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### **37<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING - SEPTEMBER 2015**

## **Seamount Closures: gear specification for the use of midwater trawls and reporting of VMEs**

### **Explanatory memorandum**

In its reply to a specific request for scientific advice as to the impacts of midwater trawling around seamount closures, the Scientific Council (SC) replied that midwater trawls around seamount closures have the potential to have bottom contact and therefore present a risk of causing Significant Adverse Impact on VMEs (NAFO SCS Doc. 15-12).

Based on the conclusion of the SC, the WG on Ecosystem Approach Framework for Fisheries Management (WG-EAFFM), in its meeting of 15-17 July 2015, recommended that the Fisheries Commission (FC) or STACTIC amend the NCEM to **broaden the scope of application of the meaning of 'midwater trawl'**, as referred to in Article 13.2.f, of the NCEM so that it would apply to midwater trawls in the seamount closures referred to in Article 17. In Article 13.2.f, it is stated that vessels operating in redfish fisheries in certain areas should use trawls with no discs, bobbins, or rollers on its footrope or any other attachment designed to make contact with the bottom.

In addition to modifications to midwater trawls, the WG-EAFFM also recommended to the Fisheries Commission (FC) to revise the NCEM in order to require **reporting of all quantities of VME indicator species** (Annex I.E.VI), in seamount closures (Article 17 of the NCEM), for example through logbooks or observer reports. Observers are best suited to identify VMEs indicator species and to record all quantities of VME indicator species in the observers' reports. Additional reporting obligations on all quantities of VMEs indicator species encountered in each haul when fishing in the seamount closures of Article 17(1) should therefore be included in the observer report. The report should include the VME indicator species, the quantity (total weight in the haul) and the location (including latitude / longitude) for any VME indicator species caught.

### **Proposed amendments**

1. *In relation to the use of midwater trawls, it is proposed to amend Article 13 as follows:*

#### Article 13 - Gear Requirements

[...]

#### Use of Attachments

5. Strengthening ropes, splitting straps and codend floats may be used on trawls, as long as these attachments do not in any way restrict the authorized mesh or obstruct the mesh opening.
6. No vessel shall use any means or device that obstructs or diminishes the size of the meshes. However, vessels may attach devices described in Annex III.B to the upper side



of the codend in a manner that does not obstruct the meshes of the codend including any lengthener(s). Canvas, netting or other material may be attached to the underside of the codend of a net only to the extent required to prevent or minimize damage to the codend.

7. Vessels fishing for shrimp in Divisions 3L or 3M shall use sorting grids or grates with a maximum bar spacing of 22 mm. Vessels fishing for shrimp in Division 3L shall also be equipped with toggle chains with a minimum length of 72 cm as measured in accordance with Annex III.B.
  8. **When fishing in the seamount closures defined in Article 17(1), only gear that is designed to fish for pelagic species, no portion of which is designed to be or is operated in contact with the bottom at any time is allowed. The gear shall not include discs, bobbins or rollers on its footrope or any other attachments designed to make contact with the bottom. The trawl may have chafing gear attached.**
2. *In relation to the additional reporting obligation on VMEs, it is proposed to amend Article 30 and Annex II.M. (Standardized Observer Report Template) as follows:*

#### Article 30 - Observer Program

##### *A. General provisions*

##### Duty to Carry Observer

1. Subject to Article 30.B.1 every fishing vessel shall at all times in the Regulatory Area carry at least one independent and impartial observer.

##### Duties of the Flag State Contracting Party

2. Every flag State Contracting Party shall provide to the Executive Secretary a list of the observers it intends to deploy to the vessels entitled to fly its flag operating in the Regulatory Area and shall ensure that the observers on board such vessels carry out only the following duties:
  - (a) monitor compliance with the CEM, in particular verify logbook entries including the composition of catch by species, quantities, live and processed weight; and hail and VMS reports;
  - (b) maintain detailed records of the daily activity of the vessel whether fishing or not;
  - (c) for each haul, record the gear type, mesh size, attachments, catch and effort data, coordinates, depth, time of gear on the bottom, catch composition, discards and retained undersized fish;
  - (d) **when fishing on seamount closures as referred to in Article 17(1), report in the comments section of the observer report referred to in Annex II.M., for each haul, all quantities of all VME indicator species as referred to in Annex I.E.VI;**
  - (e) monitor the functioning of the satellite tracking system and report on any interruptions or interference therewith;
  - (f) use a pre-agreed code to report to an inspection vessel within 24 hours, any infringement of the CEM;
  - (g) perform such scientific work as the Fisheries Commission may request; and
  - (h) as soon as possible after leaving the Regulatory Area, and at the latest at arrival of the vessel in port, submit the report, as set out in Annex II.M, in electronic format, to the flag State Contracting Party and, if an inspection in port occurs, to the local port inspection authority. The flag State Contracting Party forwards the report to the Executive Secretary within 30 days following the arrival of the vessel in port.

