Time to make history!

Welcome! It has been another year. Some would say it has been an exciting year, while others would argue that it has, in fact, been quite boring!

Sure, there was stuff that movies are made of: the VIARSA, suspected to be illegally fishing for toothfish (Dissostichus spp.), sparked off a hot chase by four vessels from three CCAMLR countries over a period of 20 days, clocking a total distance of 4,000 miles.

Then, there was stuff that history is made of: one great international convention - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) - adopting a Resolution to urge its members to cooperate with another great international convention - CCAMLR.

But then, most of the time, NOTHING happened: NOTHING was done to centralise the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), NOTHING was done to patch the loopholes of the Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS), nor to effectively extend trade controls to all countries involved in toothfish fishing and trade.

NOW is your chance to do SOMETHING. Start the coming year in style. For a change, agree to some practical ways to maintain sustainable fisheries in the Southern Ocean.

THIS is your chance to make history. THIS is your chance to leave your legacy for future generations. You want to, but don't know where to start? Here are a few ideas.............

We only want good fish!

Enforcing the CDS

Agree that all members will only buy good toothfish, which:
  • have a verifiable DCD;
  • are from States that are implementing the CDS;
  • are only from regulated areas inside the CCAMLR management area;
  • are from vessels and flag states that have a known history of complying with CCAMLR.
How do we know it’s good fish?

Centralised VMS, Electronic DCD

Agree to:

• adopt an electronic system for DCDs;
• centralise VMS monitoring at the Secretariat.
• make sure all members and cooperating parties operate a VMS which is really tamper proof.

Enforcement and Inspection

• Adopt an enforcement protocol: patrol the Convention Area!
• COOPERATE! Encourage vessels and aircraft from your States that are already out there to help track down the pirates!
• Do what the Doughnut Hole Convention already does: give CCAMLR inspectors enforcement powers.

What to do with the bad fish, the bad vessels and the bad States?

Blacklist of IUU vessels

This is the easiest one of all because everyone has had a full year to think about it:

• Agree to an official black list of vessels that have been involved in IUU activities – and keep them on the list like Norway does!

Sanctions on Blacklisted vessels ....

• Insist that blacklisted vessels should be completely excluded: denied fish licenses, denied port access, even if chartered, forbidden transshipment or any other support for fishing operations;
• Refuse any landings, exports, re-exports or imports of toothfish and toothfish products from blacklisted vessels.

... and Sanctions on flag states of IUU vessels

The big issue this CCAMLR meeting has to deal with is the collaboration of Russia and Uruguay with Spanish and Chinese syndicates of toothfish poachers. ECO suggests that CCAMLR members should insist on suspension. Given that there is no formal CCAMLR mechanism to suspend or expel members, suspension should involve:

• Refusal, by members at this meeting, to allocate any toothfish quota to any vessels flagged to Uruguay or Russia (or any other flag state involved in IUU activities);
• Refusal, by all port states fully participating in the CCAMLR CDS, to allow landings at any port by Uruguayan or Russian flagged vessels; and
• Refusal, by all market states, to allow imports with DCDs from Uruguayan or Russian flagged vessels;

The one good news

Cooperation from CITES

The only piece of positive action that was taken last year was CITES agreeing to cooperate with CCAMLR regarding trade in the toothfish. CITES has been urging its Parties to voluntarily adopt CCAMLR’s CDS.

DEAR DELEGATE, you should seize on to the momentum of this cooperation, and

• consider extending CCAMLR’s CDS to all CITES Parties by listing the humble toothfish on CITES Appendix II;
• sign an MOU with CITES to ensure more formal cooperation and collaboration in support of CCAMLR Conservation Measures;

It would be a historical move and future generations will thank you for your foresight and your action.
What have we learnt from the humble toothfish?

A cautionary tale for Kelly the Krill

Kelly the Krill is worried as she listens to Tommy the Toothfish talk about his relatives who have been disappearing from their ancestral homes and going on permanent vacations to exotic destinations. His relatives never wrote home. They didn't even send a postcard. Tommy is starting to wonder when, or if, he will ever see them again. Then there are the stories of Albert the Albatross. He talks about his friends who have drowned while diving for food near those big boats. Kelly is worried about the mysterious disappearances, the big boats and the deaths. She wonders whether her family will be next on the hit list. Please help to allay her fears by adopting a precautionary management plan for krill.

You can make your mark in history and be remembered as the "forward-looking one" of the CCAMLR delegates by agreeing on mandatory requirements for a sustainable krill fishery:

• Get potential krill fishing countries to become members of CCAMLR;
• Adopt small-scale management units (SSMU) for krill;
• Set precautionary catch limits for SSMU’s;
• Define predator management units;
• Mandate reporting, VMS and observers on all krill fishing vessels;
• Establish krill fishing seasons and limited fishing areas

The krill fishery must be regulated and maintained conservatively, with policy decisions firmly based on comprehensive scientific data.

DEAR DELEGATE, THIS is your chance to make a difference in the krill fishery before it becomes unmanageable.

While we are all enjoying the fun and the food and the sun in the lovely city of Hobart, let us not forget why we are here today. Dear delegates, YOU ARE HERE TO CONSERVE ANTARCTIC MARINE LIVING RESOURCES. And because of that, there are a few matters of duty that need to be completed while you are here:

• Develop Marine Specially Protected Areas (MSPAs), as part of your responsibilities under Annex V of the Environmental Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty;
• Ratify the Agreement for the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels (ACAP), as part of your responsibilities under Article 1 of CCAMLR;
• Agree to a Conservation Measure prohibiting bottom trawling over seamounts and cold water coral reefs: an issue that is recognised by the UN General Assembly.

So many ways to make your mark in history, to build sustainable fisheries in the Southern Ocean, to conserve Antarctic living marine resources, and to make the world a better place! NOW, let's all go and push for some concrete agreements and positive actions!

Conclusions

ECO is concerned that we are not very imaginative this year. Some of our priorities for CCAMLR delegates this year are pretty much the same as last year - well, there's not much point in coming up with new things to do when the old things haven't been done - and some of our suggestions for action are just copied straight out of other conventions. But THAT makes it easy! If other conventions can do it CCAMLR can do it! Although you've missed out on the action last year, NOW is your chance to leave your mark, build sustainable fisheries in the Southern Ocean and make CCAMLR XXII the biggest and best of them all!
ECO
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