

A summary of the ICCAT Regional Observer Programme 2023 Report
(submitted by ROP-Transshipment implementing consortium)

1. Introduction

In 2006 ICCAT adopted [Rec. 06-11](#), most recently updated by [Rec. 21-15](#), to establish a Programme for Transshipment in response to concerns that at-sea transshipment operations constituted a gap in the enforcement scheme of the Commission. MRAG Ltd. and Capricorn Fisheries Monitoring cc (the Consortium) has been implementing the Regional Observer Program (ROP) since its inception in April 2007.

The ROP aims to address Member State concerns regarding laundering of Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) tuna catches by monitoring transshipments at sea from large-scale pelagic longline fishing vessels (LSPLVs) operating in the Convention area. [Rec. 21-15](#) states that all tuna, tuna like species and other species caught in association with these species in the Convention area must be transhipped in port. However, at sea transshipments can be authorised by Contracting Parties provided the Carrier Vessel (CV) has VMS capabilities and a trained ICCAT observer on board to monitor the process.

2. Deployments

This report provides a summary of the ROP's seventeenth year, covering transshipments that occurred between the 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2023. This spanned transshipments across deployments 275/22 to 288/23. The figures include all deployments, vessel transshipments, fish transhipped and PNCs reported over this time period.

2.1 Summary of deployments

A total of 346 at-sea transshipments took place across 13 trips, all were monitored accounting for 734 sea days with an average deployment length of 56 days. The total observed weight of fish transhipped over the period was 23,281.739 tonnes. A summary of key figures from all deployments is given in **Table 1**.

Of the 346 transshipments, 49.1% were from Chinese Taipei flagged vessels, 28.6% were from Japanese flagged vessels, 21.7% were from Chinese flagged vessels, and 0.6% were from Korean flagged vessels (**Figure 1**). The location of transshipments conducted by vessels under the ROP are displayed in **Figure 2**. Transshipments were mainly located in the central Atlantic along the equator, with many around the EEZ of Ascension Island, and distributed along the length of the west coast of Africa.

Table 1. Summary of deployments 275/22 – 288/23 and weight of fish transhipped in 2023.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Vessel Name</i>	<i>Observer Name</i>	<i>On Date</i>	<i>Off Date</i>	<i>Port On</i>	<i>Port Off</i>	<i>Days</i>	<i>No. of T/S</i>	<i>Observed</i>	<i>Declared</i>
275	Chitose	Llewellyn Lewis	02/12/2022	29/01/2023	Cape Town	Cristobal	59	10	507.29	518.03
276	Harima	Anthony Donnelly	04/01/2023	27/02/2023	Cape Town	Balboa	55	47	2650.03	2712.80
277	Meita Maru	Oguzhan Ayaz	25/12/2022	01/02/2023	Walvis Bay	IOTC Cross Over	39	9	531.49	526.79
278	Taisei Maru No.15	Martin Emanuel	24/12/2022	15/02/2023	Cape Town	IOTC Cross Over	54	43	2502.26	2435.61
279	Ibuki	Ugur Kaplama	13/02/2023	05/05/2023	Cape Town	Singapore	82	44	3339.43	3418.59
280	Tuna Queen	Rauf Berkay Eryericer	11/03/2023	25/04/2023	Panama City	Cristobal	46	25	2270.68	2334.48
281	Yachiyo	Hentie Heynes	23/03/2023	30/05/2023	Cape Town	Cristobal	69	49	3291.12	3322.25
282	Taisei Maru No.24	Tony Dimitrov	19/05/2023	02/08/2023	Cape Town	Singapore	76	38	3122.54	3077.10
283	Chikuma	Devon Clive Hunt	06/08/2023	30/09/2023	Cape Town	Cristobal	56	27	1837.68	1859.86
284	Taisei Maru No.15	Sami Yildiz	23/07/2023	20/09/2023	Cape Town	IOTC Cross Over	60	30	1794.33	1755.86
285	Meita Maru	Hentie Heynes	14/08/2023	23/09/2023	Cape Town	Singapore	41	4	709.08	741.65
286	Genta Maru	Rauf Berkay Eryericer	13/09/2023	15/10/2023	Cape Town	Valleta	33	14	352.33	361.48
288	Yachiyo	Eva María Cejuela	10/12/2023	11/02/2024	Valleta	Singapore	64	6	373.48	370.85

*Some deployments started prior to or ended after 2023, however the figures shown here are only representative of transhipments that took place during this reporting period.

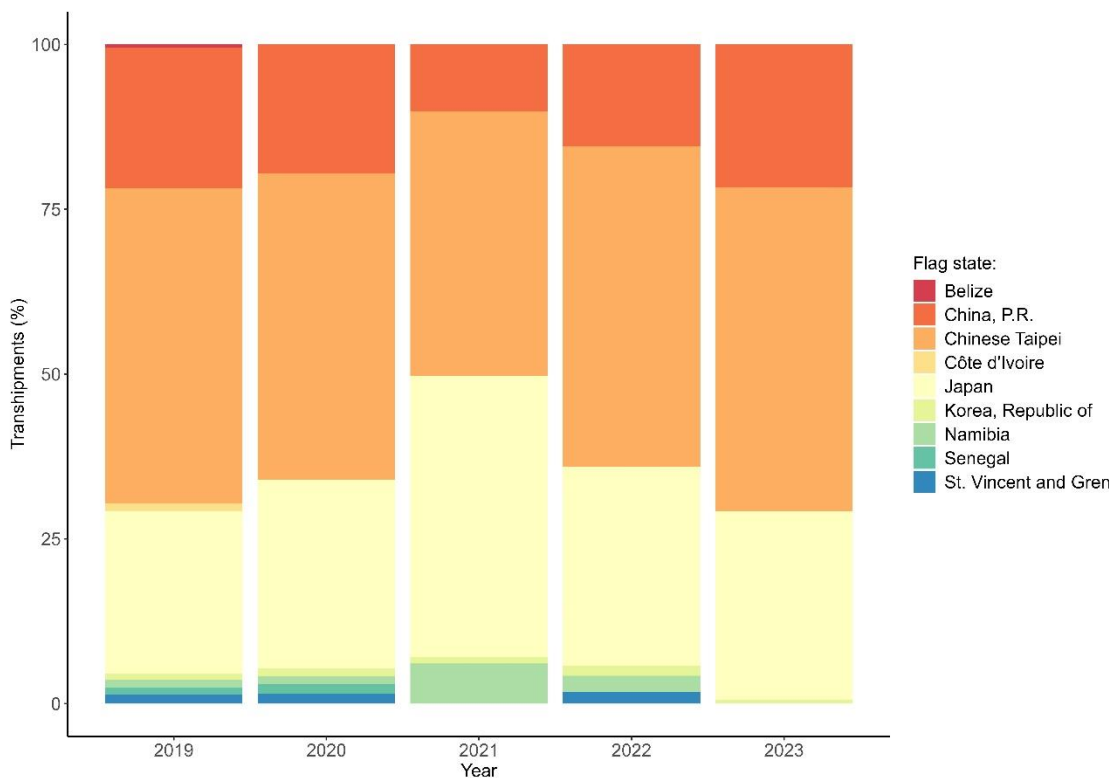


Figure 1. The percentage of transhipments during 2023 compared to the previous 4 years by large-scale pelagic longline vessels (LSPLVs) Flag State.

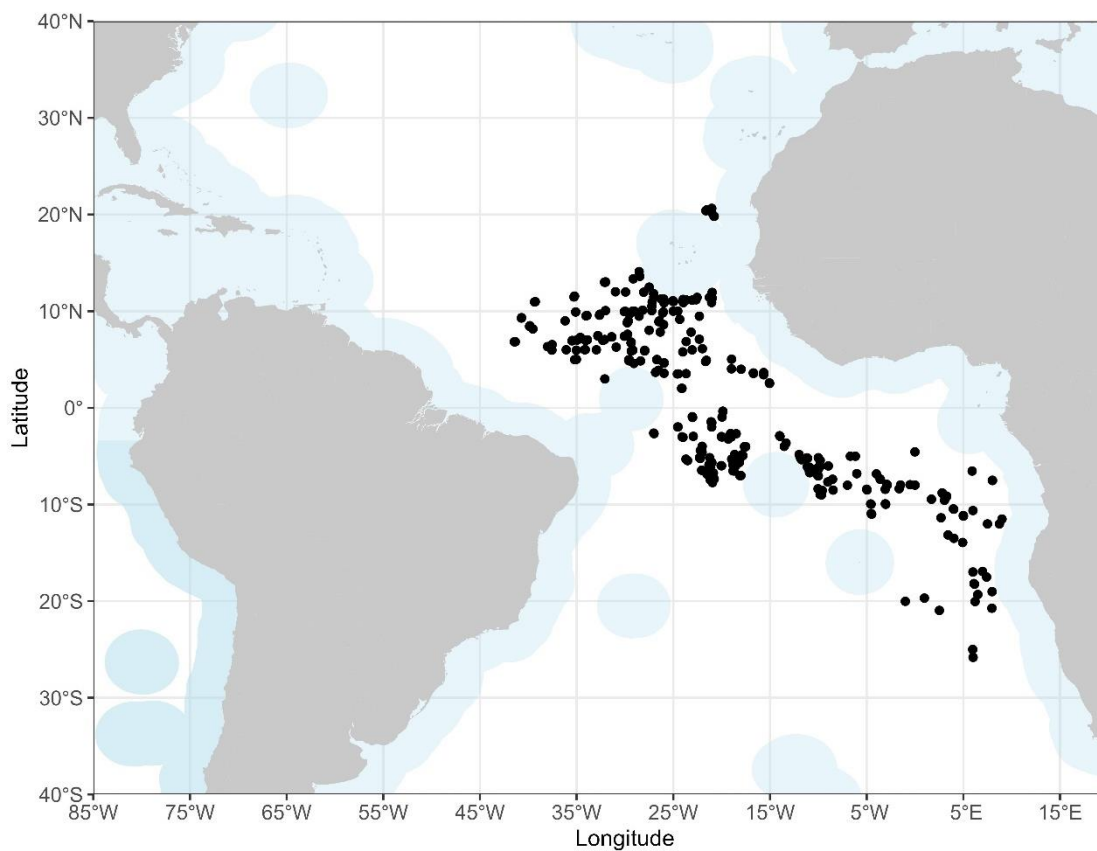


Figure 2. Locations of transhipments during 2023.

A summary of the number of ROP deployments by month for 2023 is shown in Error! Reference source not found.. **Figure 4** indicates the number of transhipments and the total weight transhipped each month. **Figure 5, Figure 6 and Figure 7** show the duration of transhipments, the quantity of products transferred and the rates of products transhipped per hour, respectively, and they remain similar to previous years.

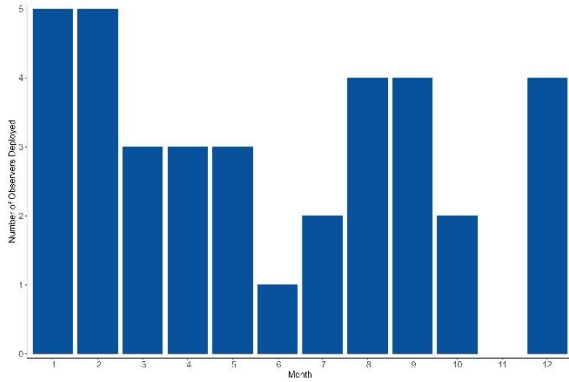


Figure 3. Number of observers deployed by month.

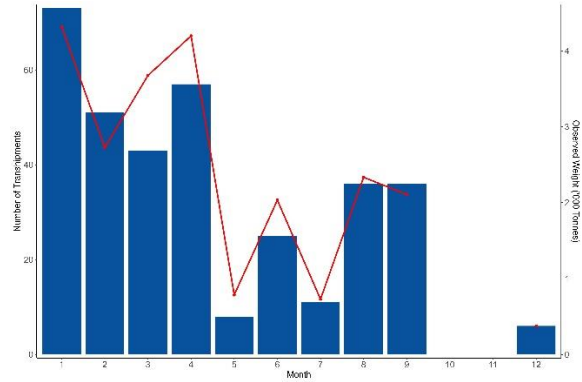


Figure 4. Number of transhipments and weights transferred (all fish, red line) by month.

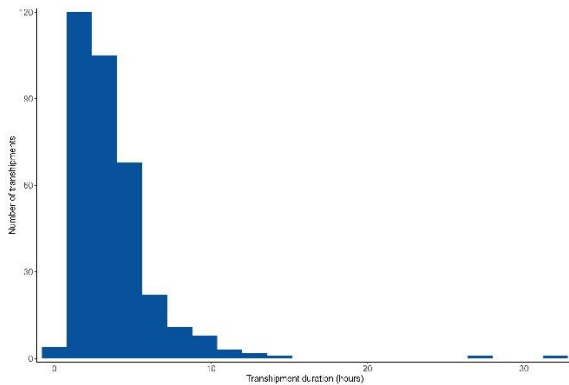


Figure 5. Duration of Transhipments (hours).

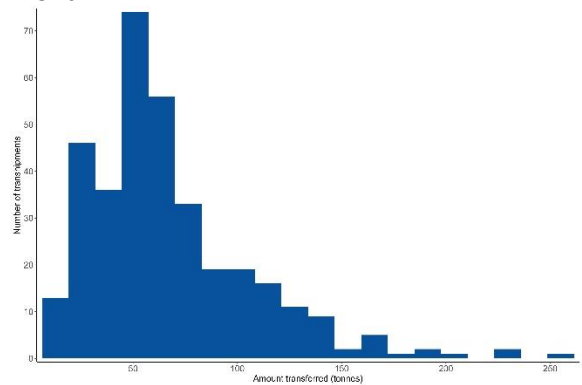


Figure 6. Quantities transferred per transhipment (tonnes).

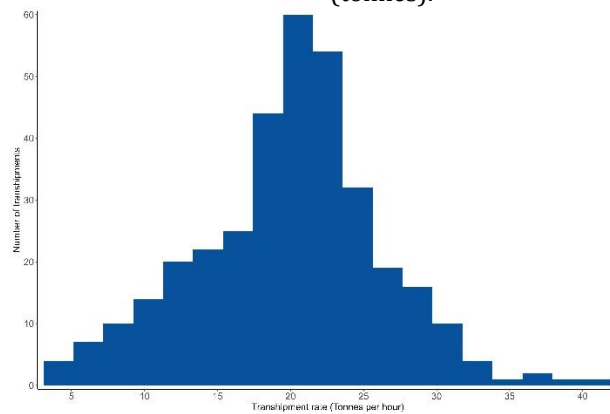


Figure 7. Rate of Products Transhipped.

2.2 Transshipments within EEZs

No transshipments were observed to be made within EEZs.

Procedures and logistics

The deployment request procedure has remained the same as previously described by the Consortium in annual reviews of the ICCAT ROP.

During the period covered by this report, three vessels crossed over from the Atlantic Ocean into the Indian Ocean on to an IOTC deployment without stopping at an Atlantic port first, no vessels crossed over from the IOTC area.

3. Species identification

The methods used by observers for species identification and reporting procedures have remained the same and are detailed in previous reports (ICCAT 2011).

4. Southern bluefin tuna

Since the adoption of the Resolution on the Implementation of a CCSBT Catch Documentation Scheme on 1st January 2010, any southern bluefin tuna (*Thunnus maccoyii*) transferred must be accompanied by a catch monitoring form (CMF) which should be countersigned by the observer. During the period covered by this report southern bluefin tuna were transhipped on 3 occasions over three deployments, with a total of 183.752 tonnes observed (Table 2). Observers prepare a separate report for CCSBT on any trips where southern bluefin tuna are transhipped.

Table 2. Transshipments of southern bluefin tuna (*Thunnus maccoyii*) during 2023.

No.	CV	CV ICCAT No	T/S No	Date	Obs. Wt.	No. fish
282	Taisei Maru No.24	AT000JPN00571	30	29/06/2023	72.72	1484
284	Taisei Maru No.15	AT000JPN00651	28	09/09/2023	42.98	885
285	Meita Maru	AT000PAN00316	2	25/08/2023	68.06	1615

5. In-Port Fish Transshipments

In 2022 ROP observers began monitoring offloading of the products from the CV at the end of each trip, where possible. As specified in Recommendation 21-15, Appendix 2, Paragraph 6.2 I, observers must:

'...observe and estimate quantities of product by species when offloaded in the port where the observer is disembarked to verify consistency with quantities received during at sea transhipment operations.'

It was agreed that the observer would monitor in port transshipments if the vessel were to offload where they were scheduled to be disembarked, however the observer should not be delayed in disembarking and returning home to monitor the offloading. It was acknowledged that this would not necessarily be a valid way to verify what the vessel received from transshipments at sea. It has proved difficult to plan ahead as the location of offloading is not mentioned in the request, unlike at sea transshipments. As a result only one offloading in Cabo Town, consisting of 381 tonnes of bait, was monitored in 2023.

Observers have been monitoring transshipments in port between vessel. This is normally midway through the deployment, these are shown in **Table 3**. Transshipments occurring in port.

Table 3. Transhipments occurring in port.

<i>Port</i>	<i>CV Name</i>	<i>CV Flag</i>	<i>No. of T/S</i>
Cape Town	Meita Maru	Panama	2
Porto Grande St Vincent	Chitose	Singapore	13
Porto Grande St Vincent	Taisei Maru No.15	Japan	3
San Vincent	Harima	Panama	4
San Vincent	Yachiyo	Panama	1
Sao Vicente	Meita Maru	Panama	5

6. Weight estimation

The methodology used by observers for estimating transhipment weights remains the same as those previously described by the Consortium (ICCAT 2011).

7. Observer Training

Currently there are 52 active ICCAT ROP observers, although not all are available all the time due to other commitments. Due to natural turnover of personnel, it is important to maintain training on a regular basis. 8 observers were trained in 2023 (**Table 4**).

With prior agreement from ICCAT, IOTC and CCSBT, observers trained under any of the programmes are available to work under all three RFMOs. This reduces costs and ensures a high standard of data integrity. It also allows observers to remain on the vessel if it crosses between RFMO areas in order to save on deployment costs.

To reflect this arrangement, observers are issued with a unique observer number and identification card, which is valid for all three RFMOs.

Table 4. ROP transhipment training conducted in 2023.

<i>Observer name</i>	<i>Training location</i>
Nicholas Van Tol	Cape Town, South Africa
John Simons	Cape Town, South Africa
Marijana Dokoza	Split, Croatia
Ivan Karužić	Split, Croatia
Jon Ander Marin Estevez	Split, Croatia
Anita Vidovic	Split, Croatia
Marcelo Alexandre Vieira Traquina	Split, Croatia
Mladen Višić	Split, Croatia

8. Observer programme databases

The database continues to be updated as required and up to the end of 2023 contains data on 7,829 transhipments.

On request from ICCAT, continued developments in the database over the last year have included the capture of data pertaining to additional monitoring tasks outlined in Recommendation 21-15.

9. Potential Non-Compliances (PNCs)

Since 2012 ICCAT have required observers to board LSPLVs to carry out checks on vessels against various ICCAT Recommendations. Any potential non-compliances (PNCs) are then submitted to the Flag State by the observer through the Consortium. The Flag State then has the opportunity to respond. PNC codes and descriptions are summarised in **Attachment 1**.

Since the Recommendation came into force, 1041 PNCs have been reported by observers over 102 deployments, these are shown in Figure 8. It shows a steep decline in PNCs since 2014, although this will have been skewed in recent years due to COVID. 6 PNCs were issued during 2023 (Table 5), although due to an internal error 3 of the PNCs were not reported to the flag state at the time that the PNCs were issued and therefore no response was received, the flag States that were notified responded accordingly.

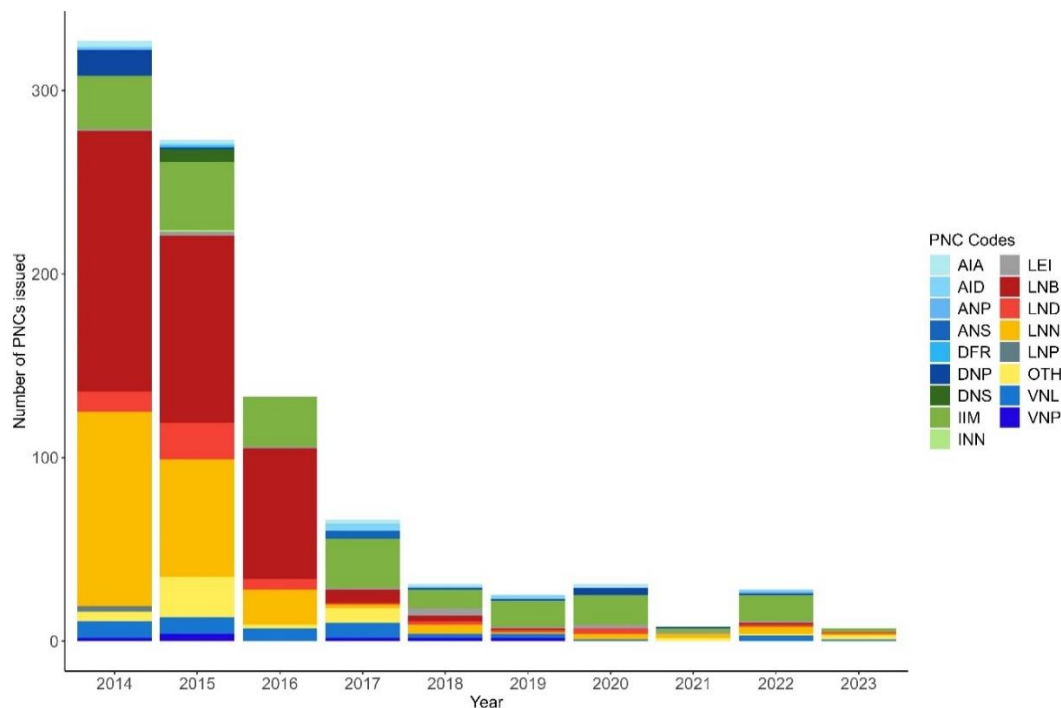


Figure 8. Number and proportion of PNCs issued since their introduction.

Table 5. PNCs issued in 2023.

Dep. No	T/S No.	CV Name	LSPLV Name	PNC Code
281	12	Yachiyo	Hung Chuan Fa	Markings not displayed correctly
281	17	Yachiyo	Lu Qing Yuan Yu 027	Logbook sheets not numbered
278	11	Taisei Maru No.15	LIAO YUAN YU 99	NRN on AFT did not match ICCAT records
278	26	Taisei Maru No.15	Koei Maru No.6	Logbook not up to date
279	41	Ibuki	Chokyu Maru No. 11	Markings not displayed correctly
280	3	Tuna Queen	Chokyu Maru No. 12	No power light visible on the VMS unit

10. Impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the programme

While the Coronavirus pandemic continued to present a number of challenges to the Consortium, operations have largely returned to normal. Quarantine requirements and most Covid related travel restrictions have now been lifted. There is still a requirement in place that all ROP observers are fully vaccinated before deploying and full boardings of LSPLVs have recommenced this year.

11. Conclusions and Recommendations

As highlighted in Section 5, monitoring of offloadings in port continues to be a problem. We would recommend that a vessel should indicate where and when it planning to offload at the start of the trip, as part of the notification process so any monitoring can be more effectively planned.

It is encouraging to see that the number of PNCs issued have continued to decrease since vessel inspections were introduced, with only 6 PNCs reported in 2023, down from 27 PNCs reported in 2022 and 329 PNCs reported in 2014, with the greatest improvements being made in logbook compliance. It is notable that when inspections first started many of the logbooks were not bound or incorrectly numbered, the quality of logbooks presented has improved significantly. The consortium would like to thank the CPCs for their timely response to all reported PNCs.

Potential non-compliance descriptions and codes

<i>PNC Event</i>	<i>Code</i>
General	
Observer prevented from carrying out duties on board the LSPLV	GLV
Document / Verification	
Transshipment Declaration not completed	DTD
Transshipment within EEZ without authorisation from coastal state	DEZ
Undocumented transshipments of fish received by the LSPLV	DFR
Prior authorisation to tranship not presented to the observer by the LSPLV	DNP
Prior authorisation to tranship not standard with Flag State	DNS
VMS	
No VMS shown to the observer on board the LSPLV	VNP
No power light visible on the VMS unit	VNL
ATF	
No Authorisation to fish presented to the observer by the LSPLV	ANP
Authorisation to fish not standard with Flag State	ANS
Authorisation to fish dates not valid	AID
Authorisation to fish not valid for ICCAT area	AIA
Logbook	
No logbook presented to the observer by the LSPLV	LNP
Logbook entries incorrect	LEI
Logbook not bound	LNB
Logbook sheets not numbered	LNN
Logbook not up to date	LND
Identification	
Vessel without an ICCAT number involved in transshipment operations	INN
LSPLV markings not displayed correctly	IIM
CCSBT	
No CCSBT Catch document presented for SBT	CND
SBT not individually tagged	CNT
Other	
Other event not elsewhere covered	OTH