

COMISIÓN INTERAMERICANA DEL ATÚN TROPICAL
INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON VESSEL MEASUREMENT

1ST MEETING

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27-28 OCTOBER 2006

DOCUMENT VES-1-06

PROTOCOL FOR SEALING FISH WELLS ON PURSE-SEINE VESSELS

The sealing of wells as a mechanism to reduce the capacity of vessels was discussed extensively at the 74th meeting of the IATTC in June 2006. It was noted that, to comply with Resolution C-02-03 on fleet capacity, a vessel wishing to reduce its capacity by sealing wells must follow certain procedures, including physically sealing the wells in a credible and verifiable manner, removing the refrigeration system from the sealed wells, and being inspected by appropriate authorities; also, a reduction in capacity achieved in this way should not exempt the vessel from any requirement to carry an observer. Mexico, Guatemala, Panama, and Venezuela presented a proposal incorporating these ideas

The proposal was not agreed by the Commission, which had little time to consider it. It was agreed that this matter be addressed in a technical working group, which could then recommend guidelines for the process of sealing wells.

Following is a recommendation prepared by the Secretariat for a protocol for the sealing of wells, which draws heavily upon the proposal presented in June.

1. PROTOCOL FOR THE SEALING OF FISH WELLS

Wells in which fish are stored on board vessels may be sealed in order to reduce the overall capacity of the vessel. In order for the reduced well volume of the vessel to be recorded on the Regional Vessel Register for purposes of the implementation of Resolution C-02-03 on fleet capacity, the following procedure must be followed:

1. A sealed well is defined as any space on board a vessel, intended for the freezing or storage of fish, access to which has been restricted to prevent its use for these purposes.
2. The well must be physically sealed, although it should be possible to open it in case of an emergency.
3. All refrigeration equipment must be removed from the well.
4. Any wells that are sealed must be inspected by the vessel's flag government to verify compliance with this protocol, and the results reported to the Director.
5. Any vessel with one or more of its wells sealed to reduce its well volume recorded on the Regional Vessel Register shall be required to carry an observer on board.
6. Observers shall be notified as to which vessels are operating with sealed wells, and shall report any instances of sealed wells being used for storing fish.

2. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIDCP

Matters concerning the well volume of purse-seine vessels and the IATTC Regional Register have implications for the AIDCP. In particular, points 5 and 6 of the proposed protocol are relevant to the AIDCP. If the IATTC adopts such a protocol, consideration should be given to recommending that the AIDCP Parties adopt the same measure. Further, the AIDCP Parties might wish to consider whether the assessments of vessels with sealed wells should be based on the original well volume of the vessel before the wells were sealed.