



BELIZE HIGH SEAS FISHING VESSEL CIRCULAR



FVC-13/02

Issued: 28th January 2013

Rev:

Revision Date:

TO: ALL SHIPOWNERS, OPERATORS, CHARTERERS, MASTER AND CREW, DEPUTY REGISTRARS AND RESIDENT AGENTS

SUBJECT: BYCATCHES AND DISCARDS

Reference: Issued in accordance with Part II 3 (1)(f) and Part VII 19(1)(2) of the Belize High Seas Fishing Act, 2003

BACKGROUND:

By-catches are one of the most significant issues in the management and conservation of global fisheries and can have significant, social, environmental and economic impacts. By-catch is considered one the leading cause of specie population decline.

“By-catch and discards present many dilemmas for fisheries management but nevertheless until and unless we are able to manage all significant sources of fishing induced mortality associated with fishing, we will not be in a position to ensure that fisheries are exploited in a responsible and long term sustainable manner consistent with an ecosystem approach to fisheries” FAO 2010

The reasons behind discards are both economic, because, for example, when there is no market for certain species or when fishermen discard marketable species in order to keep only the highly valuable ones, and regulatory, such as when vessels don't have an allocated quota for these species or the catch is below minimum landing size. In addition, the low selectivity of many fishing gears and/or techniques can also favor high by-catch and discard rates.

APPLICATION

1. For the purpose of this Circular, By-catch will be defined as the incidental take of undesirable size or age classes of the target species, or to the incidental take of other non-target species or protected, endangered or threatened species, such as seabirds and sea turtles.
2. Juveniles and undersized individuals of target species are considered by-catches and should immediately be discarded and recorded in the vessel's fishing log.

3. Species which are under a quota restriction, such as, but not limited to albacore, swordfish, bigeye tuna, Bluefin tuna, white and blue marlins, and for which a vessel has no allocation should be immediately discarded and the method should be recorded in the vessel's fishing log.
4. Dead by-catches should be retained on board, recorded and landed. For those species indicated in 3.2 and 3.3 above, a by-catch administration fee of 75% of the market value of the specie landed as dead by-catch will be charged.
5. By-catches are permitted only for species that do not fall under points 3.2 and 3.3 above and should be limited to only 5% by-weight of the vessel's total catch during each trip.
6. Operators, to the best extent possible should try to improve the selectivity and use of fishing gears, such as changing the design, rigging and deployment of the gear (eg., mesh size, hook, size), installing by-catch reduction devises (sorting grid, square mesh panels) or using operational techniques during fishing to reduce encounters with by-catch.
7. Vessels' catches and landings will be monitored to ensure compliance with this by-catch circular. No documents will be validated or issued for species caught or landed in contravention of this Circular.

ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

This Circular is considered a legally binding document in accordance with Part XIII 108(1)(2) of the Merchant Ships Registration Act 2010. Failure to comply with this circular will result in disciplinary actions taken against the vessel owners and operators and any other party affiliated with the operation of the vessel.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS NOTICE

This Fishing Vessel Circular is to be implemented with immediate effect and shall remain in force until further notification by the Belize Administration.

Any queries related to this Circular should be directed to:

International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize
Fishing Vessels Manager
Tel: 501-223-5026/5031/5047
Email: immarbe@btl.net

Belize Fisheries Department
Fisheries Administrator
Tel: 501-223-2187
fisheries_department@fisheries.gov.bz