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La Reunion, Friday 03rd November 2023

SIOFA CIRCULAR n° 2023/49

**SUBJECT: Implementation of the Williams Ridge fishery
in the 2023/2024 fishing season**

Dear Heads of Delegation,

For your information, according with the para 38 of the CMM 15 (2023), an arrangement has been done between the CCPs with fishing vessels fishing for *Dissostichus* spp. in Williams Ridge and the Chair of the MoP in consultation with the Secretariat.

Please find below the Implementation of the Williams Ridge fishery in the 2023-2024 fishing seasons.

Feel free to contact the Secretariat if you need any clarification.

M. Tae-Hoon WON

원 태 훈

Chairperson of the Meeting of the Parties



Implementation of the Williams Ridge fishery in the 2023/24 fishing season

Introduction

The 10th Meeting of the Parties (MoP) to SIOFA adopted [CMM 15\(2023\)](#) (Management of Demersal Stocks). The CMM incorporates templates and clarifications regarding the implementation of the Williams Ridge fishery where a fishing effort limitation regime is in effect, based on a grid cell system. CMM 15(2023) replaces previous versions of the CMM adopted by the Meeting of the Parties in 2019 (CMM 2019/15) and 2021 (CMM 2021/15).

Paragraph 36 and footnote 4 of CMM 15(2023) define the process for entry notifications for vessels intending to fish in any grid cell, as follows:

“36. CCPs shall ensure that their fishing vessels inform the Secretariat as soon as they enter a grid cell to fish for *Dissostichus* spp., using the entry notification template at Annex V. Outside Secretariat business hours, an advance notification process will apply. The Secretariat shall inform the vessel as soon as possible⁴ of the number of lines that have been set in that grid cell during that season and whether it is currently being fished by another vessel, using the template at Annex VI. Where the Secretariat receives notifications from multiple fishing vessels for a given grid cell, the Secretariat will respond to the notifications in the order that they were received.”

“4. In accordance with any arrangements agreed ahead of each fishing season between the CCPs with fishing vessels fishing for *Dissostichus* spp. in Williams Ridge and the Chair of the MoP in consultation with the Secretariat. The arrangements could include procedures and expected time frames for the Secretariat’s response to prevent unreasonable operational disruption to fishing outside Secretariat business hours. Once agreed, the Secretariat should circulate the arrangements to all CCPs before the beginning of the season.”

Purpose

The purpose of this note is to lay down the arrangements that will apply to the 2023/24 toothfish fishing season in Williams Ridge, as agreed among Australia and the European Union and the Chairperson of the MoP, in consultation with the Secretariat.

Secretariat business hours

The 2023/24 fishing season on Williams Ridge shall commence on 1st December at 00:00 UTC (= 4:00 am Réunion time (UTC+4)).

During the period from 30 November 2023 until the close of the 2023/24 toothfish fishing season, the Secretariat business hours shall be from 7:00 am to 4:00 pm on weekdays¹. During business hours, the Secretariat can be reached via email (secretariat@siofa.org) or by phone (+ 262 262 24 34 61).

¹ All times mentioned in this note are Réunion time (UTC+4).

Please note the following public holidays for the 2023/24 season:

- Wednesday 20th December 2023
- Monday 25th December 2023
- Monday 1st January 2024
- Monday 1st April 2024
- Wednesday 1st May 2024
- Wednesday 8th May 2024
- Thursday 9th May 2024
- Sunday 14th July 2024
- Thursday 15th August 2024
- Friday 1st November 2024
- Monday 11th November 2024

Outside office hours and when ships are in the area, the secretariat operates a weekly on-call system on weekdays between 16:00 and 21:00, and on weekends and public holidays from 7:00 to 21:00. On-call means that the secretariat must be able to receive and process notification requests by e-mail and update the image of the colour-coded grid cells on the SIOFA website within 10 hours of the notification. During on-call hours, the following member of the Secretariat can be contacted by e-mail (secretariat@siofa.org) or by telephone, according to the on-call schedule below from 1 December 2023:

- from 1 to 7 December inclusive: Mr Pierre PERIES (+262 692 37 63 95)
- from 8 to 14 December inclusive: Mr Thierry CLOT (+ 262 693 44 44 95)
- from 15 to 21 December inclusive: Dr Marco MILARDI (+262 693 40 40 10)
- from 22 to 28 December inclusive: Mr Johnny LOUYS (+262 693 44 35 35)
- from 29 December to 4 January inclusive: Mr Thierry CLOT (+262 693 44 44 95)
- from 5 to 11 January inclusive: Mr Pierre PERIES (+262 692 37 63 95)
- from 12 to 18 January inclusive: Dr Marco MILARDI (+262 693 40 40 10)
- from 19 to 25 January inclusive: Mr Johnny LOUYS (+262 693 44 35 35)
- from 26 January to 1 February inclusive: Mr Thierry CLOT (+262 693 44 44 95).

The Executive Secretary will inform the CCPs and vessel masters concerned of any change or updates to this on-call schedule.

During business hours and on-call hours, vessels may contact the Secretariat by phone to follow-up and draw attention to requests submitted by email. The Secretariat shall ensure that all notifications and their treatment are properly documented.

If the Secretariat so requests, vessels shall inform it of their fishing intentions. This will enable the Secretariat to know when vessels will be in the area and to plan accordingly.

Time-frame for response

During Secretariat business hours and 'on-call' hours (that is, from 7:00 am to 9:00 pm all days), vessels will provide entry notifications as soon as they enter a cell to fish as per CMM 15(2023) and the Secretariat shall respond to vessel entry notifications within 1 hour of their receipt by the Secretariat.²

Outside of Secretariat business hours and 'on-call' hours (that is, from 09:00 pm to 07:00 am all days), an advance notification process shall apply: vessels wishing to fish in those hours must provide entry notifications no more than 12 hours in advance. The Secretariat shall respond to vessel entry notifications within 1 hour. Only 1 advance notification for 1 grid cell shall be accepted per vessel per calendar day.

As advance notifications may not be made more than 12 hours in advance, any vessel wishing to start fishing before the Secretariat's working hours on 1 December 2023, may only send an

² For the avoidance of doubt, to start the season, a vessel may provide an entry notification during business hours or 'on call' hours on the 30th November, to fish that cell on the 1st December.

advance notification on 30 November 2023 between 4:00 pm (UTC+4) and 9:00 pm (UTC+4). Notifications received before 4:00 pm (UTC+4) on 30 November 2023 shall not be taken into account. Notifications shall relate only to one grid cell and notifications to also fish other grid cells shall be disregarded by the Secretariat.

SIOFA website updates

The colour-coded grid cells image on the SIOFA website (<https://siofa.org/management/demersal-stocks>) shall be updated as the fishing season progresses, informing vessels of the status of grid cells in accordance with paragraphs 36-38 of CMM 15(2023) (i.e., the number of lines that have been set in the cell during the season and whether the cell is currently being fished by another vessel).

The Secretariat shall use the following coding: green (no lines), amber (1 line) and red (2 lines) and indicate current fishing by 'vessel fishing'. At the commencement of the 2023/24 fishing season, all grid cells in the image on the SIOFA website shall be green, indicating the status of the toothfish fishery is 'open' for fishing.

The SIOFA website should show two tables, one for the past 2022/23 season for information, and a second for the 2023/24 season. A note shall be added to the webpage to indicate that the grid cells image is designed to be a useful resource to assist with operational planning, but that it is guidance only; it is not determinative and does not replace the confirmation from the Secretariat required under the CMM before a vessel may commence fishing in a cell.
