

**Report of the Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group
on Catch Document Scheme (CDS WG)**
(Hybrid/Osaka, Japan, 6 June 2023)

1. Opening of the meeting and meeting arrangements

The Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Catch Document Scheme (CDS WG), Mr Neil Ansell (EU), opened the meeting and gave the floor to the ICCAT Executive Secretary, Mr Camille Jean Pierre Manel, who welcomed participants, noted the meeting arrangements, and introduced the participants.

The Contracting Parties (CPs) present at the meeting were Algeria, Brazil, Canada, China (P.R.), Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, El Salvador, the European Union (EU), Gabon, Guatemala, Guinea (Rep.), Japan, Korea (Rep.), Mauritania, Morocco, Panama, Norway, Philippines, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States. The Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities, or Fishing Entities (CNCPs) in attendance were Bolivia, and Chinese Taipei. The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) participated as an Observer from an Intergovernmental Organization. Pew Charitable Trusts (PEW) attended the meeting as an Observer from a Non-governmental Organization.

2. Nomination of rapporteur

Mr Alex Meyer (Japan) was nominated as rapporteur.

3. Adoption of agenda

The Agenda was adopted and is contained in **Appendix 1**. The List of Participants is attached as **Appendix 2**.

4. Overview of available information on the risk of IUU fishing and related activities associated with specific fisheries and 5. Examination and analysis of responses to questionnaires submitted by CPCs

The CDS WG Chair proposed discussing agenda items 4 and 5 together and reminded the CDS WG of the basis for these agenda items following the discussions of the CDS WG at the [Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on a Catch Document Scheme](#) in April 2022 and the formulation of questions circulated by way of a questionnaire to all CPCs. It was noted that responses to the questionnaire had been received from Canada, the EU, Japan, Morocco, Philippines, the United States, Chinese Taipei, and Costa Rica.

Japan reminded the CDS WG that it had presented a paper entitled "A proposed way forward for discussion on catch document schemes" (PWG_410_APP_1/2021) to the Commission meeting in 2021, alongside a summary of noteworthy updates. Updated stock information for a number of major ICCAT species (bigeye tuna, yellowfin tuna, and Mediterranean albacore) and the increasing importance of and demand for seafood product traceability should be considered when moving forward with discussion on CDS. Japan also reported on the recent launch of their import control system that may be applied to tuna and tuna-like species in the future.

The United States highlighted some of its concerns with existing ICCAT measures that may present challenges in the design and implementation of any new CDS and would need to be addressed, namely that ICCAT's authorized vessel lists do not capture the full extent of vessels that catch and trade ICCAT species, and that some management measures permit bycatch allowances that are challenging to verify in the field and potentially create loopholes. Regarding the latter point, the United States expressed its intention to submit a related paper to the 16th Meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures (IMM) to be held from 7-9 June 2023, where they hoped there could be further discussion on this matter. The United States also noted the potential viability of a simpler CDS for smaller vessels, as is being considered by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). In addition, the United States noted the importance of

ensuring interoperability with the CDS of CPCs and other regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs), for which data interoperability and data standards would be key, as well as providing a better understanding of the overall costs.

The EU echoed the points raised by Japan and the United States, namely the increased importance of traceability and the need to control and prevent overshooting of catch limits, the importance of taking a stepwise approach to expanding CDS, and interoperability with other RFMOs' CDS.

Japan expressed its thanks to those CPCs that had responded to the questionnaire, but also its disappointment at the lack of responses from other CPCs. Japan reiterated the importance of understanding more clearly what difficulties CPCs may face in implementing a CDS to address the potential challenges and move forward. Japan expressed particular concern over the lack of response from CPCs with purse seiners, especially those CPCs that had noted challenges with identifying the species of small tunas caught in association with fish aggregating devices (FADs). They noted it would be valuable to hear more from those CPCs about what specific difficulties they face in this regard. Japan also pointed out that it would be useful for CPCs to share their experience certifying exports of canned tuna products, such as when exporting to the EU.

The United Kingdom expressed its intention to provide a response to the CDS questionnaire in due course. They explained how they operate an import regime that requires assurance that catches have been made under appropriate monitoring, control and surveillance measures. The United Kingdom also echoed the concerns raised about potential data gaps and expressed its support for the expansion of CDS to other species.

Senegal expressed their intention to provide a response to the CDS questionnaire soon. They explained how they participate in the EU IUU Regulation Catch Certificate Scheme and have been able to adapt the certificate required by the EU, which is very comprehensive, for its exports to other CPCs such as Japan and Korea (Rep.). Senegal noted that they would therefore not have much difficulty implementing an ICCAT CDS if it is similar to the EU's IUU Regulation Catch Certificate Scheme.

Morocco explained that their domestic CDS is similar to the EU's IUU Regulation Catch Certificate Scheme and expressed its preference for the ICCAT CDS to also be similar, otherwise there may be issues of interoperability and additional costs. Morocco suggested that if a different type of CDS is adopted, one solution may be to introduce a mutual recognition system, whereby CPCs' domestic certificates could be accepted if they contained the necessary information.

Regarding species coverage, the United States welcomed the focus on tropical tuna species during the discussions at the [Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on a Catch Document Scheme](#) in April 2022, but expressed concern about challenges ensuring traceability. The United States also stated the importance of the ICCAT CDS being applied to all catches of a particular species, not just a portion or a certain gear or product type.

The CDS WG encouraged CPCs that have not yet responded to the CDS questionnaire to do so and requested the ICCAT Secretariat to compile the responses and make them available on the ICCAT website.

The CDS WG agreed on the importance of ensuring interoperability and common elements between the potential ICCAT CDS and the CDS of CPCs and other RFMOs.

6. Determination of expansion of CDS to other ICCAT species

Japan delivered its presentation "IOTC CDS Strategy", a summary of the CDS strategy that was recently adopted by the IOTC. The summary was presented as a reference for ICCAT work on CDS and focused on the species to be covered, the scope of coverage, the goals of the CDS, the expected outcomes, ongoing and planned activities, cooperation and coordination with other RFMOs, and the work schedule. In particular, Japan highlighted the value of holding regular discussions in a permanent working group and the importance of considering interoperability with other RFMOs.

Several CPCs noted that the IOTC's CDS strategy is a useful reference, but that it seems quite ambitious and potentially costly. These CPCs expressed their preference for taking a stepwise approach for the ICCAT CDS and seeking to maximize interoperability and meeting the defined objectives.

The EU recalled that ICCAT also possesses considerable experience and know-how in CDS as a result of its work on the Electronic Bluefin Tuna Catch Document (eBCD).

The CDS WG discussed how to move forward with expanding the CDS to other ICCAT species and considered a range of factors and approaches, including which species should be covered by the CDS and whether coverage should begin simultaneously or in sequence, whether to have a catch-based system from the start or initially have a trade-based system by building on existing Statistical Document Programs (SDPs), and whether and how to integrate monitoring, control, and surveillance elements into the CDS.

The CDS WG agreed that species coverage and CDS design/feasibility/ structure are closely linked and that the two matters should be discussed in parallel.

Several CPCs expressed their preference for a catch-based system, although some noted the decisions would need to be taken at a later time when the species covered and objectives had been agreed. The United States pointed out that the expansion of the SDPs to new species or product types could be administratively burdensome. Japan also stated its preference for a catch-based system, but suggested that the approach of building on the SDPs may make for an easier transition for some CPCs.

The CDS WG agreed on the need to develop a detailed plan for moving forward and to hold discussions to that end, including assessing which elements to include and how to balance them.

PEW expressed full-hearted support for the mission of the CDS WG and the expansion of ICCAT's CDS program to cover more and eventually all species under a catch-based system, and making this electronic. PEW reminded the CDS WG that it had previously presented its position and a paper to ICCAT comparing the national import control scheme of the EU and the U.S. Seafood Import Monitoring Program with the CDS of ICCAT, the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) CDS programs, as well as the statistical document of IOTC, and expressed its intention to provide an updated comparison to include the new Japanese scheme and that of Korea (Rep.) before the next CDS WG meeting in 2024. PEW also drew the CDS WG's attention to a new traceability guidance document recently released by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which summarizes these developments and includes an exhaustive list of key data elements.

7. Capacity needs of developing CPCs in support of CDS implementation

Japan informed the CDS WG that the ICCAT/Japan Capacity-building Assistance Improvement Project (JCAP-2) funds can be used to support the capacity-building of developing CPCs, including training for CDS introduction, provision of hardware and software, and production of manuals.

The EU informed the CDS WG that it would share information with the ICCAT Secretariat on relevant capacity-building programs in due course.

The United States suggested that the Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance Fund (MCS Fund), which was established in the [Recommendation by ICCAT to support effective implementation of Recommendation 12-07 by ICCAT for an ICCAT Scheme for Minimum Standards for Inspection in Port \(Rec. 14-08\)](#) and focused on the implementation of port State measures, could be amended to include CDS-related capacity-building within its scope, if appropriate.

Senegal explained that it authorizes close to 20,000 small-scale fishing vessels and faces challenges in correctly registering all of these vessels and recording their fishing data. In this regard, Senegal expressed its thanks to Japan for financing the project to digitalize data collected by observers.

Japan expressed its preference for any potential CDS to cover all fishing vessels, but suggested that if CPCs were to have difficulty integrating small-scale fishing vessels into the system, a phase-in approach may be possible, whereby the scope of the implementation of the CDS for small-scale fishing vessels is limited only to those that export.

The CDS WG reaffirmed the importance of capacity-building for developing CPCs in any efforts to expand the CDS to other ICCAT species. The CDS WG encouraged CPCs with relevant capacity-building programs to share the corresponding information with the ICCAT Secretariat and requested that the ICCAT Secretariat compile and share this information with the CDS WG.

8. Coordination with the eBCD Technical Working Group (eBCD TWG)

The CDS WG reaffirmed the benefits and synergies of coordination with the eBCD TWG and recalled that the eBCD TWG had confirmed that the eBCD system could potentially be used for the expansion of CDS to other species as the fields/sections needed would likely be less than currently used for bluefin tuna and hence with limited development required.

9. Recommendations to the Commission

Japan presented a “Draft Recommendation on establishment of a formal Catch Document Scheme Working Group (CDS WG)”.

Several CPCs expressed general support for the proposal and shared their initial feedback. CPCs agreed to work with Japan intersessionally to further refine the proposal.

Morocco suggested that if such a CDS WG is established, it should be maintained even after the CDS is initially expanded to other species in order to ensure the continued smooth implementation of the CDS. Morocco also suggested that the CDS WG could be merged with the eBCD TWG as the two bodies would have many topics and issues in common. Another CPC noted that there were many issues to consider with regard to Morocco’s suggestions and that it looked forward to more discussion. Morocco expressed its intention to submit a written proposal covering these two points in due course.

The CDS WG noted the importance of the continued commitment and contributions of CPCs for making and sustaining further progress in the CDS WG’s work.

10. Other matters

No other matters were raised.

11. Adoption of Report and closure

The CDS WG agreed that the report would be adopted by correspondence, and the CDS WG Chair requested CPCs to respond to the questionnaire.

The CDS WG Chair thanked all the participants for their contributions and adjourned the meeting.

Agenda

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2. Nomination of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda
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5. Examination and analysis of responses to questionnaires submitted by CPCs
6. Determination of expansion of CDS to other ICCAT species
7. Capacity needs of developing CPCs in support of CDS implementation
8. Coordination with the eBCD Technical Working Group (eBCD TWG)
9. Recommendations to the Commission
10. Other matters
11. Adoption of Report and closure

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