Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Best Practice Seabird Bycatch Mitigation Criteria and Definition

Reviewed at the Eighth Meeting of the Advisory Committee

Punta del Este, Uruguay, 15 -19 September 2014

Best Practice Seabird Bycatch Mitigation Criteria and Definition

The Eighth Meeting of ACAP's Advisory Committee (AC87) endorsed the following definition of Best Practice to be used when developing advice on mitigation measures to reduce seabird bycatch:

i. *Individual fishing technologies and techniques should be selected from those shown by experimental research to significantly*[1] *reduce the rate of seabird incidental mortality*[2] *to the lowest achievable levels*. Experience has shown that experimental research comparing the performance of candidate mitigation technologies to a control of no deterrent, where possible, or to status quo in the fishery, yields definitive results. Analysis of fishery observer data after it has been collected on the relative performance of mitigation approaches are plagued with a myriad of confounding factors. Where a significant relationship is demonstrated between seabird behaviour and seabird mortality in a particular system or seabird assemblage, significant reductions in seabird behaviours, such as the rate of seabirds attacking baited hooks, can serve as a proxy for reduced seabird mortality. Ideally, when simultaneous use of fishing technologies and practices is recommended as best practice, research should demonstrate significantly improved performance of the combined measures.

ii. *Fishing technologies and techniques, or a combination thereof, shall have clear and proven specifications and minimum performance standards for their deployment and use.* Examples would include: specific bird scaring line designs (lengths, streamer length and materials; etc.), number (one vs. two) and deployment specifications (such as aerial extent and timing of deployment), night fishing defined by the time between the end of nautical dusk and start of nautical dawn, and line weighting configurations specifying mass and placement of weights or weighted sections.

iii. *Fishing technologies and techniques shall be demonstrated to be practical, cost effective and widely available*. Commercial fishing operators are likely to select for seabird bycatch

[1] Any use of the word 'significant' in this document is meant in the statistical context

[2] This may be determined by either a direct reduction in seabird mortality or by reduction in seabird attack rates, as a proxy

reduction measures and devices that meet these criteria including practical aspects concerning safe fishing practices at sea.

iv. *Fishing technologies and techniques should, to the extent practicable, maintain catch rates of target species.* This approach should increase the likelihood of acceptance and compliance by fishers.

v. *Fishing technologies and techniques should, to the extent practicable not increase the bycatch of other taxa.* For example, measures that increase the likelihood of catching other protected species such as sea turtles, sharks and marine mammals, should not be considered best practice (or only so in exceptional circumstances).

vi. *Minimum performance standards and methods of ensuring compliance should be provided for fishing technologies and techniques, and should be clearly specified in fishery regulations.* Relatively simple methods to check compliance should include, but not be limited to, port inspections of branch lines to determine compliance with branch line weighting, determination of the presence of davits (tori poles) to support bird scaring lines, and inspections of bird scaring lines for conformance with design requirements. Compliance monitoring and reporting should be a high priority for enforcement authorities.