

U.S. TUNA TRACKING & VERIFICATION PROGRAM

Program Summary Document

The NOAA Fisheries Service (NMFS) Southwest Regional Office is responsible for administering the Tuna Tracking & Verification Program (TTVP) throughout the fifty states, Puerto Rico, and American Samoa. The Regional Office, located in Long Beach, CA, monitors the following sectors of the U.S. tuna industry:

Domestic Catch

- ◆ Every tuna purse seine vessel greater than 400 short tons carrying capacity fishing in the ETP must have an Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) approved observer onboard to oversee every fishing trip. In addition to other duties, the observer records information on one of two Tuna Tracking Forms (TTFs) every time the purse seine net is set on a school of tuna. The information recorded after each set includes: 1) date and time of the set; 2) well number; 3) status of whether dolphins were killed or seriously injured; 4) estimated weights of yellowfin, skipjack, bigeye, and other fish caught in the set; 5) comments if any; and 6) initials of the observer and the chief engineer of the vessel. At the end of the trip, the observer and the vessel captain sign the completed forms certifying that the TTFs are complete and accurate to the best of their knowledge.
- ◆ NMFS is notified of the location and expected time of arrival of all U.S. vessels completing fishing trips in the ETP. A NMFS representative meets the vessel at the dock to oversee offloading if there are any non dolphin-safe tuna onboard. If the entire catch is dolphin-safe, NMFS may or may not meet the vessel at the dock.
- ◆ NMFS regulations require dolphin-safe tuna be stored only in designated dolphin-safe storage wells aboard purse seine fishing vessels, and that non dolphin-safe tuna will be stored only in designated non-dolphin-safe wells identified by well number throughout unloading, transshipping, weigh in, storage, and canning at processing plants.
- ◆ An owner of a large U.S. flagged purse seine vessel, which fishes in the ETP, may request certification of each trip's catch. After review of the Tuna Tracking Forms, the TTVP issues a Dolphin-Safe certificate which bears the Official Mark.

Domestic Cannery

- ◆ The TTVP currently monitors 20 companies operating plants in California, Oregon, Washington, Puerto Rico, and American Samoa.
- ◆ To ensure the "dolphin-safe" label is accurate for tuna purchased by the public, NMFS has developed a plan for tracking and verifying the dolphin-safe or non-dolphin-safe condition of tuna caught in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean (ETP). The tracking system is based on keeping dolphin-safe tuna separated from non-dolphin safe tuna from capture through processing.
- ◆ U.S. processors are required to submit three monthly reports of processing activity: 1) a report of all tuna received at U.S. processing facilities whether or not the tuna is actually canned or stored during that month; 2) a subset detailed report of tuna harvested in the ETP; 3) a cold storage removal report of ETP source tuna including the date of removal; lot

identification number(s); the dolphin-safe or non dolphin-safe designation of each container; details of the disposition of fish (for example, canning, sale, rejection). Monthly cannery receipt information must contain the following information: species, condition (round, loin, dressed, gilled and gutted, other), weight, ocean area of capture, catcher vessel and trip dates, carrier name, unloading dates, and unloading location.

Imports

- ◆ For each and every shipment of frozen or processed tuna imported into the U.S., a completed Fisheries Certificate of Origin (NOAA Form 370) is required to be submitted to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection at the time of importation. In some cases, an additional certification signed by a representative of a nation participating in the International Dolphin Conservation Program or a Captain's Statement is required to accompany the NOAA Form 370.
- ◆ Within 10 days of the shipment, the importer is responsible for ensuring a copy of the NOAA Form 370 is to be sent directly to the TTVP.

Additionally, the TTVP conducts or participates in the following activities:

Audits and Spot Checks

- ◆ Periodic cannery audits are conducted to verify reports and documentation processes.
- ◆ The TTVP may verify fishing reports by the use of IATTC data.
- ◆ Routine follow-up of NOAA Form 370 documents is conducted on an as-needed basis.
- ◆ Spot checks are carried out around the country to verify the legal importation and/or the dolphin-safe status of canned/pouched tuna products found on retail market shelves. After random purchases are made, processors or importers are requested to trace the item back through processing and ultimately to harvest to verify the product. Retail market spot checks have been made in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

International Dialogue and Cooperation

- ◆ TTVP team members participate, in conjunction with the U.S. State Department, in International Dolphin Conservation Program (IDCP) meetings.
- ◆ Parties to the Agreement of the IDCP enact conservation related resolutions by consensus.

Contact Information

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