

Deep Blue: Pacific Island fisheries observers in action

After several months of preparation, several weeks at sea, and numerous days of interviews, shooting and editing, The DVD Deep Blue is finally here. Deep Blue presents one observer's trip on a tuna purse seiner and all the tasks he carries out onboard. It then follows him when he returns to land to show what happens to the data, information, samples, tags and other information he has collected.

Observers and fisheries management

Observers are instrumental in improving tuna fisheries management: they collect data at sea, which are then entered into nationally and regionally maintained databases and, once analysed, serve to guide regional and national fisheries management and policies.

In 2008 concerns about excessive fishing pressure on bigeye and yellowfin tuna stocks served to further highlight the importance of observer data, and led members of both the Parties to the Nauru Agreement and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission to require that all purse-seine fleets of their member countries be monitored by observers. Since 2010, every purse-seine vessel in the western and central Pacific must carry an observer onboard during their fishing trips. The observers collect data on the geographic location, species and quantities of catches, and get biological samples from fish for analysis.

An information and training tool

Pacific Island countries and territories have had to recruit and train more observers. In collaboration with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency and SPC, certification and training standards have been developed for Pacific Island Regional Fisheries Observers (PIRFO), and a large number of training sessions have been carried out with the support of international donors, making it possible to train observers from all member countries.

The DVD *Deep Blue* is an information and training tool. When broadcasted on national TV, it leads to a better understanding of the work observers do and encourage young people to join this profession. When shown during observer training sessions, it allows young trainees to gain a realistic idea of fishing issues in the Pacific, observers' working conditions, their responsibilities, and the qualities needed to be a good observer.

During training sessions, the video also makes it possible to look at the different tasks in detail using images, and to explain how observers are organised at the country level.

Cooperative effort

This video, filmed in Papua New Guinea, provided an opportunity for constructive collaboration, which is the key to responsible and sustainable tuna fisheries in the future: the ship's crew, observers, the fishing company, public authorities, the film and editing crew, and SPC staff worked on this production. Funding from the European Union, via the SciCOFish project, allowed them to create a new tool to better manage tuna fisheries, a tool that is already being used with success during training sessions. The DVD was originally produced in English and will soon be available in French.

Observers will continue to be out there as the eyes and ears of the fisheries and nations.



Deep Blue, a 30-minute DVD, presents the work of observers.



PIRFO ensure the collection of targeted, high quality data on tuna fisheries.

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