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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IATTC REGIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAM FOR TRANSSHIPMENTS AT SEA IN ACCORDANCE WITH RESOLUTION C-22-03

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The following acronyms are used in this document:

BLZ	Belize	IDN	Indonesia	MHL	Marshall Islands	PYF	French Polynesia
CHN	China	JPN	Japan	PAN	Panama	TWN	Chinese Taipei
EUR	European Union	KOR	Korea	PER	Peru	VUT	Vanuatu
FJI	Fiji	LIB	Liberia	PHL	Philippines	WSM	Samoa
BET	Bigeye	SHK	Sharks	SWO	Swordfish	YFT	Yellowfin

1. INTRODUCTION

The IATTC regional observer programme to monitor at-sea transshipments by carrier vessels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) authorized to receive tunas and related species and sharks from large-scale tuna longline fishing vessels (LSTLFVs) is governed by Resolution C-22-03. This resolution was adopted in 2022 and amends and replaces resolution C-12-07, which in turn amended and replaced resolution C-11-09 to establish a programme on transshipments by *large fishing vessels.*

Paragraph 21 of Resolution C-22-03 states that "Each year, the Director shall present a report on the implementation of this Resolution to the annual meeting of the Commission, which shall review compliance (...)". For the past 6 years, the practice has been established of presenting this report separately to the different Committees of the Commission: financial aspects to the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC); compliance matters to the Compliance Review Committee (CRC); and operational aspects of the programme with catch data, transshipments, areas, etc. to this Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC).

Six IATTC Members participate in this programme through their authorized large-scale longline fishing vessels (LSTLFVs): China, Korea, Japan, Panama, Chinese Taipei, and Vanuatu, and these Members fund it. In 2025, no transshipments were recorded from Panamanian longline vessels, although their carrier vessels did receive transshipments.

2. IMPLEMENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

2.1. Participation

The Secretariat maintains on the Commission website the List of carrier vessels authorized to receive transshipments at sea (Regional Vessel Register), which is continually updated with information supplied by the participants on additions or removals of carrier vessels or changes in their data. As of 15 April 2026,

the list includes 72 carrier vessels from seven CPCs[1] (Table 1). This list includes carrier vessels from the six participants in the program, plus 3 from Liberia, the latter as a Cooperating non-Member of the IATTC.

It is important to note that, to date, there are no vessels on the list of authorized carrier vessels that are not under the flag of a CPC. This allows for better control of authorized carrier vessels in terms of compliance. It should be noted that this recommendation comes from the approved transshipment guidelines by the FAO.

TABLE 1. Flag of carrier vessels authorized to receive transshipments at sea, March 2026

CPC	CHN	JPN	KOR	LIB	PAN	TWN	VUT
Número de buques	18	6	14	3	23	7	1

Paragraph 5 of Resolution C-22-03 requires each CPC participating in the program to identify the tuna longline vessels authorized to transship fish at sea, which in turn must be listed on the IATTC Regional Vessel Register (see List of authorized large longline vessels). Similarly, each CPC must provide a list of its carrier vessels authorized to receive transshipments at sea.

2.2. Observers on board

2.2.1. Safety on board

As previously reported, MRAG has provided observers with emergency alert devices, with which they can send an immediate signal to the MRAG office, and there is a protocol to follow in case of emergencies (MRAG Americas: IATTC Observer Program - Emergency Action Plan).

The reports by observers on carrier vessels include a section for recording situations or incidents that affect the performance of their functions, such as harassment or matters related to their well-being. All information recorded in this section, and any other related to possible non-compliance with working conditions for observers, is reported to the flag CPC for its consideration and is reviewed by the Review Committee (COR).

Another issue included in observer reports is that the emergency drills required by the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS Convention, Chapter III Part B-1, rule 19, Points 2.2 and 2.3) are not carried out in some cases. This requirement, a safety issue both for observers and crews, should be complied with because the Antigua Convention, Article VII (*Functions of the Commission*), paragraph n), lists as one of the functions "*promote the application of any relevant provision of the Code of Conduct and of other relevant international instruments*", which covers not only the SOLAS Convention, but also the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), which governs situations such as fuel spills at sea.

The annual compliance report includes cases of possible non-compliance by carrier vessels with observers on board.

2.2.2. Procedures and logistics

The procedure for requesting the placement of an observer begins with the corresponding request through the carrier vessel's company and through the Fisheries Agency of the vessel's country. The observer request is sent to the IATTC, who forwards it to the program coordinator at MRAG once it is confirmed that it is eligible for placement, mainly that the vessel is on the list of authorized carrier vessels. The coordinator addresses the request with the deployment of the IATTC observer and coordinates with the carrier vessel's company the place and date of the observer's embarkation or any changes in the

[1] IATTC Members and Cooperating non-Members

schedule.

MRAG also maintains communication with the carrier vessel companies to establish estimates to allow for long-term planning and to ensure that MRAG has enough observers to meet the needs. During the reporting period (2025), observers were deployed on 27 different carrier vessels.

The main tasks of the observer, as specified by Resolution C-22-03, are as follows:

a) **Record and report upon the transshipment activities carried out**;
b) Verify the position of the vessel when engaged in transshipping;
c) Observe and estimate products transshipped;
d) Verify and record the name of the LSTLFV concerned and its registration number;
e) Verify the data contained in the transshipment declaration;
f) Certify the data contained in the transshipment declaration;
g) Countersign the transshipment declaration;
h) Issue a report of the carrier vessel's transshipping activities every 15 days;
i) Establish general reports compiling the information collected in accordance with the requirements of the IATTC program and provide the captain the opportunity to include therein any relevant information.

Tasks a and c are the priority tasks performed by the observers and occupy most of their time through counting, identifying and recording the weights of the transshipped species and the movements of the carrier vessel.

LSTLV reports including product counts and weights are obtained by the second officer of the carrier vessel (CV) from the captains of the LSTLV; then, they are made available to the IATTC observer within the first two hours of transshipment. IATTC observers receive a copy of the LSTLV numbers and weights report within the first two hours of transshipment. Transshipment declarations are prepared by the second officer of the CV within the first two hours of transshipment and given to the IATTC observer for signature, certification and verification. A copy of the transshipment declaration is provided directly to the IATTC observer during transshipment.

2.3. Estimation of weight of the transshipped product

Observers are tasked with estimating the weight of the transshipped product by species and species group they count during their observation period(s). The main objective is to verify the weights recorded by the carrier vessel and the LSTLVs on the transshipment declaration. There are five options to perform this task; one of them, which is commonly used, is the following:

Total weight of product = Average weight by species x Total count of species by observer

Other options involve electronic hook-scales on the vessels. However, very few carrier vessels are equipped with these devices.

Transshipments in which there is a difference of more than 10% between the amount of product calculated by the observer and the amount reported on the transshipment declaration are forwarded to the flag CPC to investigate whether there could be any possible negligence in completing the declaration or falsification of data. The general response from the CPCs in the Review Committee is that the differences are due to the fact that these are calculations or estimates and therefore it is normal that differences exist.

At the 14th SAC meeting, a recommendation was made to examine whether the issue of discrepancies in the reports between the tuna calculated by the observer and that reported on the transshipment declaration was significant. To this end, observers were asked to carefully monitor and report details of all transshipments, verifying—for each one—the difference between their calculations of transshipped fish

and that reported on the transshipment declaration.

A further review was carried out of all carrier trips in 2025, verifying in how many carriers and in how many transshipments there were differences of more than 10% in the trips made in those years. From this review, the following was obtained:

- Data from 396 transshipments for 2025 are included.
- Of those 396 transshipments, in 80% there was no difference greater than 10% between the fish declared in the transshipment declaration and that calculated by the observer.
- In 12% the difference is in the range of 10% to 25%. And only in 8% is it greater than 25%.

Figure 1 illustrates that range of differences. The differences may be explained by the fact that the figures provided by observers are estimates and that the speed at which transshipments are carried out is considerable.

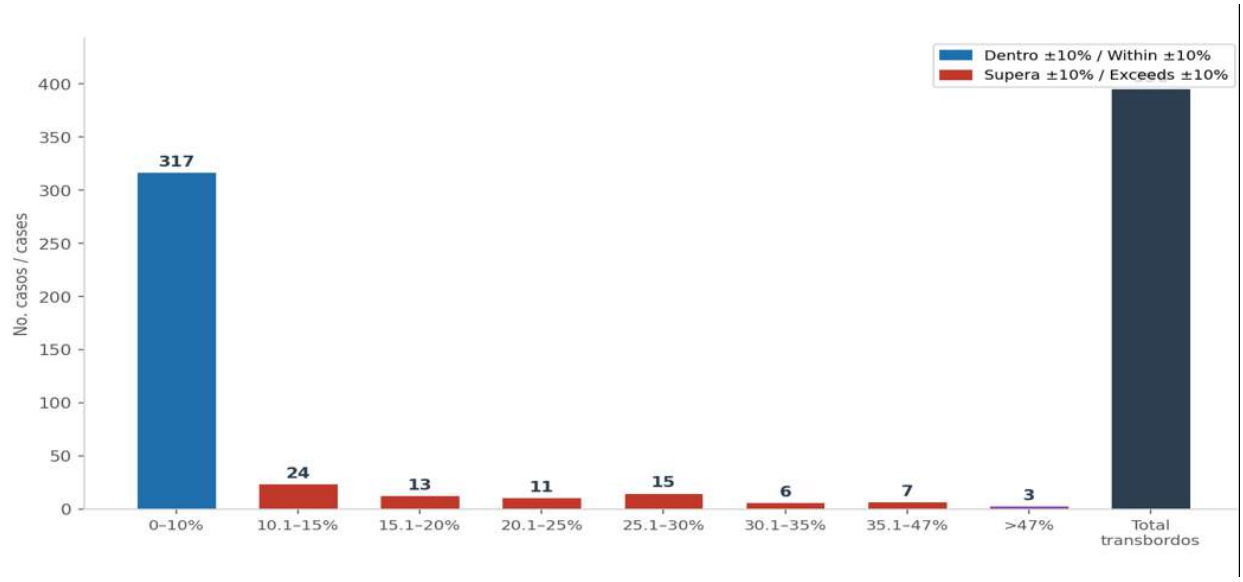

FIGURE 1. Percentage of differences between the product recorded on the transshipment declaration and that calculated by the observer; 2025

It has been previously discussed in the SAC that experimental work should be carried out to see if the use of scales could help to resolve the doubts regarding the differences between the tuna calculated by the observer and that recorded on the transshipment declaration, as well as carry out experiments with the use of cameras (electronic monitoring) on carrier vessels. However, the financial resources to carry out this work have not been available.

3. RESULTS TO DATE

In 2025, a total of 459 transshipments in the EPO were monitored during 27 trips. Through MRAG, observers were placed on all these trips. It is important to note that trips that begin in 2025 are counted as trips made in that year, even if they end in 2026.

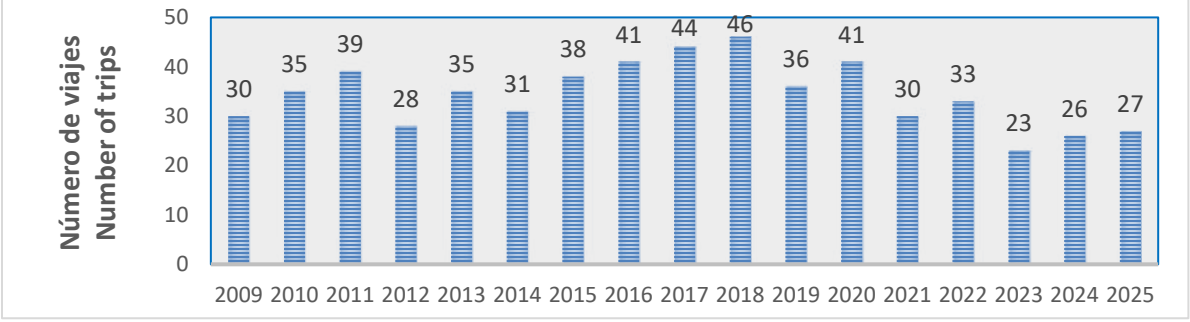

FIGURE 2. Trips with observers, 2009-2025.

In 2025, the number of trips with observers (27) was 4% higher than in 2024 (26) (**Figure 2**), while the number of transshipments was 479 in 2025 and 459 in 2024, representing an increase of 4.4% in these years (**Figure 3**).

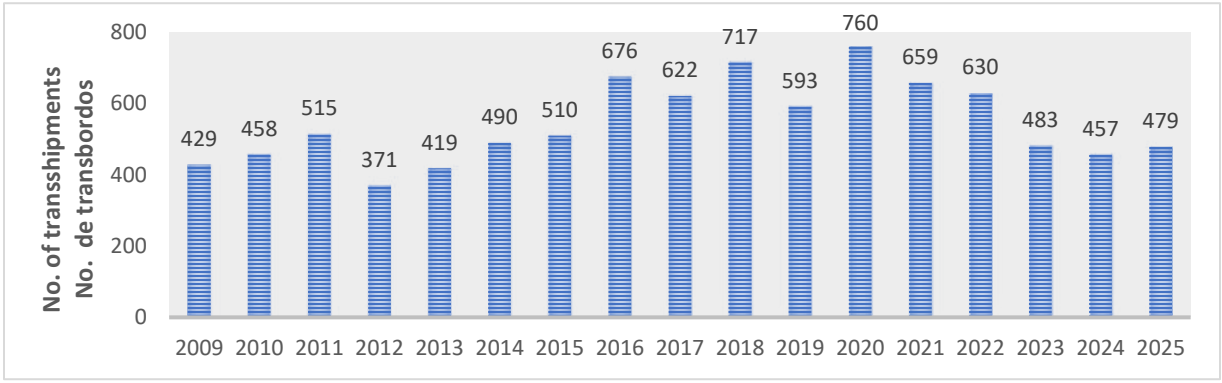

FIGURE 3. Transshipments at sea in the EPO, 2009-2025.

Figure 4 shows the transshipments (total tonnage of the catches) in the EPO from 2018 to 2025, by flag of the fishing vessel. China and Chinese Taipei are the participants with the largest amount of fish transshipped in the EPO. A total of 159 longline vessels participated in transshipments in 2025, of which 77% were from China, 8% from Chinese Taipei, 1% from Japan, 11% from Korea, and 3% from Vanuatu. No transshipments by Panamanian longline vessels were recorded in 2025.

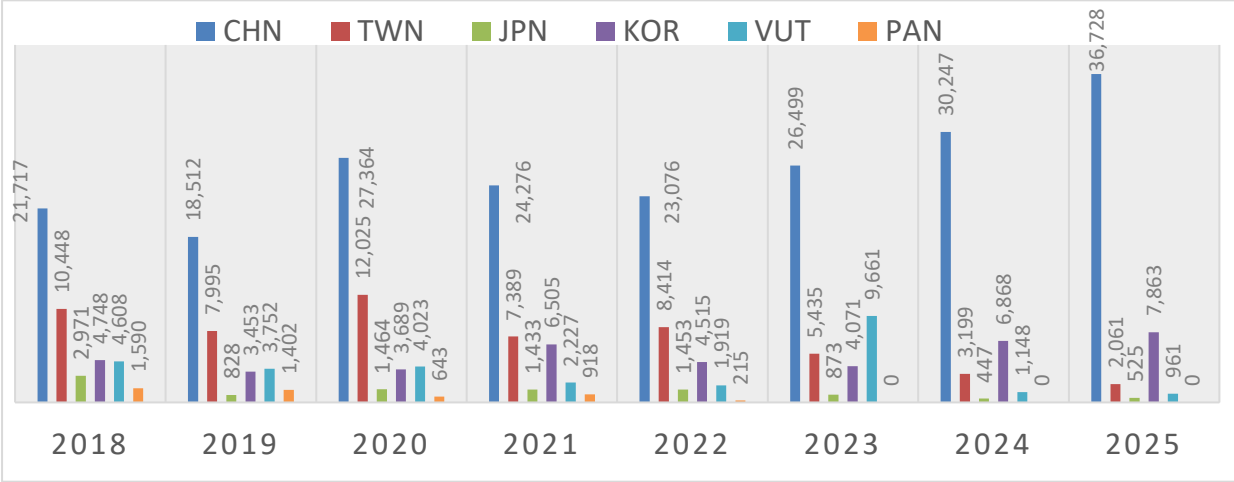

FIGURE 4. Transshipped product in the EPO, by flag, 2018-2025.

Appendix 1 contains the data on product transshipped in the EPO from 2021-2025, broken down by species and flag of the fishing vessel. **Appendix 2** lists trips by carrier vessels and ports of boarding and disembarkation of observers in 2025.

The total tonnage of the catches transshipped under the program during 2025 (48,139 t) was 14% higher than in 2024 (42,182 t) (**Figure 5**).

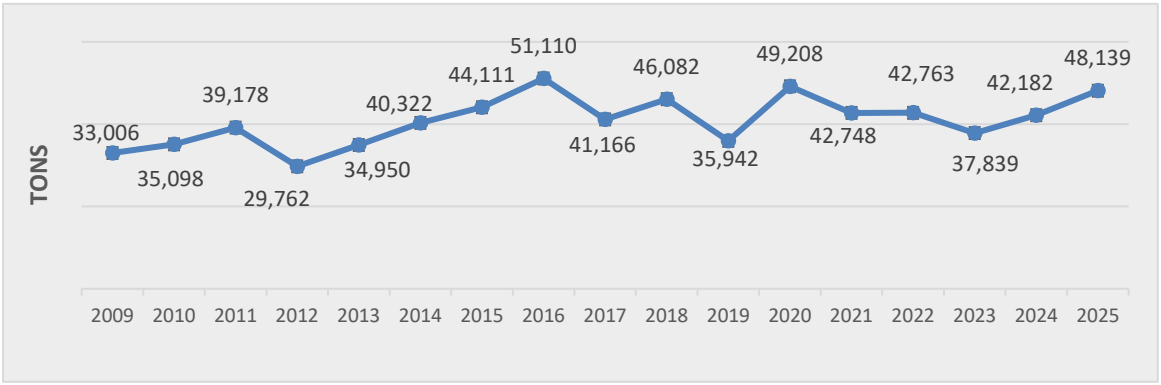

FIGURE 5. Total transshipped tonnage in the EPO, 2009-2025.

In 2025, the weights of the predominant fish species transshipped were: albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*) with 58%, followed by bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*) with 17%, yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) with 12%, swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) with 2%, sharks with 0.3%, and other species with 10.7%, as shown in **Figure 6**.

In accordance with Resolution C-12-07, sharks have been included in transshipment declarations since 2013. Prior to this, they were grouped with other species. In 2025, the total transshipped was 101 t, representing 0.3% of the total transshipped product.

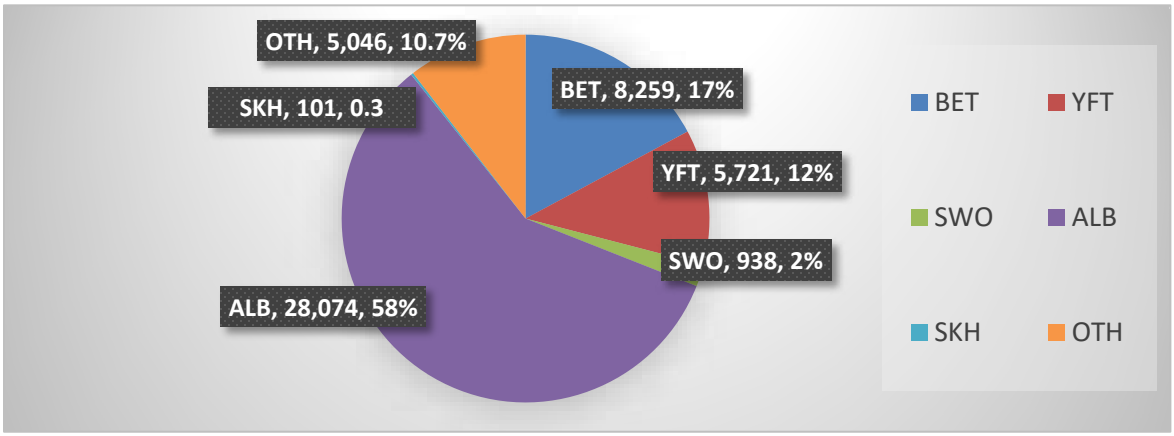

FIGURE 6. Total tonnage transshipped in the EPO, by species, 2025.

In the case of albacore tuna (the main species that is transshipped), questions have been raised regarding the area where it is caught. In this regard, it is only known whether it was caught in the EPO, including the overlap area (although it is possible to differentiate whether it was specifically caught in the overlap area), as well as in the western Pacific Ocean. The catch areas for 2025 are as follows (**Table 2**).

TABLE 2. Transshipped albacore catches in the IATTC-regulated area, 2025 (t)

Catch area	Catch amount (t)	Percentage
Entire Pacific	29,478	100 %
IATTC-regulated area without overlap area	25,184	85.4%
Western Pacific without overlap area	2,112	7.2%
Overlap area	2,182	7.4%

Since 2013, observers record where the transshipped tuna originated: Western Pacific (WPO), EPO or IATTC-WCPFC overlap area. In 2025, about 70% of the transshipped tuna was caught in the EPO, including the overlap area (**Table 3**), and around 30% in the WPO.

TABLE 3. Tonnage of catches in the Pacific Ocean in 2025 and transshipped in the EPO, by fishing vessel flag and area of origin

Participant	Area of catch			Total
	EPO Without OA	Overlap area (OA)	WPO With-out OA	
China	32,174	2,858	8,397	**43,969**
Japan	525	0	0	**526**
Korea	5,586	2,273	7,211	**15,070**
Panama	0	0	0	**0**
Chinese Taipei	774	1,865	4,109	**6,748**
Vanuatu	317	584	818	**1,720**
Total	**39,916**	**7,580**	**20,535**	**68,032**

Table 4 shows the catch limits for bigeye tuna established for 2025 in Resolution C-24-01 and the catches in the EPO recorded by the transshipment program. There were catch limit transfers to Korea and China by Japan in 2025 for 6,000 and 2,000 metric tons, respectively. Nevertheless, the data from the transship-ment program show that the limits were not exceeded even without considering these transfers.

TABLE 4. Bigeye catch limits in Resolution C-24-01 and bigeye catches in the EPO recorded by the transshipment program, in tons, 2025

CPC	Catch limit (C-24-01)	EPO catches transshipped in the EPO		
		EPO	Overlap area	Total
China	2,507	1,955	304	2,259
Japan	32,732	259	0	259
Korea	11,947	2,796	1,252	4,048
Chinese Taipei	7,555	442	745	1,187
United States	750	Does not make transshipments		

The geographic locations of transshipments made during 2022-2025 in the Pacific Ocean and in the EPO are shown in **Appendix 3**.

4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

The SAC is encouraged to discuss the following items:

- Is there any other information the SAC would like to receive about the transshipment program?
- Could the transshipment information be used in any other way for scientific purposes?
- Should experimental work be carried out with the use of electronic monitoring on carrier vessels?

APPENDIX 1. Quantity of product transshipped in the eastern Pacific Ocean, 2021-2025, by species or group and flag of fishing vessel, in tons.

Year	CPC	Atunes-Tunas			SWO	SKH	OTR	Total
		BET	YFT	ALB				
2021	CHN	1,691	918	18,702	382	17	2,567	**24,276**
	JPN	809	284	51	118	0	172	**1,433**
	KOR	4,028	1,400	349	274	2	452	**6,505**
	PAN	62	20	698	116	0	23	918
	TWN	2,268	505	2,627	884	140	934	7,359
	VUT	798	127	757	327	50	199	2,258
	Total	9,655	3,254	23,184	2,101	208	4,346	**42,748**
2022	CHN	1,899	578	20,909	473	0	2,563	26,246
	JPN	760	201	195	111	0	186	1,453
	KOR	2,639	854	481	242	0	298	4,515
	PAN	78	33	0	104	0	0	215
	TWN	3,518	867	1,482	1,262	359	927	8,414
	VUT	1,100	159	54	259	117	229	1,919
	Total	**9,995**	**2,692**	**2,468**	**22,929**	**476**	**4,203**	**42,763**
2023	CHN	1,540	774	20,909	473	0	2,804	26,499
	JPN	497	151	56	82	0	86	873
	KOR	2,761	626	211	213	0	261	4,071
	PAN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TWN	1,932	479	1,463	576	300	684	5,435
	VUT	547	104	2	149	99	59	961
	Total	**7,277**	**2,135**	**22,641**	**1,494**	**399**	**3,894**	**37,839**
2024	CHN	2,279	2,361	21,142	286	0	4,301	30,369
	JPN	205	132	35	37	0	38	447
	KOR	4,153	1,630	589	237	0	410	7,019
	PAN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TWN	1,226	644	343	130	297	560	3,199
	VUT	744	265	26	101	0	12	1,148
	Total	**8,607**	**5,032**	**22,134**	**791**	**297**	**5,321**	**42182**
2025	CHN	2,319	2,385	27,320	318	0	4,385	36,728
	JPN	259	116	64	40	0	47	525
	KOR	4,021	2,510	541	346	0	444	7,863
	PAN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TWN	996	532	141	188	82	121	2,061
	VUT	663	177	8	46	19	49	961
	Total	**8,259**	**5,721**	**28,074**	**938**	**101**	**5,046**	**48,139**

APPENDIX 2. 27 trips by carrier vessels that carried IATTC observers to monitor transshipments in the eastern Pacific Ocean, 2025.

Trip	Vessel	Departure 2025	Departure port	Arrival	Arrival port
557	Ping Tai Rong Leng 2	1-Mar	Busan, Korea	10-May-2025	Busan, Korea
558	Shun Tian Fa 168	24-Jan	Kaohsiung	7-Apr-2025	Kaohsiung
559	Heng Hong 5 *	Cancelled			
560	Taiho Maru	21-Feb	Busan, Korea	18-Apr-2025	Busan, Korea
561	Hanaro	25-Feb	Busan, Korea	25-Apr-2025	Busan, Korea
562	Ping Tai Rong Leng 6	7-Apr	Busan, Korea	5-Jul-2025	Busan, Korea
563	Ping Tai Rong Leng 1	22-Apr	Busan, Korea	1-Aug-2025	Busan
564	Genta Maru	24-May	Majuro, Marshall Is.	13-Jul-2025	Majuro, Marshall Is.
565	Shun Tian Fa 168	24-Apr	Kaohsiung	26-Jun-2025	Kaohsiung
566	Taiho Maru	3-Jun	Kaohsiung	4-Aug-2025	Kaohsiung
567	Heng Hong 5	1-Jun	Busan, Korea	3-Sep-2025	Busan, Korea
568	Ping Tai Rong Leng 2	26-Jun	Busan, Korea	15-Sep-2025	Busan, Korea
569	Futagami	22-Jul	Busan, Korea	17-Nov-2025	Busan, Korea
570	Shun Tian Fa 168	9-Aug	Kaohsiung	25-Oct-2025	Kaohsiung
571	Seibu	25-Sep	Busan, Korea	10-Dec-2025	Busan, Korea
572	Genta Maru	14-Aug	Majuro, Marshall Is.	9-Oct-2025	Majuro, Marshall Is.
573	Ping Tai Rong Leng 6	20-Aug	Busan, Korea	7-Nov-2025	Busan, Korea
574	Taiho Maru	2-Sep	Busan, Korea	30-Oct-2025	Busan, Korea
575	Oceanus	5-Sep	Busan, Korea	6-Nov-2025	Busan, Korea
576	Ping Tai Rong Leng 1	8-Sep	Busan, Korea	19-Nov-2025	Busan, Korea
577	Heng Hong 5	24-Sep	Busan, Korea	21-Dec-2025	Busan, Korea
578	Ping Tai Rong Leng 2	17-Oct	Busan, Korea	6-Jan-2026	Busan, Korea
579	Genta Maru	29-Oct	Busan, Korea	13-Jan-2026	Busan, Korea
580	Shun Tian Fa 168	19-Nov	Kaohsiung	16-Feb-2026	Kaohsiung
581	Badaro	10-Nov	Busan, Korea	10-Jan-2026	Busan, Korea
582	Futagami	4-Dec	Busan, Korea		Busan, Korea
583	Ping Tai Rong Leng 6	13-Dec	Apia, Samoa	5-Mar-2026	Apia, Samoa
584	Taiho Maru	10-Dec	Busan, Korea	4-Feb-2026	Busan, Korea

APPENDIX 3. Transshipment geographic locations in the Pacific Ocean (top) and in the EPO (bottom), 2022-2025.