



Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes

Recommended citation:

FAO. 2017. Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes. Rome. 20 pp.

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ISBN 978-92-5-130009-1

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CDS

IPOA

IUU

MCS

RFMO

SSC

Monitoring, control and
surveillance

SSF

WTO

Small-scale fisheries

Executive summary

The UN Fisheries Resolution on Sustainable Fisheries of 9 December 2013 expresses concerns over the continued threat to marine habitats and ecosystems represented by Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing, and also acknowledges the negative impact that these activities have on food security and State economies, particularly in developing regions. FAO has an established role in facilitating the collaborative development by States of international instruments that set out principles and standards for responsible practices in the management, conservation and development of fisheries. Therefore, the Resolution calls upon States to, *inter alia*, initiate within FAO as soon as possible the elaboration of guidelines and other relevant criteria relating to catch documentation schemes.

In response to this request as expressed in paragraph 68 of the Resolution, the thirty-first Committee on Fisheries (COFI 31) (Rome, 9 to 13 June 2014) proposed that FAO undertake the elaboration of guidelines and other relevant criteria related to catch documentation schemes, including possible formats, based on the following principles: a) conformity with the provisions of relevant international law; b) not create unnecessary barriers to trade; c) equivalence; d) risk-based; e) reliable, simple, clear and transparent; and f) electronic if possible. The Committee further stipulated that the assessment of schemes and formats would include cost-benefit considerations and take into account catch documentation schemes already implemented by certain Members as well as by Regional Fisheries Management Organizations.

This document, the Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes, is the direct

output of a series of meetings including the Expert Consultation (Rome, July 2015), COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (Agadir, February 2016), Technical Consultation (Rome, April 2016, July 2016 and April 2017) and COFI 32 (Rome, July 2016). The Guidelines were officially adopted by the FAO Conference at its Fortieth Session in July 2017.

The content of the Guidelines is divided into seven sections and one annex. In order, these sections are: Scope and Objective, Definition, Basic Principles, Application of Basic Principles, Cooperation and Notification, Recommended Functions and Standards, Cooperation with and Recognition of the Special Requirements of Developing States. The annex includes Information Elements for Catch Certificate and Additional Information along the Supply Chain.

1

Scope and objective

1.1 These Guidelines are voluntary and cover Catch Documentation Schemes (CDS) for wild capture fish caught for commercial purposes in marine or inland areas, whether processed or not.

1.2 These guidelines are elaborated recognizing that all available means in accordance with relevant international law and other international instruments, such as, the International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU) should be used to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. CDS build on the primary responsibility of the flag state to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing. They also constitute a valuable supplement to port state and other measures.

1.31.3

2

Definitions

For the purposes of these Guidelines:

2.1 “Catch Documentation Scheme”, means a system with the primary purpose of helping determine throughout the supply chain whether fish originate from catches taken consistent with applicable national, regional and international conservation and management measures, established in accordance with relevant international obligations, hereinafter referred to as “CDS.

2.2 “Catch certificate” means an official document accompanying a consignment and validated by the competent authority, allowing accurate and verifiable information concerning fish passing through the supply chain.

2.3 “Fish” means all species of wild capture living aquatic resources, whether processed or not.

2.4 “Consignment” means fish, which are either sent simultaneously from one exporter to one consignee or covered by a single transport document covering their shipment from the exporter to the consignee.

2.5 “Fishing vessel” means any vessel of any size used for, equipped for use for, or intended for use for the purposes of fishing or fishing-related activities, including support vessels, fish-processing vessels, vessels engaged in transshipment and carrier vessels equipped for the transportation of fishery products, except container vessels.

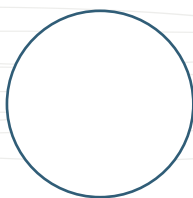
2.6 “Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing” means the activities set out in paragraph 3 of the 2001 FAO International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, hereinafter referred to as “IUU fishing.”

2.7 “Landing” means the initial movement of fish from a vessel to dockside in a port or free-trade zone, even if subsequently transferred to another vessel. The offload or transfer in port of fish from a vessel to a container is a landing.

2.8 “Regional fisheries management organization” means an intergovernmental fisheries organization or arrangement, as appropriate, that has the competence to establish fishery conservation and management measures, hereinafter referred to as “RFMO/A.”

2.9 “Supply chain” means a sequence of processes involved in the production and distribution of fish from catch to the point of import in the end market, including events such as landing, transshipments, re-export, processing, and transport.

2.10 “Transshipment” means the transfer of fish that have not previously been landed, from one vessel directly to another, at sea or in port.



Basic principles

The Guidelines are based on the principles that CDS should:

3.4 Be risk-based;

3.5 Be reliable, sim4oe.21(, scle/Lar)1.s()3.4e /5pan 4

accurate and verifiable information along the supply chain. To ensure CDS are reliable, simple, clear and transparent:

(a)

5

Cooperation and notification

5.1 CDS are most effective when all states involved cooperate in the schemes. States should seek wide multilateral engagements in the development and implementation of CDS, based on the risk assessment approach and cost-effectiveness considerations. Multilateral or regional CDS are preferred.

5.2 States should make every effort to cooperate in the design, implementation and administration of CDS. Such cooperation should aim to:

- (a) ensure that the risk assessment is based on clear objective criteria;
- (b) ensure that imports of fish originate from catches made in compliance with applicable legislation;
- (c) facilitate the importation of fish and the verification requirements of catch certificates; and
- (d) provide for the establishment of a framework for the exchange of information.

5.3 The acceptance of catch certificate should be subject to the notification by the validating state that:

- (a) it has in place national arrangements for the implementation, control and enforcement of laws, regulations and conservation and management measures that must be complied with by fishing vessels; and
- (b) the competent authority is empowered to attest to the veracity of the relevant information contained in catch certificates and to carry out verifications of such certificates on request from the importing state. The notification should also include the necessary information to identify and contact the authority. If the information provided in the notification is incomplete, the importing state or RFMO should indicate to the state validating the catch certificate, without delay, which elements are missing and request that it provide a new notification as soon as possible.

All states involved in events in the supply chain in the CDS should designate a competent authority to ensure availability of accurate and verifiable information along the supply chain.

6

Recommended functions and standards

6.1 The CDS should be based on a clearly defined objective, enabling determination of the level of traceability and functions required. It should be designed to meet its objective and minimize the burden on users.

6.2 The CDS should clearly specify the species and stocks concerned, wherever applicable, product types, and exemptions associated with the scheme, and list all applicable Harmonized System (HS) classifications.

6.3 In the CDS validation process, different roles of relevant states to authorise, monitor, and control fishing operations and verify catch, landing, and trade should be fully recognized, consistent with relevant national and international law, multilateral measures, instruments and obligations. Validation of the catch documentation information should be done by a competent authority. According to the specific circumstances of the fisheries, all relevant states could take part in the verification of information in the catch documentation. Importing states may request verification by the competent authorities validating the catch documentation.

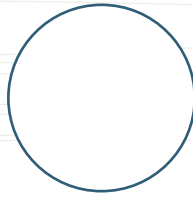
6.4 The CDS should include requirements for unique, secure document numbers. In the case of split consignments, or processed

products, clear links to the underlying catch certificate should be available to facilitate verification by importing states.

6.5 When establishing a CDS, due consideration should be given to:

- (a) applicable monitoring, control and surveillance requirements;
- (b) relevant standards for information exchange and data confidentiality;
- (c) use the operative languages necessary to the efficient and effective function of the CDS; and
- (d) user manuals for various user groups and provide appropriate training, taking into account, the special requirements of developing states.

6.6 Core information elements for CDS are set out in the Annex. To ensure the link between the catch and the products, information along the supply chain should be included as appropriate. In specific instances, CDS may incorporate additional elements as necessary to achieve their objectives.



Cooperation with and recognition of the special requirements of developing States

7.1 States should give full recognition to the special requirements of developing States, in particular the least-developed among them and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), to ensure that they have the ability to implement these Guidelines.

7.2 In this regard, States may, either directly or through international organizations, including RFMO/As, provide assistance to developing States in order for them to enhance their ability to, *inter alia*:

- (a) develop, implement and improve practical and effective CDS;
- (b) develop an adequate legal and regulatory framework for CDS;
- (c) strengthen institutional organization

ANNEX

Information elements for Catch Certificates and additional information along the supply chain

1. When considering the data elements to be included in the catch certificates, due consideration should be given to the fisheries concerned, the outcome of the risk assessment, the objective of the CDS and the complexity of the supply chain. Core elements include:

- (a) Unique and secure identification of document
- (b) Information on catch and landing (fishing vessel or vessel group [SSF], species, catch area, landing information etc.)
- (c) Transshipment at sea or in port, as appropriate (donor and receiving vessel, area, date)
- (d) Description of exported product(s) (product type, weight)
- (e) Issuing Authority validating the catch certificate, including contact details
- (f) Exporter identity and contact details
- (g) Importer identity and contact details
- (h) Export and transport details

2. In addition to the core elements, elements unique to re-export and processing:

- (a) Link to originating catch certificate
- (b) Description of imported products(s)
- (c) Description of re-exported or processed product(s)
- (d) Issuing Authority validating the re-export or processing statement, as appropriate, including contact details

