04/01	18/01
1	NO. 3 – TRADE OF <3/1 TON FISH AND PAPER BCD/Ebcd CONVERSION USER PROFILE (10)	17/08/2015	18/11/2015													
8																
9	WG MEETING	17/09/2015	18/09/2015													
10																
11	NO. 1 – DOMESTIC TRADE (3/3.10)	23/11/2015	28/01/2016													
18																
19	NO. 5 - EDITING FUNCTIONALITY (21)	23/09/2015	29/10/2015													
26																
27	NO. 4 – DATA EXTRACTION QUERIES/REPORTS (16)	25/09/2015	17/11/2015													
34																
35	NO. 8 - CPC ADMINISTRATORS EDITING NEW USERS/ROLE APPLICATIONS (3.6)	06/10/2015	02/12/2015													
42																
43	NO. 6 - RE-EXPORT CERTIFICATE (BATCH RESTRICTION (31)	09/10/2015	03/02/2016													
50																
51	NO. 02 – TAG NUMBER SEARCH FUNCTIONALITY (4)	22/10/2015	09/02/2016													