



---

**TO ALL COMMISSION MEMBERS, COOPERATING NON-MEMBERS,  
PARTICIPATING TERRITORIES AND OBSERVERS**

**Circular No.: 2020/125**

**Date: 22 October 2020**

**No. pages: 04**

**Outcome of Decision on Extension of WCPFC Decisions in the Context of COVID-19 relating to Purse Seine Observer Coverage, At-Sea Transshipment for Purse Seine Vessels, and At-Sea Transshipment Observers until 15 February 2021**

Dear Colleagues,

The Chair's proposal for an extension of the three decisions taken in response to COVID-19 was circulated in Circular 2020/122 of 13 October 2020. At the end of the 7-day review period on 20 October 2020, substantive comments were received from Korea, FFA Members and the EU. These have been circulated to CCMs. All those Members responding indicated their support for the proposed extension. The decision that the Commission has therefore endorsed is set out in *Annex 1* to this circular.

The extension of the COVID-19 related Decisions until 15 February 2021 provides sufficient time for WCPFC17 to decide on any necessary COVID-19 measures and for them to enter into force prior to the expiry of the three intersessional decisions. An item on the Intersessional Decisions in Response to COVID-19 is included in the provisional agenda for WCPFC17, which was circulated to CCMs in Circular 2020/121 of 9 October 2020. I invite CCMs to consider in advance of WCPFC17 how best to ensure the implementation of the WCPFC ROP and transshipment measures, including the safe return of observers to work.

Thank you once again for your flexibility and cooperation regarding the COVID-19 Decisions. I am confident that this spirit will carry through to the forthcoming WCPFC17 meeting.

Keep well and stay safe.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jung-re Riley Kim', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jung-re Riley Kim  
**WCPFC CHAIR**

cc: Feleti P Teo, OBE, WCPFC Executive Director  
Josie Tamate, WCPFC Vice Chair

## DECISION

### The Commission endorses that:

#### A. Purse Seine Observer Coverage

1. The Commission agrees to suspend the requirements for observer coverage on purse seine vessels set out in paragraphs 34 and 35 of CMM 2018-01 and CMM 2018-05 until 15 February 2021.
2. The temporary suspension will apply to new trips after a vessel operator has met any requirement for repatriation of observers currently on board a vessel. Repatriation, in this context, means returning the observer to his/her home port, in consultation with the observer provider.
3. Repatriation is to be expedited by the vessel operator and the relevant flag State, in close consultation with the relevant national Observer Provider. The observer's costs will continue to be met by the vessel operator until such time as the observer is returned to his/her home port.
4. During the period of suspension, the VMS requirements and procedures of paragraphs 33 and 37 of CMM 2018-01 that apply to purse seine vessels during FAD closure periods will also apply to purse seine vessels which are not carrying observers.

#### B. At-sea Transshipment for Purse Seine Vessels

1. Until 15 February 2021, and without prejudice to the provision that “transshipment at sea by purse seine vessels shall be prohibited” as stipulated by paragraph 25 of CMM 2009-06, if it is not feasible for a purse seine vessel to tranship in port despite its best effort due to port closures and relevant access restrictions related to the prevention of COVID-19, that particular vessel may tranship at sea in an area under the jurisdiction of a Port State on the following conditions:
  - (1) Subject to any temporary measures that Port States may take regarding transshipment within a designated area of their national jurisdiction in relation to COVID-19, purse seine vessels may tranship at sea in areas under national jurisdiction of a port state in the area between 20°N and 20°S in accordance with the domestic laws and regulations of the port State.
  - (2) CCMs shall ensure that their purse seine vessels comply with all other binding requirements established under the Convention and Commission decisions using all MCS tools available, including but not limited to verification of catch and effort and logbook data, VMS and AIS (when available) monitoring and examination of other relevant information such as landing and transshipment data.
  - (3) The flag State CCM of any such authorized purse seine vessel that is required to be on the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels shall notify the Executive Director that the vessel is authorized to engage in transshipment outside of port.

2. CCMs whose vessels are subject to these temporary arrangements are encouraged, to the extent practicable and in accordance with their domestic rules and regulations, to implement additional MCS measures and to follow-up these transhipments through inspection or observation or monitor these transhipments electronically if available during the application of the arrangements. In doing so, the requirements of the port State or coastal State are to be adhered to by all vessels within that State's jurisdiction.

### **C. At-sea Transhipment Observers**

1. The requirements in paragraph 13 of CMM 2009-06 are temporarily suspended until February 15 2021. Paragraphs 14, 15 and 16 of CMM 2009-06 will be also suspended during the same period when a vessel is not carrying an observer. The temporary suspension will apply to new trips after disembarkation of the observers currently on board the vessels participating in the at-sea transhipments indicated in the aforementioned paragraph of CMM 2009-06 on the following conditions:

(1) Concerned flag CCMs shall indicate, when they send the Transhipment Declaration referred to in paragraph 35(iv) of CMM 2009-06 to the Executive Director, whether the particular at-sea transhipment had occurred under this temporary suspension. The Secretariat shall provide a summary of at-sea transhipments without observers that occurred under this temporary suspension, based on Transhipment Declarations submitted to the Executive Director in accordance with paragraph 35(iv) of CMM 2009-06, in the Annual Report on Transhipment to and for consideration of TCC17.

(2) CCMs shall ensure that their vessels comply with all other binding requirements established under the Convention and Commission decisions using all MCS tools available, including but not limited to verification of catch and effort and logbook data, VMS and AIS (when available) monitoring and examination of other relevant information such as landing and transhipment data.

(3) If the at-sea transhipment takes place in areas under national jurisdiction of a coastal State, the vessels shall tranship in accordance with the domestic laws and regulations of the coastal State.

2. CCMs whose vessels are subject to this temporary arrangement are encouraged, to the extent practicable and in accordance with their domestic rules and regulations, to implement additional MCS measures and to follow-up these transhipments through inspection or observation or monitor these transhipments electronically if available during the application of the arrangements. In doing so, the requirements of a coastal State are to be adhered to by all vessels within that coastal State's jurisdiction.

### **D. Review**

1. This decision takes effect immediately once the Commission has endorsed it. The Commission will review its decision by 15 February 2021. In undertaking such review, the Commission should take into consideration Article 30 of the Convention and the safety and livelihoods of ROP observers, in particular SIDS observers.