So Long and Thanks for All the Fish

Heard of the vessel 'Notre Dame'? How about the 'Noemi'? Neither vessel is flagged to a CCAMLR member state, yet both have off-loaded toothfish in Mozambique this year. What has CCAMLR been able to do about it? Absolutely nothing!

ECO commends the government of Mozambique, a state that is not a CCAMLR member but has been the destination of many questionable catches of toothfish over the past year. Perhaps the owners of these vessels think that Mozambique will turn a blind eye to their activities. Mozambique has, however, behaved in a manner that CCAMLR Parties could usefully emulate. They have shown that they will not be treated as a port of convenience by vessels and states trying to shirk their international responsibilities. They ask the necessary questions and require compliance with CCAMLR Conservation Measures.

Yet it is not only port states that can act. These vessels, and others, particularly those flying the flags of CCAMLR members, are attempting to offload more and more fish (ostensibly caught outside of the CCAMLR area) in Mozambique and then travelling South to South African ports for stores and fuel. It is all very fishy business. This year alone at least four vessels flagged to CCAMLR members have tried to offload toothfish in Mozambique: Dorita, Arvisa, and Lugal Pesca — flagged by Uruguay; and the Elqui — flagged by Chile.

Flag states should exercise control over their vessels, or be subject to legal consequences. Last year, CCAMLR redrafted CM 118. The Notre Dame and Noemi have been reported to the CCAMLR Secretariat in accordance with CM 118. Several other vessels flagged to CCAMLR members have been reported to the Secretariat for engaging in activities that undermine CCAMLR's Conservation Measures. The Commission must act now to restore its credibility in the international arena.

VMS and measures against IUU fishing

ECO is encouraged by discussions held on the need to close loopholes in the CDS that allow laundering of illegal catches through DCDs claiming the catch was taken outside the convention area. Obviously, VMS alone is not the panacea for IUU fishing, unless it is operated with integrity in an effective and transparent manner and cannot be subject to manipulation by fishing operators. Cases such as the Dorita and Arvista I clearly show that the only way that an importing state can obtain reliable confirmation of DCDs is through centralized VMS. This would ensure that the same standards are applied to all vessels fishing for toothfish, and allow the CCAMLR Secretariat to confirm the veracity of DCDs to importing states. ECO urges delegates to adopt a centralized Vessel Monitoring System to be housed at the CCAMLR Secretariat.

Urgent Need for Blacklist

Conservation Measures 118/XX and 119/XX provide an adequate mandate for drawing up a blacklist of vessels and flag-states whose vessels are undermining CCAMLR Conservation Measures. ECO urges delegates to compile such a blacklist and establish sanctions against these vessels and states. These sanctions should include toothfish-related trade measures directed against the flag-state and beneficial owners of the offending vessels, and the denial of port access and the seizure of catch and vessels should they in fact enter port.
Long Lost Relatives, Lost Again

Tommy had packed his bags for a trip to visit his newly found cousins in Area 51, but then he heard that CCAMLR Delegates don’t believe any toothfish live there after all. It seems that some illegal operators had made up the existence of toothfish populations in these areas in order to get away with illegal fishing within the convention area. Tommy lives near Area 51 himself and wonders if he’ll be around for next year’s CCAMLR meeting!

Dead Bird Walking!

In an effort to assist observers on licensed fishing vessels, Tommy called his old friend Alain the Albatross to discuss dead birds. Alain joked, “I AM French you know, so I’d certainly recognize a dead petrel...HA HA! But seriously, most people think that a bird is dead when it is fit for stuffing. However, a bird hauled onto a fishing vessel alive, but injured, will likely be ready to stuff in a short time and should be counted as dead by observers. Just because a bird has a pulse doesn’t mean that it will survive being hooked by a longline fishing vessel.” Tommy and Alain wonder what the real bycatch number is...