



**11<sup>th</sup> Regional Observer Coordinators Workshop**  
**Forum Fisheries Agency**  
Honiara, Solomon Islands  
**June 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**NATIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAMME - (SAMOA)**

**1. General Information**

The observer programme contributes significantly to the monitoring and collection of reliable data in order for our fisheries authorities to understand where, who and what is happening in our smallest EEZ (120,000 km<sup>2</sup>) in the Pacific Region. Other monitoring systems such as MCS, Licensing, Port Sampling, Vessel log sheets and Boat Counts are separate establishments interrelated with the Observer programme to serve our EEZ management purpose.

Samoa tuna longline fishery is mainly exploited by longline domestic fishing vessels comprise of frozen Albacore which supply the canneries in American Samoa, fresh chilled tuna (Yellowfin and Bigeye) for US and NZ markets and the bycatch sold in various local shops and markets.

Longline fishing days are fluctuated throughout the year, as in April marked when Albacore season about to move in great quantities. The season has continued and apparently peaking in June to July then gradual decreasing in the end of August to September. These seasonal changes eventually diverted most longline vessels (size A) to other fishing methods like trolling and bottom fishing until the next Albacore season, while the bigger fishing vessels (size B-E) remain with longline fishing or sometimes moor at the wharf due to unaffordable operational costs.

In June 2010 – May 2011 reflects associated distinctions for each license vessel relevant for observer placement in meeting observer coverage in our EEZ are in the table 1 as follow.

**Table1. License fishing vessels & associated distinctions**

<b>Class</b>	<b>License/Registered</b>	<b>Size/length (m)</b>	<b>Crew &amp; Skipper</b>	<b>No of hooks/set</b>	<b>Average trip/year</b>
A	61	up to 11	3	350-450	22
B	1	11 up to 12.5	4	1000-1300	14

C	3	12.5 up to 15	5	1500-2000	17
D	8	15 up to 20.5	6	2000-2500	12
E	2	Over 20.5	7	2500-3000	8

### 1.1 Vessels eligible for observer placement

#### Class D & E

- License and Register;
- Have room for observer;
- Life raft capacity carries more than seven (1x10) as safety requirements;
- Large fish-hold capacity with very large number of hooks deployed per set;
- May suspect of fish discarded during the Albacore peak season in May to July;
- Fishing activities cover vast ocean in distance;
- Highly safety equipped and fitness construction withstand unfavorable weather

(Very safe and comfortable)

### 1.2 Vessels not eligible for Observer placement

#### Class A, B, & C

- License and Register
- Limited space
- No liferaft on size A & B and size C installed with liferaft that accommodated the crew and captain only)
- All the catch is retained and the uneconomic species such as Unicornfish, Crested oarfish, Scabbardfish, Lancetfish and Stingrays are struck off before landing is regarded as discard.

### 1.3 Observer Placements

The Observer programme is obligated to place fisheries observers on our domestic longline fishing vessels recognizing certain safety requirements. These guarantee our placements on eligible conditions stated under 1.1 (Vessels eligible for observer placement).

We would not disregard others mention in 1.2 (Vessels not eligible for Observer placement), but consideration draw from previous observer trips results. The programme's discretion however, carry out spot check trips to confirm previous results are consistently maintained or respond upon any noncompliance matter suspected from port sampling effort.

### 1.4 Certified Observers and Constraints

Currently, observers increased to five after two new recently certified under PIRFO Certification Standards carried out in Fiji. They are all registered under the Samoa National Programme which principally guided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (Fisheries Division). Our Programme has employed observers under certain

working conditions. These are unlikely due to Public Service Commission's (PSC) policies shielding observers employed by Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF). And it is an issue which differently entitled our observers concerning Internal and External constraints.

Internal constraints encountered

Fisheries Observer staffs:

- 4 observers are Fisheries Division's staffs whom are not entitle to take observer trips in other programmes such as, US Treaty and others unless taking your own days off (leave without pay). It violates the Public Service Commission (PSC) policies;
- Only allow taking local fleet trips (Size D & E) and is entitled for \$25 ST per night (as camping allowance). Current issue with observer's sea allowance which identify as camping allowances but incomparable of their environmental risks;
- Involved in other fisheries activities such as research fishing activities, FAD deployments, monitoring & maintenance. Refer other roles perform in the Addendum follows.

Non Fisheries Observer staffs (self employed)

- Can take observer trips on US Treaty and other observer programme's request;
- Cannot take local observer trips due to our Treasury payment policies, PSC working policies and Insurance policies

External constraints encountered

- Some vessel owners have not shown interest on taking observers by creating excuses that their liferaft has limited space and expensive feeding of the observer while paying full amount for license fees
- Does not like observers to see their discards (size D & E)

*Note: The Observer Programme is responsible for their observer's life insurance.*

**Table2 Other relevant information in the programme**

<b>Observers (National)</b>	<b>Vessel by gear type</b>	<b>Trips by gear type</b>	<b>Observers (various programme) served by P/coordinator</b>	<b>Number of transshipment</b>	<b>Status of Debriefing process</b>	<b>Number of potential debriefer</b>
5	refer table 1	refer table 1	6 Cook island observers (Samoan nationals) placements	3 FJs based longline onto Japanese Carrier flagging	Debrief national observers (acting debriefing)	One who debriefed national observers

				Vanuatu on 20 <sup>th</sup> -22 <sup>nd</sup> Nov 2010		
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## **2. Sub-Regional Activities**

Our National programme had assisted one Observer programme, Cook Islands through good spirit of cooperation in providing locals for their trainings while providing them with job opportunities. Additional are making placements on their vessel to meet sharing of obligations as requirements to minimize issues compromising our hard efforts.

## **3. Sub-Regional & ROP Standards**

Some of the key solutions identified which best implemented to eliminate constraints while meeting minimum standards which positively sustaining our Observer programme. Firstly is to include observer provision or expenses cost in the license fees for eligible vessel (size D & E only). This must clearly stress during the licensing applications process in the presence of the vessel owner, and could end no more complaints (MAF & owner)

Secondly is requesting assistance to the Ministry of Transport (MOT) for eligible vessels to ensure that they have liferafts with capacity including the observer (vessel safety certificate)

## **4. Programme MCS incidents**

In findings detected from observer data reflected absence of observer harassment. The warm working relation of the crew and observers onboard remained well acquainted out at sea was the main good cause.

With IUU activity, nothing was noted but brought our attention that they complied with rules and regulations. So far the MCS incidents related to observer data had not yet come across of any prosecution.