

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 167

Division/Agency: SRM/AFMA – Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: CSIRO Southern Bluefin Tuna Close-kin Genetics Project

Proof Hansard Page: 92 (21/02/2011)

Senator Colbeck asked:

Senator COLBECK—What can you tell me about the work that is being done by CSIRO on the close-kin project that maps DNA?

Dr Begg—Yes, that project is still ongoing, and they are analysing an additional, I think, 7,000 samples. We are expecting to see the results later this year, and around September-October those results are expected.

Senator COLBECK—But what is the focus of that? I mean, my understanding is that it is to do a calculation on the size of the spawning stock. How does that relate?

Dr Begg—That is correct. We can certainly give you the details and we can table the report that has been presented to date on that, but effectively the idea is to match pairs of spawning adults, which are sampled out of Indonesian waters, and those juveniles that we collect in the GAB, and from that index, it gives you an estimate of the biomass. So it would provide us with another index in terms of the potential size of the stock.

Answer:

The CSIRO Southern Bluefin Tuna Close-kin Abundance Project aims to estimate the spawning biomass of southern bluefin tuna (SBT) using parent-offspring matches from DNA fingerprinting. Seven thousand samples have been processed thus far and an additional 7000 samples, for a total of 14 000 individual SBT, are being processed to increase the precision of the final estimate. If successful, the project should reduce some of the current uncertainty about the size of the SBT spawning stock. The project is funded by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and the CSIRO. The initial estimate of spawning abundance is due in September 2011.

The attached update was provided by CSIRO to the Extended Scientific Committee Meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna in September 2010.

[Attachment]

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 168

Division/Agency: SRM/AFMA – Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Queensland Floods and Tropical Cyclone Yasi

Proof Hansard Page: 96 (21/02/2011)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Perhaps I will follow that up at some future estimates. Are you in any way involved in the impact on the fisheries—and again I am talking about the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery and the Coral Sea Fishery—from events such as Cyclone Yasi and, before that, other cyclones that have hit the Queensland coast in recent years? They always hit the Queensland coast, but I am talking in recent years. Are you involved in any work on that?

Dr J Findlay—When doing our risk assessments about how we are going to manage the fisheries, we certainly take into account scientific information, including the impact of various mechanical events which affect reefs and how that might affect our fisheries. That is part of the normal process. In the case of Cyclone Yasi, I cannot give you any up-to-date information or any current assessments. I suspect there have not been any assessments in the regions that the Coral Sea Fishery is operating in. They operate quite widely and I doubt there have been any recent surveys out there to tell us what has gone on with the reefs we are interested in as a result of that cyclone. I am happy to follow up and see if there is anything around and provide it on notice.

Answer:

The full extent of the impacts on commercial fisheries from both *Tropical Cyclone Yasi* and the recent flooding events in South-East Queensland are not yet understood. The department has been in contact with the Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) to discuss impacts affecting Queensland state-managed fisheries and aquaculture industries. DEEDI has consulted with key stakeholders and industry representatives to assess the damage to fisheries and aquaculture in those regions affected and is developing recovery plans.

See related answer 169 (SRM/AFMA) from the Additional Estimates February 2011.

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 169

Division/Agency: SRM/AFMA – Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Queensland Floods and Tropical Cyclone Yasi

Proof Hansard Page: 97 (21/02/2011)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Dr Begg—Various surveys are conducted on an annual basis up there. The Australian Institute of Marine Science conducts surveys throughout the reefs of the GBR. They have been going for some time now, so you could see some temporal trends there. I am not familiar with it in terms of the recent projects that have looked at the potential impacts of the cyclones, but it is information we could look at.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Could you do that for me?

Dr Begg—Yes.

Answer:

Previous studies have explored the impacts of rapidly changing environmental conditions, including impacts from cyclones. The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) published the results of a study in 2010 *Adapting to change: minimising uncertainty about the effects of rapidly-changing environmental conditions on the Queensland Coral Reef Fin Fish Fishery*. The study analysed the socio-economic effects of *Tropical Cyclone (TC) Hamish* on the commercial and charter Queensland Coral Reef Fin Fish Fishery (CRFFF), including adaptability of the fleet, vulnerability to future environmental events, and steps for reducing or mitigating this vulnerability. Habitat alteration and water temperature fluctuations are known impacts as a result of tropical cyclones. *TC Hamish*, a Category 5 tropical cyclone event similar to *TC Yasi*, impacted the southern section of the Great Barrier Reef in March 2009. Catch rates on the main target species for the CRFFF, common coral trout, were particularly negative and long lasting (up to twelve months). The full report can be accessed through the FRDC publications database at www.frdc.com.au. **A copy is also attached.**

In addition, the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) runs a long term monitoring program (LTMP) which has been surveying the health of 47 reefs in the Great Barrier Reef annually since 1993. The data captures the natural variability of coral and fish populations and documents the effects of disturbances like cyclones and bleaching events. The latest AIMS LTMP survey results are available at www.aims.gov.au

See related answer 168 (SRM/AFMA) from the Additional Estimates February 2011.

[Attachment]

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 170

Division/Agency: SRM/AFMA – Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Queensland Floods and Tropical Cyclone Yasi

Proof Hansard Page: 97 (21/02/2011)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—You have jogged my memory that perhaps I should be asking AIMS or even GBRMPA or FRDC, as you say, but I am a fraction surprised that it would not come into your fisheries management role in those fisheries that are impacted upon by severe weather conditions. Whilst you are having a look at that, you might let me know whether after the biggest floods—since 1974 I might add; it has happened before—any work has been done on the impact of severe flooding in South-East and Central Queensland waters and whether that has had any noticeable impact on fisheries stocks generally. Again, I appreciate you have not done it, but you might be able to alert me to any work or where I might go to find out about that.

Answer:

CSIRO is investigating the impact of the recent flooding events on marine ecosystems in Moreton Bay and the Great Barrier Reef region. This research combines vessel surveys, water sampling and satellite and glider technology with CSIRO's existing monitoring activities in the region. The information gathered will help in understanding the dynamics of flood plumes and their effects on marine flora and fauna.

See related answers 168 and 169 (SRM/AFMA) from the Additional Estimates February 2011.

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 171

Division/Agency: SRM/AFMA – Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Structural Adjustment & Harvest Strategy

Proof Hansard Page: 99 (21/02/2011)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—If I may interpose again, Mr Chairman, there is a question that I meant to ask and did not. In the south east fishery the buyback and the harvest strategy were intended to improve the profitability of the fishery. Has this goal been achieved? Has it succeeded? Is it more profitable? If it has not— which I am told is the case—what can be done further to try and improve the profitability? If you can answer that now, please do; otherwise, take it on notice.

Dr J Findlay—The first part of that is DAFF somewhat and/or DAFF and ABARE. The second part might be both of us.

Mr Thompson—To answer the first part of your question, ABARE may have the detail but they may need to take it on notice. There was a study that we did on the impact of the buyback, which indicated that the buyback had been successful in reducing the effort, improving the catch per unit and improving the overall potential for profitability in the industry. I do not have the report with me, so I am not sure whether it improved the profitability of individual enterprises, but the overall capacity of the industry as a result of the buyback was in the positive direction. There were fewer fishers catching roughly the same amount or more fish with less effort, but individual fishers could have been affected by a range of things, so profitability of an individual business may still be a problem in some cases. Are you familiar with the details?

Dr Begg—That is consistent with the work that we have conducted. Our recent fisheries survey, which was released late last year, would have the details for part of that fishery and we can certainly provide you with that report.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—That would be good.

Answer:

In 2010 and 2011 Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) has completed studies that have looked at the profitability and productivity of the Commonwealth Trawl and the Gillnet, Hook and Trap Sectors of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark fishery. These studies are published on the ABARES web site (www.daff.gov.au/abare-brs) and are listed below. **Copies are also attached:**

- Vieira, S, Perks, C, Mazur, K, Curtotti, R and Li, M 2010, *Impact of the structural adjustment package on the profitability of Commonwealth fisheries*, ABARE research report 10.02, Canberra, February.
- Perks, C and Vieira, S 2010, *Australian fisheries surveys report 2010, Results for selected fisheries, 2007–08 and 2008–09, Preliminary estimates for 2009–10*, ABARES report prepared for the Fisheries Resources Research Fund, Canberra, December.

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 171 (continued)

- Vieira, S 2011, *An index number decomposition of profit change in two fishing sectors*, ABARES conference paper presented at the Australian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society Conference, 9–11 February 2011, Melbourne.
- Perks, C McGill, K, and Curtotti, R 2011, *Vessel-level productivity in Commonwealth fisheries*, ABARES conference paper presented at the Australian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society Conference, 9-11 February 2011, Melbourne.

The buyback of Commonwealth licences in key Commonwealth fisheries was completed in late 2006. Generally, the buyback has reduced fishing effort, improved catch per unit of effort and improved the overall potential for profitability in the industry. The four ABARES studies listed above show that profitability and productivity have generally improved in the Commonwealth Trawl and Gillnet, Hook and Trap Sectors of the SESSF in the period following the buyback.

Profitability is also affected over time by external market factors; for example the appreciation of the exchange rate, which makes exports generally less competitive, higher fuel prices and the tight labour market. While these market factors can impact on the profitability of operators differently, a key effect of the buyback was to remove the least efficient operators from the fisheries, and thereby create a more resilient fishery.

The *Australian Fisheries Survey Report 2010* contains the most recent information on the economic performance of the Commonwealth Trawl and Gillnet, Hook and Trap Sectors of the SESSF. The report contains economic return survey estimates for 2007–08 and 2008–09 and non survey estimates for 2009–10. These estimates show that at the fishery level:

- The financial and economic performance of the Commonwealth Trawl Sector reduced over the survey period (2007–08 and 2008–09). In 2009–10, however, preliminary estimates indicate that the economic performance of the Commonwealth Trawl Sector improved by \$2.9 million.
- The financial and economic performance of the Gillnet, Hook and Trap Sector improved over the survey period (2007–08 to 2008-09). In 2009–10, preliminary estimates indicate that the economic performance of the Gillnet, Hook and Trap Sector declined by \$3.9 million due to lower prices and reduced catches.
- At the vessel level average cash profits and economic returns (inclusive of management costs) have improved since the buyback.

[4 Attachments]

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 172

Division/Agency: SRM/AFMA – Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Upper-Slope Dogfish Management Strategy

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

Can you provide an update on the dogfish management strategy in Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery?

Answer:

During 2010 Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) implemented the Upper-Slope Dogfish Management Strategy that primarily applies to the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery (SESSF). Key components of the strategy include:

- a network of seven targeted spatial closures covering more than 7530km², 17 per cent of the upper slope habitat in the SESSF, from the Great Australian Bight to eastern South Australia, eastern Bass Strait and off the coast of NSW
- a research zone that allows commercial fishing under strict guidelines including high observer coverage and a requirement to collect data
- a catch limit of 15 kg per day for all four species combined with a maximum of 90 kg for trips exceeding six days
- industry initiatives that include accredited skipper training and a code of practice to improve handling practices
- research and monitoring
- quantitative rebuilding targets for closed and managed areas. Targets for all areas will be developed and/or refined over time.

AFMA has worked closely with CSIRO and the fishing industry to minimise the impact of spatial closures while protecting upper-slope dogfish and enabling these populations to rebuild in the long term.

The effectiveness of the management strategy will be monitored annually and reviewed accordingly. Recovery of these species is expected to take some time given their biology.

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 173

Division/Agency: SRM/AFMA – Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Marine Bioregional Planning

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. Can the Department detail meetings including dates and locations during which it met with SEWPaC officers to discuss the Marine Bioregional Planning.
2. Has the Department provided advice to the Department of Environment regarding the formation of a displaced effort policy in conjunction with the current program of bioregion plans.
3. Has the Department provided advice to the Fisheries Minister about draft plans for the South West Bioregion Plan and specifically about marine reserves within that bioregion?

Answer:

1. The department has met Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC) officers on several occasions to discuss the Marine Bioregional Planning process. Since the October 2010 Supplementary Budget Estimates, DAFF officers met SEWPaC officers on 2 November 2010, 1 February 2011, and 23 February 2011 at SEWPaC offices, and 24 February 2011 at Australian Fishery Management Authority offices specifically to discuss Marine Bioregional Planning.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 174

Division/Agency: SRM/AFMA – Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Aquaculture Expansion in Commonwealth Waters

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

The Incoming Government Brief from the Department notes “Aquaculture is also expanding in Commonwealth waters, which may require new legislation and/or management arrangements.”

1. Can the Department provide an overview of the present and anticipated extent of aquaculture in Commonwealth waters?
2. What new legislation and/or management arrangements may be necessary and why?

Answer:

1. No aquaculture operations are licensed to operate in Commonwealth waters. The demand for aquaculture in Commonwealth waters may increase in the future due to rising demand for seafood, limits to wild stocks and limited suitable coastal locations.
2. As there is no legislative framework for the provision of aquaculture in Commonwealth waters, establishing a practical and flexible arrangement with the states and Northern Territory for aquaculture developments in Commonwealth waters may be achieved either through new legislation, by amending existing Commonwealth legislation, including the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* or through negotiated agreements with each state/territory jurisdiction.

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 175

Division/Agency: SRM/AFMA – Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Seabird Management Plans

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewert asked:

1. How does AFMA intend to ensure compliance with vessel management plans (VMPs) when each boat in the fishery has a different plan?
2. Is AFMA able to provide an update on progress of VMPs? What proportion of the fleet now has a VMP in place?
3. How many albatross were caught by vessels in the SESSF trawl sector in 2010? Of these, how many had VMPs already in place?
4. Will the vessel management plans include clear, strong requirements for compliance with mitigation methods?
5. There is no requirement for the workplan to have implemented the mitigation measures once they have the VMP in place by a certain date. How will AFMA ensure compliance?
6. Can DAFF provide an update on their preparation of Australia's National Plan of Action for Seabirds?

Answer:

1. It should be noted that VMPs have been renamed Seabird Management Plans (SMPs) since they only deal with seabirds.

AFMA observers will report on compliance of vessel operations in accordance with the SMPs. In addition the South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association (SETFIA), the East Gippsland Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and Fishwell Consulting recently completed the roll out of the Skipper Training course. Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) representatives participated in the delivery of the course.

Completion of the implementation of SMPs for each fishery will be followed by independent third party audits. An audit is planned for April 2011 for the Great Australian Bight Trawl Fishery (GABTF), and January 2012 for the SET fishery. Auditors will be members of SeaNet and BirdLife International.

Following the independent third party audits and an analysis of observer information, AFMA will examine whether stronger regulatory and/or compliance measures are required. In the interim, fisheries operators continue to have a legal obligation to minimise bycatch and report all interactions with threatened, endangered and protected species under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*.

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 175 (continued)

2. There are currently 38 board trawl vessels in the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery (SESSF). Of these, 22 have a Seabird Management Plan in place (four in the GABTF and 18 in the SET fishery). The SMPs for all remaining vessels are due to be completed during 2011 in accordance with the Bycatch and Discard Workplans for the SESSF.
3. The number of albatross deaths reported by AFMA observers or fishers in the SESSF trawl sector in 2010 was 26. Of the 11 vessels involved, seven had SMPs already in place, and the other four were being assessed for the implementation of SMPs at the time of reporting.
4. The SMPs clearly outline the responsibilities to comply with mitigation actions and reporting requirements. AFMA observers will report on whether the vessel operations are in accordance with the SMPs.
5. See responses to questions 1 and 4.
6. Australia has demonstrated its commitment to reduce the incidental catch of seabirds through the development of the Threat Abatement Plan (TAP) for the incidental catch (or by-catch) of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations which was implemented in 1998 and reviewed in 2006. The TAP is Australia's key national measure for mitigating the impact of longline fisheries on seabird populations consistent with Australia's commitment to the International Plan of Action for Reducing the Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries.

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 176

Division/Agency: SRM/AFMA – Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: CSIRO Consultancy of High Seas Benthic Impacts

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewert asked:

The AFMA 2009-2010 Annual Report at page 157 cites a consultancy service to CSIRO Division of Fisheries to undertake an assessment of high seas benthic impacts for \$110,000. The justification noted is there was a need for independent research or assessment. I understand that at the recently held meeting of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation Australia indicated this assessment would be completed by May 2011.

1. Can you please give some history to this process? What are the terms of reference for the consultancy?
2. Is this just for the South Pacific Ocean or will it also include the Southern Indian Ocean?
3. Will the CSIRO report be made public in May? Is there any other addition review process?
4. Will that be the final or will it be considered by Government?
5. Why has it taken so long for Australia to put this in place?
6. Is Australia in breach off its UN obligations by allowing high seas bottom fishing to take place although scientific assessment of impacts of any such fishing has not occurred?
7. What guidelines or standards have CSIRO been advised to use in undertaking the assessment?
8. Will the assessment be species based or ecosystem based?

Answer:

1. Arrangements for the provision for a high seas benthic impact assessment were made in the first half of 2010. On 21 June 2010, CSIRO and Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) signed a contract with the following terms of reference:
 - Stage 1 (preliminary assessment):
 - i. Mapping and evaluating the Australian fishing footprint in relation to physical features, broad ecological attributes and,
 - ii. Developing options to mitigate the impacts of fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs), including possible long term management strategies to facilitate VME conservation;
 - iii. Documenting the data and methods used, and those available for developing a stage 2 (full) assessment.
 - Stage 2 (full assessment):
 - i. Mapping the fishing footprint in relation to physical features and, to the extent possible, VMEs;
 - ii. Options to mitigate the impacts of fishing on benthic habitats and VMEs

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 176 (continued)

- iii. Options for developing a method and process for a longer term management strategy to facilitate VME conservation.

Stage 1 has been completed, and Stage 2 is on track to be completed by 28 May 2011.

2. The impact assessment includes the South Pacific Ocean and the Southern Indian Ocean.
3. The CSIRO report will be reviewed by relevant government agencies prior to public release and submission to the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation Secretariat.
4. The CSIRO report will be considered by government.
5. UN resolution 64/72 requiring benthic impact assessments in order to authorise bottom fishing was issued in March 2010. Funding was allocated to this project in the 2009–10 financial year.
6. Australia has a number of fishing management arrangements in place, which include:
 - fishing is restricted to areas already fished by Australian vessels during a historical reference period
 - mandatory 100 per cent observer coverage for trawl operators
 - mandatory first trip observer coverage for non-trawl operators (and ongoing coverage of at least 10 per cent annually)
 - upon encountering trigger levels of evidence of vulnerable marine ecosystems (such as deep-sea corals and sponges), there is a requirement to cease fishing within a five nautical mile radius of the shot and to report the encounter. The area is then closed to all operators using that method of fishing for the life of the permits
 - restrictions on fishing methods and gear types, including not permitting the use of deep water gillnets
 - seabird bycatch reduction measures in line fisheries, through requirements to deploy streamer lines
 - avoiding interactions with cetaceans and threatened species
 - species catch prohibitions (e.g. Black Cod, Blue Marlin and Black Marlin)
 - Vessel Monitoring Systems and reporting requirements.

When considered as a suite of mitigation measures, these management arrangements meet Australia's international obligations.

7. For the impact assessment, CSIRO is following the guidelines in the draft Bottom Fishery Impact Assessment Standard stipulated by South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation. CSIRO has also considered the New Zealand benthic impact assessment in developing its approach.
8. The assessment will be ecosystem/habitat based.

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 177

Division/Agency: SRM/AFMA – Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: AMSA High Seas Vessel Register

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewert asked:

According to the AMSA High Seas Vessel register in 2010 nine vessels had high seas fishing permits.

1. How many of these permits were for bottom trawling?
2. If yes, how many were for fishing in the Southern Indian Ocean and how many in the South Pacific Ocean?
3. What was the predominant catch?
4. What was the total catch for 2010?
5. What conditions were placed on the permits for bottom trawl in 2010?
6. Are details of fish catch available? Is by-catch data available?
7. Did observers note any contact with vulnerable marine ecosystems?
8. Was the move-on rule applied in any instance?
9. Were any interactions with threatened, endangered or protected species reported?
10. How many high seas fishing bottom trawl permits have been granted for 2011?
11. Has a benthic assessment of impacts of bottom fishing of the Southern Indian Ocean been undertaken?
12. If not why then has Australia allowed / issued a permit to the Austral Fisheries *Southern Champion* to bottom trawl fish? On what grounds of scientific evidence and the precautionary principle was the permit issued to the Southern Champion?

Answer:

1. Four.
2. Of the four, three are for fishing in both the Southern Indian Ocean and South Pacific Ocean. One is for the Southern Indian Ocean only.
3. The predominant catch for both regions was Orange Roughy.
4. The total catch for 2010 for both regions was 2,115 tonnes.
5. Permit conditions specifically for bottom trawl in 2010 were to:
 - hold a High Seas Permit before undertaking fishing activity
 - have mandatory 100 per cent observer coverage

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 177 (continued)

- upon encountering trigger levels of evidence of interactions with vulnerable marine ecosystems (such as deep-sea corals and sponges), cease fishing within a five nautical mile radius and report the encounter. The area is then closed to all operators using that method of fishing for the life of the permits
 - abide by prohibitions on catch of some species or species groups (i.e. Black Cod, Blue Marlin, Black Marlin, and tuna and tuna-like species)
 - avoid interactions with cetaceans and threatened species
 - operate Vessel Monitoring Systems and meet reporting requirements.
6. Details of catch for 1987-2009 for the South Pacific Ocean are made available through the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO). The Australia National Report 2009 for SPRFMO can be found at: www.southpacificrfmo.org/ninth-swg-meeting/. Data for the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) region are not yet publicly available. Details of catch and by-catch for SPRFMO and SIOFA are available from Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) upon.
 7. In the Southern Indian Ocean, 6 kg of coral were brought up in February 2011, and 62 kg of coral in August 2010. During 2010 the vulnerable marine ecosystem (VME) trigger limit was 100 kg in the SIOFA region. No interactions with VMEs were recorded in the South Pacific Ocean, where there is a 50 kg trigger limit.
 8. No.
 9. In the Southern Indian Ocean three warp strikes with Cape Petrels, which all flew away, were recorded by observers. No interactions were recorded in the South Pacific Ocean.
 10. Two.
 11. The benthic impact assessment of the Southern Indian Ocean is being undertaken by CSIRO and is due for completion by 28 May 2011.
 12. Australia has issued a permit for bottom trawling in the Southern Indian Ocean on the basis that Australia currently has conservation and management measures in place to prevent significant adverse impacts to vulnerable marine ecosystems,

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 178

Division/Agency: SRM/AFMA – Australia Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewert asked:

1. When will Australia ratify SIOFA?
2. Can / will Australia take action to ensure a meeting of SIOFA is held as soon as possible?
3. Will Australia ensure that appropriate non-state parties are able to attend the first meeting of SIOFA?
4. Can Australia take action to ensure that as a matter of priority “interim measures” are put in place to cover the Southern Indian Ocean?
5. When will Australia ratify the SIOFA?
6. Does Australia support a 50 kilo trigger before the move-on rule applies?
7. On what scientific basis is this trigger amount made?

Answer:

1. Australia is working towards ratifying the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) by late 2011.
2. The SIOFA will come into force 90 days after four instruments of ratification, acceptance or approval are deposited, at least two of which must have been lodged by a coastal State bordering the agreement area. The deposit of one more such instrument, including by Australia, will achieve this. The agreement requires a meeting of the parties to be held periodically – at least once a year. The agreement also provides for subsidiary committees to be established and to hold regular meetings. At this stage there are no plans for a meeting of the signatories to be held prior to the agreement coming into force.
3. Article 14.5 of the SIOFA states that: *‘Representatives from non-governmental organizations concerned with matters relevant to the implementation of this Agreement shall be afforded the opportunity to participate in the Meeting of the Parties and meetings of its subsidiary bodies as observers or otherwise as determined by the Meeting of the Parties. The Rules of Procedure of the Meeting of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies shall provide for such participation. The procedures shall not be unduly restrictive in this respect.’* Australia will seek to meet its obligations under the SIOFA.
4. Australia has consulted with signatories to the Agreement and interested parties on the implementation of interim measures in the area to be covered by the SIOFA. Consensus on such measures has not been reached. Once in force, Article 8 of the agreement requires that decisions on matters of substance are taken by mandatory consensus.
5. Australia is working towards ratification by late 2011.

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 178 (continued)

6. Yes.
7. The 50 kg of coral and sponges used as a trigger for evidence of vulnerable marine ecosystems was determined by Australia based on observer reports received by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority from Australian flagged vessels operating in the SIOFA area. Other countries have adopted different approaches based on their own assessments, CSIRO is undertaking an assessment of high seas benthic impacts, which will explicitly consider the basis of the trigger limit and method applied by Australia. When this assessment is completed (due mid 2011), the Australian Fisheries Management Authority will review all of the management arrangements in place, including the 50 kg trigger.

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2011

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 179

Division/Agency: SRM/AFMA – Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: United Nations General Assembly Sustainable Fisheries Resolution

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewert asked:

1. Will Australia be participating in the workshop to review implementation of measures to ensure measures are in place to ensure adverse impacts from bottom fishing do not arise?
2. Will Australia provide a public report on its implementation of UNGA resolutions and the Interim Measures of the SPRFMO intended to ensure vulnerable marine ecosystems of the high seas are protected from bottom fishing activities?

Answer:

1. Australian Government agencies are yet to take a decision on whether Australia will participate in the workshop to review implementation of aspects of the United Nations General Assembly Sustainable Fisheries Resolution.
2. Yes.