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A proposal for an alternate method to collect data required by paragraph 12 of CMM 02 (2025) on Data Standards in order to exclude Mauritius semi-industrial fishery to embark observers on board

Delegation of the Republic of Mauritius

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Abstract

A proposal from Mauritius for an alternate method to collect data required by paragraph 12 of CMM 02 (2025) on Data Standards in order to exclude the Mauritius semi-industrial fishery to embark observers on board taking into consideration the working conditions and limited space available on board the vessels operating on the sub-area 8 (Saya de Malha bank)

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[2] Documents available only to members invited to closed sessions.

Recommendations

- The Scientific Committee notes that the Mauritian semi-industrial vessels operating in Sub-Area 8 are relatively small (12–23 m LOA) and are subject to safety and seaworthiness certification requirements, with limited accommodation and deck space, making the embarkation of additional personnel, including scientific observers, not operationally feasible
- The Scientific Committee further notes that the Mauritian semi-industrial fisheries operating in SIOFA Sub-Area 8 are low-risk, use selective gears, and are subject to comprehensive electronic, vessel, and port-based monitoring.
- The Scientific Committee recommends that the alternative monitoring and data collection measures implemented by Mauritius be considered sufficient to meet the requirements of paragraph 12 of CMM 02 (2025), and that Mauritian semi-industrial vessels operating in Sub-Area 8 be exempted from the requirement to embark scientific observers.

A proposal for an alternate method to collect data required by paragraph 12 of CMM 02 (2025) on Data Standards in order to exclude Mauritius semi-industrial fishery to embark observers on board

1.0 Background information - Description of the semi-industrial fisheries

1.1 The Semi-Industrial Shallow Water Fish Fishery

In this fishery, the fishing boats are of length ranging between 12m and 24m. Fishing is practised using handlines. The vessels carry ice and fishing gears, and once on the fishing grounds, fishing is carried out from the deck. Normally, on average, each vessel carries a total of 10 crew members comprising 6 fishermen and 4 other members (master/mechanics). The handline operated by each fisherman is fitted with an average of 8 hooks and the bait used consist of mainly bonitos. When the fish is caught, it is placed in a slurry containing ice and sea water. At the end of the fishing day, all the fishes are put in the fish hold. Fish in the fish hold is kept on layers of ice in racks in the ratio of 1 kg of fish to 2 kgs of ice. The fishing vessels fish for about ten days and the catch is unloaded chilled for retail distribution in the island.

The main targeted species of this fishery are the white fish lethrinids, mainly *Lethrinus mahsena* and other species, namely 'red fish' (*Plectropomus spp*, *Variola spp*), *Aprion virescens.*

2.0 The Semi-Industrial Deepwater snapper and grouper fishery

Deepwater snappers/groupers are fished at depth of 150-300m on the slopes of the banks. The deepwater snapper and grouper fishery is mainly practised on the drop-offs (slopes) of the fishing banks by fishing vessels of length range from 12m to 24 m. The main species caught are: Snappers (*Etelis* spp., *Pristipomoides* spp.), Frenchman seabream (*Polysteganus baissaci*) and comet grouper (*Epinephelus morrhua*). Fishing is carried out from the deck of the fishing vessels using hydraulic reels mounted with nylon lines and hooks. On average, each vessel carries a total of 10 crew members comprising 6 fishermen and 4 other members (master/mechanics). The gear operated by each fisherman is fitted with an average of 8 hooks. Bait is mainly frozen tuna and cuttlefish.

Table 1: Number of operational boats in the semi-industrial shallow water fishery

	Year						
Type of vessel	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**		**2025**
Semi-industrial shallow water bank vessels	**(1)** (it also operated in the Semi-industrial deepwater fishery)	1	**(2)** (also operated in the Semi-industrial deepwater fishery)	**(2)** (also operated in the Semi-industrial deepwater fishery)	1	One (**1**) vessel also operated in both the Semi-Industrial Shallow Water Banks Fishery and Semi-Industrial Deepwater snapper/grouper fishery)	4
Semi-industrial deepwater vessels	5	2	3	3	2		**(2)** (also operated in the Semi-Industrial Shallow Water Banks Fishery
Total	**5**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**4**		**4**

Table 2: Catch and effort data from 2020 to 2025 for the Semi-Industrial Shallow Water Banks Fishery

SAYA DE MALHA – SIOFA Sub Area 8			
Year	**Catch (tonnes)**	**Fishermen days**	**CPUE (kg/fishing day)**
2020	66.4	1 176	56.5
2021	46.7	504	92.6
2022	43.4	573	75.8
2023	147.9	1 803	82.0
2024	101.7	1 424	71.4
2025	73.5	871	84.4

Source: Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping

Table 3: Catch and effort data from 2020 to 2025 for the Deepwater Snapper/Grouper Fishery

SAYA DE MALHA – SIOFA Sub Area 8			
Year	**Catch (tonnes)**	**Fishermen days**	**CPUE (kg/fishing day)**
2020	46.4	572	81.1
2021	22.9	237	96.7
2022	59.4	978	60.7
2023	37.3	535	69.7
2024	26.6	463	57.5
2025	4.9	217	22.4

Source: Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping

3.0 Vessel characteristics

The overall length (LOA) of the vessels operating on the SIOFA - Saya de Malha Bank vary between 14 to 20 m. The hull of the boats is made up of fibre glass and the engine capacity ranges from 200 hp to 650hp. The GT of the vessel ranges from 19 to 78 tonnes.

Prior to the issue of a fishing licence, the owner of each vessel has to submit a hull/machinery and safety equipment certificate issued by a registered marine surveyor. With regard to spaces available for accommodation on board, it is to be noted that one criterion for the issue of the safety and seaworthiness certificate is the availability of sleeping bunks for the crew members in the cabin area. The number of sleeping bunks should be equal to the total number of crew on board. It is to be noted that not enough space is available to accommodate extra sailors on these types of boats.

4.0 Monitoring and control aspects

An inspection for safety equipment and conformity is carried out by Fishery Inspectors on all the boats prior to undertaking fishing campaigns. To this regard, a departure clearance is issued by the Competent Authority to ensure that the boats satisfy all the conditions of departure.

Each vessel is also mandated to report its positions every two hours through the Mauritius Fisheries Monitoring Centre and is also monitored via a vessel monitoring system throughout their fishing campaigns.

According to the conditions of the fishing licence, the master of each fishing vessel is required to submit a duly filled fishing logbook to the Port State Control Unit upon arrival at the port. It is to be noted that the only authorised port of landing for every semi-industrial fishing vessel is Port Louis.

When the vessels arrive at the port and prior to landing of their catch, a landing authorisation is issued after verification of all necessary documents including the fishing logbooks. Here, it is important to note that Mauritius has already embarked on the Electronic Reporting System whereby daily information on catch and positions of each vessel are received electronically at the fisheries departments.

5.0 Collection of data from the landing of catches

The Fisheries Inspectors also carry out inspection of all the catch from each vessel at the port. The species composition and the weight landed are recorded and therefore, a full monitoring is undertaken on the landings of each vessel at the port.

Morphometric sampling exercises are also undertaken by technicians of the Albion Fisheries Research Centre during unloading of the catches and parameters like length, weight and species composition are recorded.

The Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) of the semi-industrial fishery is calculated in terms of fishermen days which are obtained from the raw data provided in the fishing logbooks by the master of the vessel.

6.0 Justifications

Mauritius considers that the requirement to embark scientific observers on semi-industrial vessels operating on the Saya de Malha Bank is not operationally feasible and is not proportionate to the scale and risk profile of these fisheries.

6.1 Operational Constraints

The vessels operating in the semi-industrial shallow water and deepwater snapper/grouper fisheries are relatively small (12–23 m LOA) and are not designed to accommodate additional personnel beyond the required crew complement.

- All crew members sleep within a single shared cabin.
- Sleeping bunks are available for declared crew size only.
- No additional working or sampling space exists onboard.
- Deck space is limited and fully utilised for fishing operations and gear handling.
- There is no dedicated working desk space available

The embarkation of a scientific observer would therefore compromise vessel safety, and minimum space standards. Figures 1-3 illustrate the limited space and conditions of semi-industrial fishing vessels.

6.2 Low Ecological and Compliance Risk Profile of the Semi-Industrial Fisheries

The semi-industrial fisheries operating in the Saya de Malha Bank are characterised by:

- The use of handline and hydraulic reel gear;
- No documented bycatch concerns;
- No identified seabed impacts;
- Short fishing trips (typically 10–12 days);

- Mandatory landing at a single designated port (Port Louis);
- No transhipment at sea or in port.

Given the selective nature of the fishing gear and the absence of complex interactions (e.g. seabed contact, high-risk bycatch species, or vulnerable marine ecosystems), the ecological and compliance risk profile of these fisheries is considered low.

6.3 Proportionality and Practicality

Given:

- the small scale of the fleet, with a limited number of active vessels;
- the low-risk fishing methods employed;
- the absence of transhipment activities;
- the full port-based monitoring regime; and
- the operational constraints related to vessel design,

Mauritius considers that port-based and ~~electronic~~logbook monitoring measures provide data of equivalent reliability to onboard observer coverage for this specific fishery.

6.4 Current Monitoring Measures and Data Collection

To ensure compliance with SIOFA Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs), the following monitoring and data collection measures are implemented by officers of the Port State Control Unit and the Albion Fisheries Research Centre:

- Full monitoring of all semi-industrial vessels landing their catch at port by Fisheries Protection Officers~~Inspectors~~;
- Continuous monitoring of all vessels through the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS);
- Daily ~~electronic~~ reporting of catch and operational data through the Electronic Reporting System (ERS)/Paper logbook, including catch details, fishing coordinates, and number of fishermen involved;
- Prohibition of all transhipment activities at sea and in port;
- Landing of all catches at a single authorised port (Port Louis);
- Sampling of catches conducted upon unloading of fishing vessels at port.

7.0 Conclusion

In light of the operational constraints related to vessel design, the small scale of the fishery, and its low ecological and compliance risk profile, the requirement to embark scientific

observers on semi-industrial vessels operating on the Saya de Malha Bank is not operationally feasible and is not proportionate.

Mauritius therefore considers that the alternative monitoring and data collection measures implemented are sufficient to meet the requirements of paragraph 12 of CMM 02 (2025). Accordingly, Mauritius proposes that the Scientific Committee consider recognising these alternative measures as meeting the data collection requirements under paragraph 12 of CMM 02 (2025), and that the semi-industrial fisheries be exempted from the requirement to embark scientific observers.

Mauritius remains committed to maintaining robust monitoring and to the continued provision of comprehensive data to the Scientific Committee.

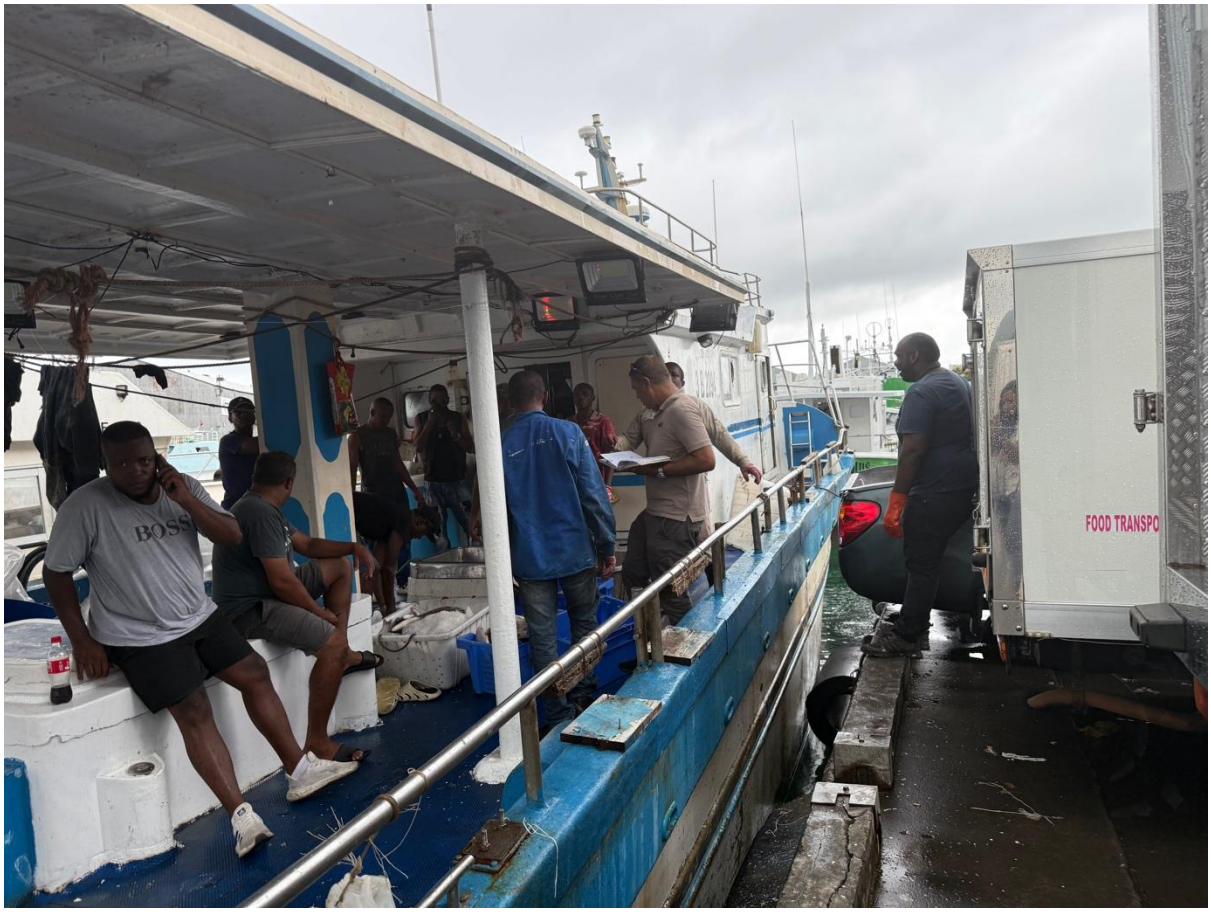

Figure 1: Unloading activities of Mauritian semi-industrial fishing vessels

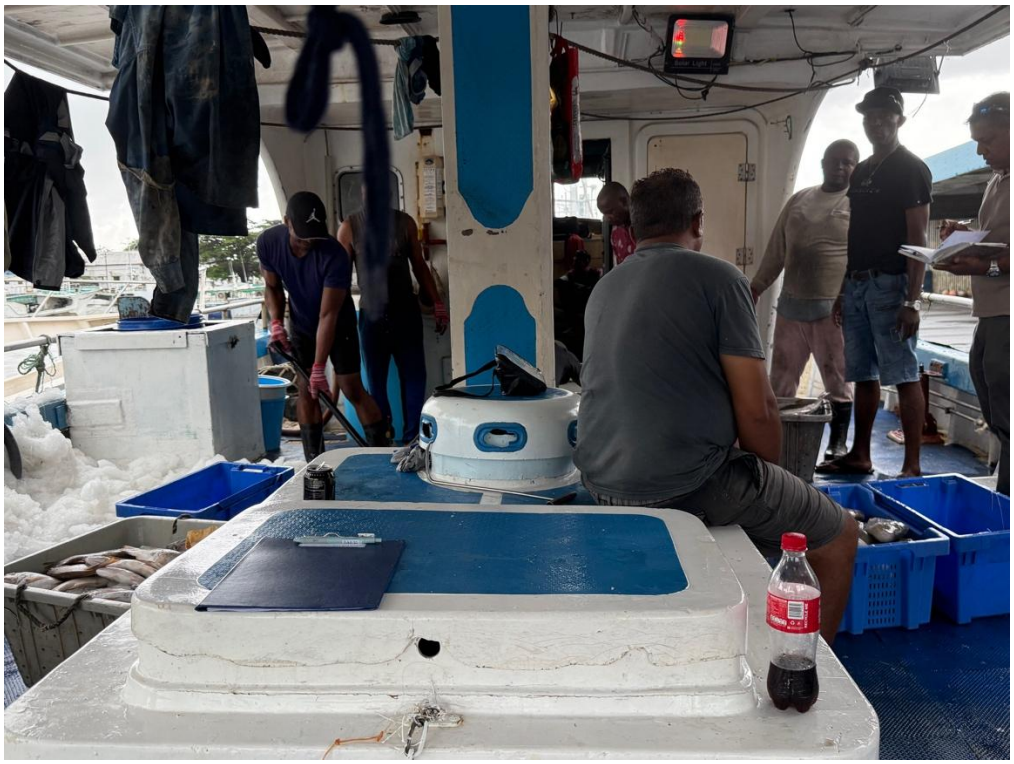

Figure 2: Deck area of Mauritian semi-industrial fishing vessel

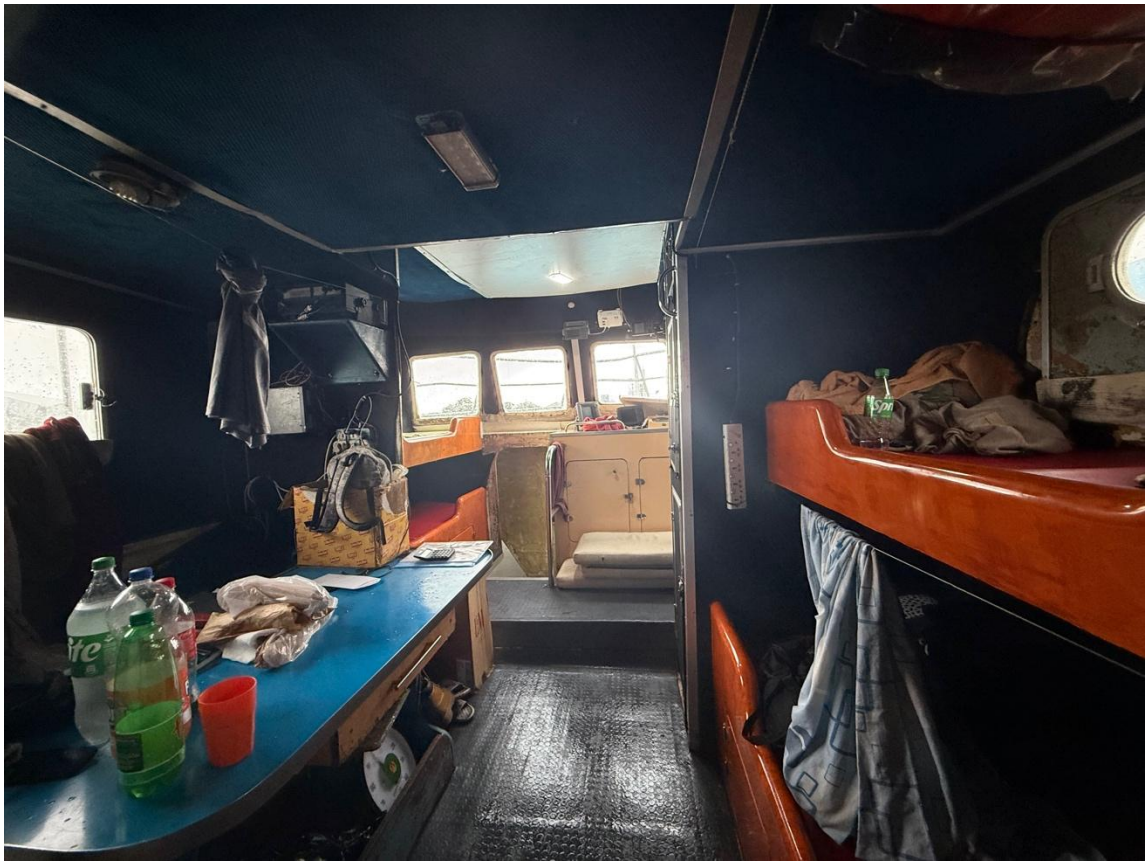

Figure 3: Living area in Mauritian semi-industrial fishing vessels