MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND FISHERIES

National Observer Programme Plan for Pelagic Longline Fishery of Suriname 2026

January 2026

Prepared by: *The Directorate of Fisheries of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, Suriname*

Executive Summary

This document presents the National Observer Programme Plan of Suriname for its tuna longline fishery operating within the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) Convention Area. The Plan establishes a formal domestic observer programme that meets ICCAT minimum standards and demonstrates compliance with ICCAT Recommendation 22-01 (paragraph 55) and Recommendation 16-14 (paragraph 4). It ensures that a minimum of 10% of the total realized fishing effort, expressed in number of fishing trips, is effectively observed, documented, and reported.

The Plan provides the mandatory framework under which observers are qualified, trained, deployed, and under which observer data are collected and reported to the national authority and ICCAT bodies. Observer coverage is planned based on historical effort estimates and adjusted throughout the reporting year to ensure compliance.

1. Objective and Scope

The objective of this Plan is to establish and implement a domestic observer programme that meets ICCAT minimum standards and ensures that at least 10% of the total realized fishing effort, expressed in number of fishing trips, is effectively observed and accurately reported.

The Plan applies to all Suriname-flagged tuna longline vessels authorized to operate in the ICCAT Convention Area and constitutes the framework under which observer deployments are conducted and recognized by ICCAT.

2. Legal and Policy Framework

This Observer Programme Plan is implemented in accordance with:

- ICCAT Recommendation 22-01 (paragraph 55 and annex 7);
- ICCAT Recommendation 16-14 (paragraph 4);
- Applicable national fisheries legislation of Suriname;
- Decisions and administrative arrangements of the competent authority responsible for the National Observer Program.

ICCAT observer deployments are not conducted on an ad hoc basis but exclusively under this formally established national programme.

3. Fleet Description

- **Fishery type:** Tuna longline fishery
- **Number of vessels:** 17

- **Flag State:** Suriname
- **Fishing area:** ICCAT Convention Area

Vessels differ in their number of fishing trips conducted annually.

4. Observer Qualifications

Observers deployed under this Programme shall have the following qualifications in accordance with annex 7 of the Recommendation 22-01:

- Knowledge of ICCAT conservation and management measures;
- Knowledge of fishing gear, fishing operations, and target and bycatch species;
- Capacity to accurately collect, record, and verify fisheries-data;
- Knowledge to identify species, including protected, endangered, and prohibited species;
- Knowledge of safety-at-sea procedures and professional conduct on board fishing vessels.

Observers shall receive initial training prior to deployment and periodic refresher training as required. Training programs may be updated to reflect changes in ICCAT requirements or national priorities.

5. Observer tasks

The observer tasks in accordance with annex 7 of the Recommendation 22-01 shall be in particular:

a) To monitor the fishing vessels compliance with the relevant conservation and management measures adopted by the Commission, such as:

i Record and report upon the fishing activities carried out including
  - data collection, that includes quantifying total target catch, discards and by-catch (including sharks, sea turtles, marine mammals, and seabirds), estimating or measuring size composition as practicable, disposition status (i.e., retained, discarded dead, released alive);
  - fishing operation information, including location of catch by latitude and longitude, fishing effort information (e.g., number of sets, number of hooks, etc.), date of each fishing operation, including, as appropriate, the start and stop times of the fishing activity and general condition of released animals related to survival rates (i.e. dead/alive, wounded, etc.).

ii Observe and record the use of by-catch mitigation measures and other relevant information;

ii Verify catch entries made in the logbook;

iii Sight and record vessels which may be fishing in contravention to ICCAT conservation and management measures;

iv Verify the position of the vessel when engaged in catching activity.

b) Establish general reports compiling the information collected in accordance with the information above and provide the master the opportunity to include therein any relevant information.

6. Deployment Protocols

Observers are deployed in accordance with standardized national deployment procedures throughout the reporting year, including:

- Selection and assignment of observers by the competent authority;
- Notification procedures to vessel operators prior to departure;
- Observers are deployed across different vessels;
- Coverage is distributed over different months and fishing areas;
- Prohibition of permanent assignment of observers to a single vessel;
- Deployment levels are reviewed quarterly.

The competent authority monitors on a quarterly basis:

- the cumulative number of fishing trips conducted;
- the cumulative number of observed trips;
- the resulting observer coverage percentage.

Where monitoring indicates that observer coverage may fall below the required 10%, additional observers will be deployed on subsequent fishing trips to ensure full compliance.

Observer deployments occur exclusively under the authority and standards of this National Observer Programme.

7. Planning of Observer Coverage

In accordance with ICCAT Recommendation 16-14 (paragraph 4), fishing effort for reporting purposes is expressed in number of fishing trips.

As the total number of fishing trips cannot be determined ex ante, observer coverage planning is based on:

- Historical estimates of fishing effort;
- Logbook and Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data;
- Port and landing records.

Observer coverage is calculated as the percentage of observed fishing trips relative to the total number of fishing trips effectively carried out by the fleet during the previous year.

Based on historical information, the total number of fishing trips undertaken by the tuna fleet is estimated at 150 to 160 trips per year (154 trips in 2025). Consequently, an initial planning target of at least 16 observed trips in 2026 is established to comply with the 10% observer coverage, starting in January 2026.

This estimate is indicative and subject to adjustment during implementation.

8. Data Collection, Confidentiality and Reporting

Observers collect fisheries-data in accordance with national protocols and ICCAT data standards, including:

- Fishing effort and catch data;
- Bycatch and discards;
- Interactions with protected species;
- Compliance with ICCAT conservation and management measures.

All data collected by observers are submitted to the Directorate of Fisheries within **15 days** after the end of each trip and are treated as confidential. Data should be submitted in digital format with copies or scans of the paper forms as attachment. After data are transmitted to the competent authority and validated, the data is reported to ICCAT through the ST09 statistical form.

All supporting documentation, including observer reports, deployment records, logbooks, VMS data, and port records, is archived at national level.

9. Review and Updating

This Observer Programme Plan is reviewed on an annual basis and updated as necessary to reflect changes in fleet size, national legislation, or ICCAT requirements.

10. Final Statement

Through this National Observer Programme Plan, Suriname confirms that observer deployments in ICCAT fisheries are conducted exclusively under a formal domestic programme that meets ICCAT minimum standards, ensuring that observer data and reports are recognized and accepted by ICCAT.