**SEINE TRAWL AUTOLINE ADVISTORY GROUP 17 September 2020**

The STAAG met today (17 September 2020). Present via video link were Will Mure (auto-longline industry), Dan Corrie (AFMA), Simon Boag (Chair, industry), Stu Clarke (seiner industry) and Luke Hill (seiner, industry). The meeting agreed that Simon Boag would draft a record of this meeting, then after holding a SETFIA general meeting, that the STAAG might write to AFMA with advice about EM in the trawl sector. This document is that record.

The meeting was briefed on the history of an EM trial that started in September 2018 in which SETFIA and AFMA partnered to instal cameras (EM) on a seiner and trawler. The seiner in particular experience issues with a camera that took several visits to remedy.

A draft AFMA report (August 2020) on this trial explained that while EM, in its current form, had low ability to:

1. validate discard volume species,
2. validate catch volume and species,
3. validate small TEPs,
4. ascertain interacted seabird species,
5. ascertain seabird warp strikes and
6. determine the appropriateness of net BRDs

The STAAG noted its disappointment that in its current form EM does not provide strong validation of discard volume or species but noted that this was understandable.

However, the report noted that EM was potential useful on seiners and board trawlers to:

1. validate large TEPs such as seal and dolphins,
2. may show seabird interactions that return to the deck on warps,
3. could ascertain the start and end of fishing operations,
4. would show the presence of seabirds in the danger zone,
5. would likely show board trawler offal discharge behaviours,
6. will reveal compliance to animal mistreatment management arrangements,
7. could potential validate crew collected data programs and,
8. might provide some information about the life status of large released TEPs particularly on seiners,
9. might encourage vessels to report discards organically

The project did not address its aim of developing an alternate provider given there were none resident in Australia.

The meeting explored the contention that EM might form part of a larger picture of data and compliance that would also include in port compliance, at sea ISMP, port data collection and at sea crew data collection. The meeting noted that catch comps and discard estimates were particularly important for ERAs and stock assessments. The meeting noted Dan Corrie’s comments that it was hard to see crew data collection replace ISMP given the critical nature and likely inability of crew data collection to provide catch comps and discard estimates.

The GHaT fishery has implanted an in-port data collection program but the number of strata (seasons \* species \* reporting zones \* method) was significantly less than the trawl sector and that the program would be more complicated in the trawl sector.

Industry STAAG members hold concerns about the layering of ISMP and EM both of which carry significant levied cost.

Will Mure explained the experience in the GHaT fishery which was that when EM replaced ISMP no valid shark data was collected for three years and that attempts to run the gummy shark assessment failed and it was delayed. He added that “piece counts”, which are the count of retained and discarded fish individually, seemed to consume most of the EM review cost and were used as a general indicator of reporting accuracy, of CPUE and of discards. The meeting noted that costs overruns and the need to move shark data collection into ports had seen significant cost increases over time including a $50,000 increase in the most recent budget which had not yet been explained.

Industry STAAG members hold concerns about the implementation in the GHaT fishery, the number of unresolved issues and the *perception* (reality or not) that levied costs had increased significantly and that the scope of EM had expanded. Simon Boag proposed that the resolution of these issues would assist acceptance or the value of EM in the trawl sector.

Simon Boag and Dan Corrie noted that the review time and therefore cost in the trawl sector was much lower than in the GHaT given the short length of trawl fishing operations versus gillnet.

Simon Boag proposed that the review % could be set and then varied higher and lower depending on the EM vs reported accuracy of each vessel. If EM review was user pays than this provided a very strong incentive to reduce fee for service cost. Stuart Clarke proposed a variation to this that being that observers could be used instead of EM and could be varied up and down under a user pays system. Dan Corrie noted, and the STAAG accepted, that this might place observers in a very difficult position.

The discussion noted that in its current form EM is an excellent validator of large TEP interactions and seabird offal behaviours. Given then that seiners have much lower larger TEP interactions and few seabird interactions and no offal discharge management rules the need for EM on seiners is much reduced.

However, the meeting noted AFMA advice that the reporting of TEPs and discards in the seine fishery was polarised with some operators performing well and others having almost nil reporting. The meeting speculated that if seiner reporting increased that a case could be put to AFMA to exclude seiners from further consideration about EM. Given that seiners represent approximately half the fishing operations and one third of the vessel count in the trawl fishery excluding them from EM would reduce review cost by 50% and hardware/maintenance by one third.

The meeting resolved that a tiered series of activities could be taken to encourage and incentivise seiners to improve reporting, these include in order of occurrence:

1. An in-person course that:

* explained that improved reporting might provide an alternative to EM and its costs and perhaps also to the escalation of efforts (see 2 below) to improve data
* reviewed the GHaT cost and implementation experience
* educated operators about the reporting bundles and TEP reporting within eLog software

1. That seiners with a poor reporting history should have user-pays observers deployed on them to ascertain a baseline. This would provide a financial incentive for vessels to improve reporting. There are individual differences between vessel operation but most seiners operate from one port so it is unlikely that some vessels experience TEP interactions and discards while others do not.

End.