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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IATTC REGIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAM FOR
TRANSSHIPMENTS AT SEA

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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 observer program to monitor transshipments at sea by carrier vessels in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) authorized to receive tuna and tuna-like species and sharks from large-scale tuna longline fishing vessels (LSTLFVs) is regulated by Resolution [C-12-07](#).

Paragraph 12 of Resolution C-12-07 establishes 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 (...).” A couple of years ago, it was decided that the report would be presented separately to the different Committees of the Commission. Therefore, the financial aspects of the program are presented to the Committee on Administration and Finance (CAF); matters of compliance with the resolution are presented to the Review Committee (COR); and the operational aspects of the program, including catch data, transshipments, areas, etc., are presented to this Scientific Advisory Committee.

Six IATTC Members fund and participate in the program through their authorized large-scale tuna longline fishing vessels (LSTLFVs): China, Japan, Korea, Panama, Chinese Taipei, and Vanuatu.

With the approval of these participating Members, in 2019 the Secretariat signed a three-year contract with the Marine Resources Assessment Group (MRAG) consortium to operate the program during 2020-2022. This consortium is responsible for placing and coordinating the assignment of observers on board carrier vessels.

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, which is continually updated with information supplied by the participants on additions or removals of carrier vessels or changes in their data. As of 1 May 2022, the list includes 99 vessels from eight CPCs¹. This list includes carrier vessels from the six participants in the program, plus one from the European Union and nine from Liberia, the latter as a Cooperating non-Member of the IATTC.

TABLE 1. Carrier vessels authorized to receive transshipments at sea, May 2022								
CPC	CHN	EUR	JPN	COR	LIB	PAN	TWN	VUT
Number of vessels	16	1	4	11	9	53	4	1

Also, each CPC with longline fishing vessels is required to define the specific carrier vessels to which its fishing vessels are allowed to transship fish at sea. That information is included in the last column of the list (*"CPCs that authorize use of this carrier for transshipment from their longline vessels"*).

Resolution C-12-07 specifies that longline fishing vessels that transship at sea must be on the list of longline vessels authorized to fish in the IATTC Convention Area. The list includes longline vessels from the six participants that are on the IATTC Regional Vessel Register. [List of authorized longline vessels](#).

In 2020, 2021 and 2022, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became necessary to authorize five trips to be made without an observer under the condition that the captain of the corresponding carrier vessel submit transshipment information to MRAG and the IATTC. Also, three trips by Panamanian carrier vessels were monitored by an AIDCP observer, who was specially trained by MRAG to carry out his work on a carrier vessel.

The conditions established to allow a carrier vessel to operate in transshipments at sea in the area regulated by the IATTC without an observer on board are included as Annex 1. This exemption possibility is noted in Resolution C-12-07, which states in paragraph 17: *"Vessels shall be prohibited from commencing or continuing at-sea transshipping in the Convention Area without an IATTC observer on board, except in cases of force majeure duly notified to the Director."* As such, the pandemic and the difficulty of placing an observer on board were considered *force majeure*.

2.2. Observers on board

2.2.1. Safety on board

As previously reported, MRAG has provided observers with an emergency alert device, 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.

Another issue mentioned 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 carried out only in very few 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.

¹ IATTC Members and Cooperating non-Members

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 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. Of the IATTC deployments during the reporting period, observers were deployed on 15 different carrier vessels; most of the vessels previously had an IATTC observer on board. All vessels were informed of the necessary requirements and procedures.

Sometimes a vessel moves between the WCPFC and IATTC areas and the observer remains on board, which reduces deployment costs.

The main tasks of the observer, as specified by Resolution C-12-07, are as follows:

- Record and report upon the transshipment activities carried out;
- Verify the position of the vessel when engaged in transshipping;
- Observe and estimate products transshipped;
- Verify and record the name of the LSTLFV concerned and its registration number;
- Verify the data contained in the transshipment declaration;
- Certify the data contained in the transshipment declaration;
- Countersign the transshipment declaration;
- Issue a report of the carrier vessel's transshipping activities every 15 days;
- 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 1 and 3 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. As agreed with MRAG, reports are submitted every 15 days summarizing the daily transshipment activity rather than issuing daily reports.

LSTLV reports including product counts and weights are obtained by the second officer of the 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

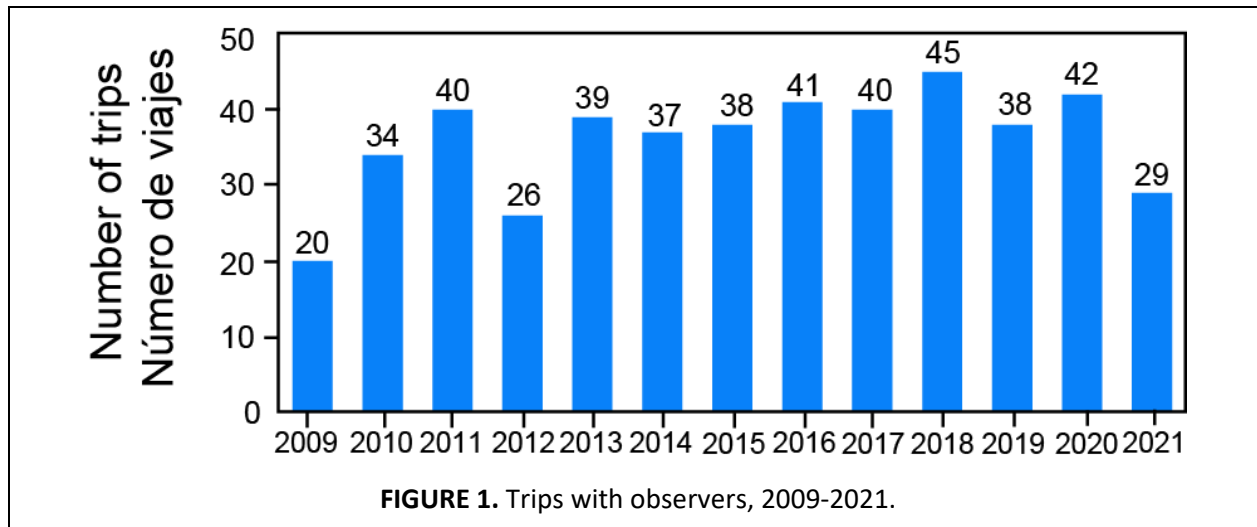
task; one of them, which is commonly used, is the following:

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.

3. RESULTS TO DATE

In 2021, a total of 659 IATTC transshipments were monitored during 31 trips. Through MRAG, observers were placed on 29 trips; two trips were not covered due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Thus, 29 of 31 observer requests were fulfilled (**Figure 1**).



In 2021, the number of transshipments (659) was about 13% lower than in 2020 (760) (**Figure 2**).

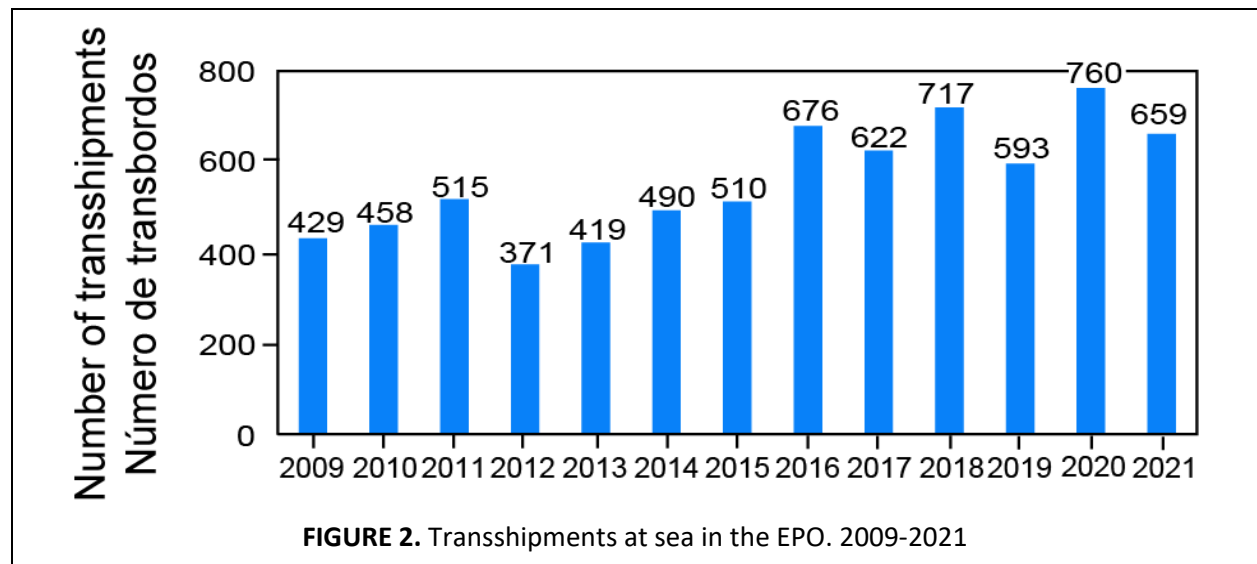


Figure 3 shows the transshipments in the EPO from 2015 to 2021, by flag of the fishing vessel. China and Chinese Taipei are still the participants with the largest amount of fish transhipped in the EPO. A total of 323 vessels participated in these transshipments.

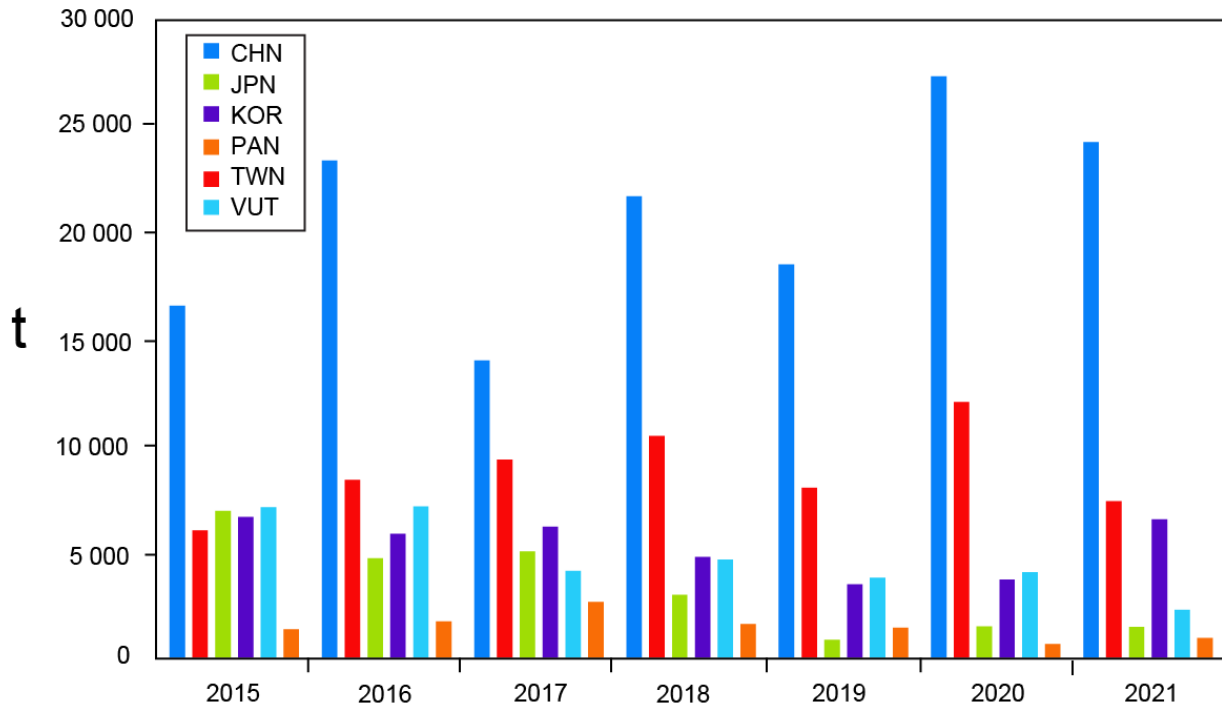


FIGURE 3. Tonnage of fish transshipped in the EPO, by flag of carrier vessel, 2015-2021.

Appendix 2 contains the data from 2009-2021, broken down by species and flag of the fishing vessel. **Appendix 3** lists trips by carrier vessels and ports of boarding and disembarkation of observers in 2021.

The total tonnage of the catches transshipped under the program during 2021 (42,748 t) was 13% lower than in 2020 (49,208 t) (**Figure 4**). Pursuant to Resolution C-12-07, since 2013 transshipments of sharks (208 t in 2021) are itemized separately.

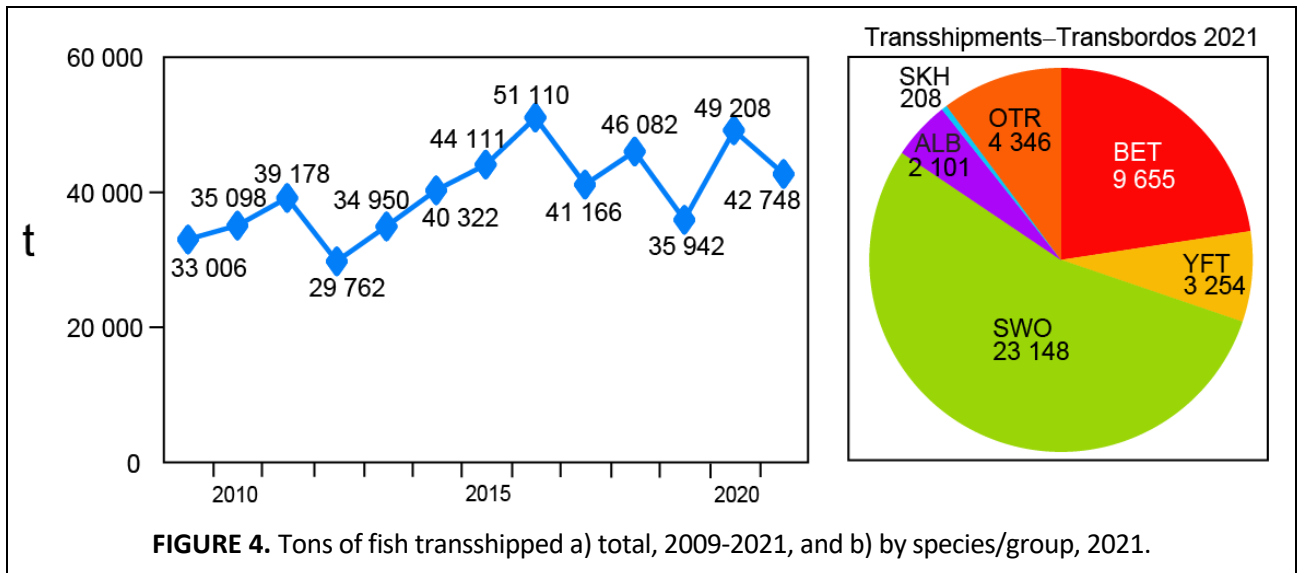


FIGURE 4. Tons of fish transshipped a) total, 2009-2021, and b) by species/group, 2021.

Since 2013, observers record where the transshipped tuna originated: Western Pacific (WPO), EPO or IATTC-WCPFC overlap area. In 2021, about 70% of the transshipped tuna was caught in the EPO, including the overlap area (**Table 2**), and around 30% in the WPO.

TABLE 2. Catches transshipped in the Pacific Ocean in 2021, by fishing vessel flag and area of origin					
Participant	Area of catch				Total
	EPO	Overlap area	WPO	Unknown	
China	21,512	2,009	5,788	0	29,309
Japan	1,435	2	35	0	1,472
Korea	3,583	1,453	6,640	1	11,677
Panama	918	0	0	0	918
Chinese Taipei	2,679	5,051	4,437	0	12,167
Vanuatu	1,420	1,191	1,027	0	3,638
Total	31,547	9,706	17,927	1	59,181

Table 3 shows the catch limits for bigeye tuna established for 2021 in Resolution [C-20-06](#) and the catches in the EPO recorded by the transshipment program. There were catch limit transfers to Korea and China by Japan in 2021. However, with the data from the transshipment program, it can be seen that the limits were respected.

TABLE 3. Bigeye catch limits in Resolution C-20-06 , and catches in the EPO recorded by the transshipment program, in tonnes, 2021.				
CPC	Catch limit (C-20-06)	EPO catches transshipped in the EPO		
		EPO	Overlap area	Total
China	2,507	1,022	571	1,593
Japan	32,732	807	1	808
Korea	11,947	2,404	776	3,180
Chinese Taipei	7,555	889	1,433	2,322
United States	750	Does not make transshipments		

The positions of transshipments made during 2018-2021 in the Pacific Ocean and in the EPO are shown in **Appendix 4**.

4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

The SAC is encouraged to discuss the following items:

- Is there any other information you would like to know about the transshipment program?
- Could the transshipment information be used in any other way for scientific purposes?

APPENDIX 1. Data to be submitted to MRAG and the IATTC in the event of an exemption from the obligation to carry an observer in transshipment operations at sea related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In coordination with the IATTC Secretariat, MRAG and the IATTC designed the following protocol to attend emergency cases related to the transshipment program and the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Carrier Vessels that are unable to be assigned an IATTC observer for a trip due to the COVID-19 pandemic will need to complete the steps below in order to transship within the IATTC region. The IATTC Director will define when it is **not possible** to place an observer on board.

The required documentation will be e-mailed or faxed to the MRAG Americas Anchorage office to the e-mail: Bryan.belay@mragamanicas.com. Phone number: 907-677-6022.

- 1) At the start of the cruise the following information should be sent: the Departure Date, Time and Port, the Captain's Name, the total weight of tuna products onboard at departure, and a projected list of LSTLVs to be offloaded in the IATTC and WCPFC during the cruise. (Making copy to the IATTC transshipments@iattc.org).
- 2) For each transshipment completed during the cruise, the carrier will send within 12 hours of the end of the transshipment:
 - a) The completed Transshipment Declaration (*see Sequential numbering below) including the LSTLV Name, Call Sign, Flag State, National Registration Number, IATTC/WCPFC number, LSTLV Captain's Name, Transshipment Start Date/Hour and the Lat&Long start position.
 - b) LSTLV Reported transfer Weights and Numbers – LSTLV captain should complete the attached form and include Weight (KG) and Number of Fish for each species transshipped. The Sequential transshipment number, LSTLV name and Transshipment date should be recorded the upper right corner.
 - c) The Date/Hour and Lat&Long position at the end of the transshipment.
 - d) If there are revisions to the Transshipment declarations, please number following sequential numbering rules below:
 - To a revised declaration add the word and number Revised1.
 - If revised more than once, please label revisions sequentially as well, TS01 Revised1, TS01 Revised2. Etc.
- 3) At the end of transshipment operations, the carrier vessel will send the total weight of tuna products onboard. The estimated date of arrival in port and the port of initial offload. The actual date of arrival in the port will be emailed when the cruise ends.

*Sequential numbering of the Transshipment Declarations is important to ensure all data are right. Carrier vessel captain will include a sequential number in the upper right corner of the Transshipment Declaration. This number should be the same on the LSTLV Reported transfer Weights and Numbers and any Declaration revision.

APPENDIX 2. Fish transshipped in the eastern Pacific Ocean, 2009-2021, by species and flag of fishing vessel, in metric tons.

		Atunes-Tunas			SWO	SKH	OTR	Total
		BET	YFT	ALB				
2009	CHN	6,392	1,281	433	978		502	9,586
	JPN	4,736	1,218	767	627		657	8,004
	KOR	2,460	324	79	323		553	3,739
	PHL	72	34	-	-		-	106
	TWN	2,564	586	1,655	320		363	5,487
	VUT	964	237	3,828	108		1,053	6,190
	Total	17,186	3,679	6,762	2,356		3,128	33,112
2010	BLZ	81	13	10	3		2	110
	CHN	3,674	748	429	583		470	5,902
	JPN	6,623	1,942	819	1,049		1,502	11,935
	KOR	2,957	459	102	372		891	4,781
	PER	80	15	3	7		3	107
	TWN	4,535	987	1,431	539		730	8,223
	VUT	1,321	259	1,963	131		330	4,005
	Total	19,271	4,424	4,756	2,684		3,928	35,063
2011	BLZ	90	9	76	19		17	212
	CHN	5,363	1,157	436	815		755	8,526
	JPN	5,198	1,111	1,819	1,247		1,622	10,997
	KOR	4,263	574	253	486		1,015	6,591
	TWN	2,246	413	3,269	271		1,123	7,323
	VUT	1,160	228	3,609	166		366	5,529
	Total	18,319	3,492	9,463	3,004		4,899	39,178
2012	CHN	3,690	840	389	772		429	6,121
	JPN	5,894	1,359	1,340	1,185		1,162	10,938
	KOR	1,257	130	55	166		257	1,866
	TWN	2,476	395	2,015	398		664	5,949
	VUT	1,226	160	2,996	157		348	4,888
	Total	14,543	2,884	6,796	2,678		2,860	29,762
2013	BLZ	246	40	20	52	16	30	404
	CHN	3,635	798	3,400	583	114	758	9,289
	IDN	102	16	2	16	0	2	138
	JPN	5,756	1,126	735	1,162	9	784	9,571
	KOR	3,947	519	199	487	294	579	6,026
	TWN	1,771	386	1,463	245	335	676	4,876
	VUT	763	160	2,853	161	34	316	4,285
	Total	16,221	3,045	8,672	2,706	801	3,144	34,590
2014	BLZ	38	1	1	5	0	0	45
	CHN	4,418	1,142	8,068	906	115	1,477	16,127
	IDN	18	7	3	1	6	28	62
	JPN	3,850	919	337	858	0	755	6,719
	KOR	2,585	481	118	287	170	391	4,032
	PAN	172	76	13	37	34	56	388

		Atunes-Tunas			SWO	SKH	OTR	Total
		BET	YFT	ALB				
	TWN	2,924	626	3,238	547	258	780	8,373
	VUT	818	269	2,593	142	118	256	4,195
	Total:	14,822	3,521	14,371	2,782	701	3,743	39,941
2015	CHN	5,690	1,897	6,631	888	130	1,323	16,558
	JPN	4,201	766	367	829	0	761	6,925
	KOR	4,347	525	154	545	252	813	6,636
	PAN	522	116	447	17	56	163	1,321
	TWN	2,267	639	1,379	508	215	392	5,400
	VUT	1,381	429	4,249	194	202	620	7,075
	Total	18,407	4,373	13,228	2,982	855	4,072	43,916
2016	CHN	4,572	1,898	14,064	1,169	157	1,559	23,419
	JPN	2,395	581	285	685	61	671	4,678
	KOR	3,661	672	246	524	0	711	5,815
	PAN	463	85	346	320	164	309	1,687
	TWN	2,983	679	2,315	844	445	1,118	8,385
	VUT	1,815	357	3,756	353	334	512	7,126
	Total	15,889	4,272	21,012	3,895	1,160	4,881	51,110
2017	CHN	3,428	899	7,462	693	18	1,481	13,981
	JPN	2,812	546	358	790	0	488	4,993
	KOR	4,073	710	286	517	0	591	6,177
	PAN	640	129	921	109	381	444	2,623
	TWN	4,354	580	1,410	1,160	419	1,343	9,265
	VUT	1,801	429	725	311	322	484	4,072
	Total	17,109	3,292	11,161	3,579	1,140	4,830	41,111
2018	CHN	3,647	1,162	13,247	966	397	2,299	21,717
	JPN	1,531	260	313	477	29	360	2,971
	KOR	2,964	679	228	310	0	567	4,748
	PAN	251	55	924	133	70	157	1,590
	TWN	3,454	780	3,173	1,289	455	1,295	10,448
	VUT	2,237	516	575	547	237	496	4,608
	Total	14,084	3,452	18,461	3,722	1,189	5,175	46,082
2019	CHN	2,327	1,118	11,984	566	160	2,357	18,512
	JPN	518	62	113	38	0	97	828
	KOR	1,941	710	325	158	0	319	3,453
	PAN	191	115	160	725	82	129	1,402
	TWN	2,555	873	2,250	591	395	1,331	7,995
	VUT	1,241	369	782	561	253	548	3,752
	Total	8,773	3,248	15,613	2,639	889	4,780	35,942
2020	CHN	2,031	1,063	20,648	447	234	2,941	27,364
	JPN	837	221	103	139	0	164	1,464
	KOR	2,215	691	248	171	0	364	3,689
	PAN	6	2	610	4	14	8	643
	TWN	3,743	1,164	3,014	1,226	845	1,993	12,025
	VUT	1,551	403	862	691	170	346	4,023

		Atunes-Tunas			SWO	SKH	OTR	Total
		BET	YFT	ALB				
	Total	10,383	3,543	25,485	2,718	1,263	5,815	49,208
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

APPENDIX 3. Trips by carrier vessels that carried IATTC observers to monitor transshipments in the eastern Pacific Ocean, 2021.

IATTC trip	Carrier vessel	Flag	Departure		Arrival	
			Date	Port	Date	Port
444*	Lung Yuin	PAN	13-Dec-20	Kaohsiung, TWN	25-Feb-21	Kaohsiung, TWN
445	Taiho Maru	PAN	16-Jan-21	Kaohsiung, TWN	26-Apr-21	Shimizu, JPN
446	Ping Tai Rong Leng 2	CHN	20-Jan-21	Busan, KOR	9-May-21	Busan, KOR
447	Shin Ho Chun No.102	PAN	22-Jan-21	Papeete, Tahiti	10-Mar-21	Suva, Fiji
448	Rising Star	PAN	15-May-21	Vacamonte, PAN	7-Jun-21	Vacamonte, PAN
449	Shin Ho Chun No.101	PAN	18-Jan-21	Papeete, Tahiti	7-Apr-21	Busan, KOR
450	Yu Run 3	PAN	11-Feb-21	Busan, KOR	31-Aug-21	Honiara, Solomon Islands
451	Sei Shin	KOR	10-Feb-21	Busan, KOR	10-May-21	Busan, KOR
452	Tenho Maru	LIB	30-Mar-21	Busan, KOR	12-Jul-21	Busan, KOR
453	Ping Tai Rong Leng 1	CHN	20-Feb-21	Busan, KOR	28-Jun-21	Zhoushan, CHN
454	Taiho Maru	PAN	31-May-21	Busan, KOR	14-Aug-21	Busan, KOR
455	Full Kuo Shin	PAN	23-Feb-21	Kaohsiung, TWN	27-Jul-21	Busan, KOR
456	Tuna Queen	PAN	27-Apr-21	Kaohsiung, TWN	14-Jul-21	Shimizu, JPN
457	Seiyu	KOR	15-May-21	Busan, KOR	17-Jul-21	Busan, KOR
458	Ping Tai Rong Leng 2	CHN	18-Jun-21	Busan, KOR	27-Sep-21	Busan, KOR
459	Yu Run 3	PAN	9-Jun-21	Busan, KOR	22-Oct-21	Busan, KOR
460	Tenho Maru	PAN	24-Jul-21	Busan, KOR	28-Sep-21	Busan, KOR
461	Full Kuo Shin	PAN	25-Jul-21	Kaohsiung, TWN	2-Nov-21	Kaohsiung, TWN
462	Tuna Queen	PAN	22-Aug-21	Kaohsiung, TWN	1-Dec-21	Shimizu, JPN
463	Ping Tai Rong Leng 1	CHN	23-Aug-21	Busan, KOR	28-Dec-21	Zhoushan, CHN
464	Seiyu	KOR	14-Aug-21	Busan, KOR	7-Nov-21	Busan, KOR
465	Taiho Maru	PAN	29-Sep-21	Busan, KOR	16-Dec-21	Busan, KOR
466	Yu Run 3	PAN	22-Oct-21	Busan, KOR	23-Mar-22	Busan, KOR
467	Tenho Maru	PAN	2-Nov-21	Busan, KOR	24-Jan-22	Busan, KOR
468	Sheng Hong	TWN	5-Nov-21	Kaohsiung, TWN	8-Jan-22	at-sea
469*	Shin Ho Chun No.102	PAN	12-Oct-21	Suva, Fiji	26-Nov-21	Levuka, Fiji
470	Ping Tai Rong Leng 2	CHN	17-Nov-21	Busan, KOR	28-Feb-22	Busan, KOR
471	Shin Ho Chun No.101	PAN	30-Nov-21	Suva, Fiji	21-Jan-22	Suva, Fiji
472	Full Kuo Shin	PAN	5-Dec-21	Kaohsiung, TWN	21-Mar-22	Kaohsiung, TWN
473	Seiyu	KOR	21-Dec-21	Busan, KOR	21-Feb-22	at-sea
474	Shun Tia Fa 168		2022 trip			
475	Meita Maru	LIB	24-Dec-21	Busan, KOR	4-Apr-22	Shimizu, JPN

* Trips without an observer are in yellow.

APPENDIX 4. Transshipments in the Pacific Ocean (top) and in the EPO (bottom), 2018-2021.

