



Agreement on the Conservation
of Albatrosses and Petrels

ACAP Opening Statement to COFI 35, September 2022

The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) is pleased to be able to participate as an observer at the 35th session of the FAO's Committee on Fisheries. We are also happy to be included in the Regional Secretariats Network (RSN) which meets before and after COFI. Both meetings provide useful opportunities for sharing with a broad range of colleagues the latest updates to ACAP's best practice advice for reducing the impact of fisheries on seabirds.

Through its 13 Parties, ACAP (<https://acap.aq>) strives to conserve albatrosses and petrels by coordinating international activities to mitigate threats to their populations. Bycatch in pelagic longline fisheries is one of the greatest threats to seabirds, particularly albatrosses and petrels. ACAP continues to work with others to address the challenges of the conservation crisis faced by albatrosses and petrels. This crisis requires ongoing, concerted efforts by all whose activities have an impact on the fate of these birds. We see this as a joint endeavour for ACAP, RFMOs and others. Fortunately, the crisis is not insoluble. Within jurisdictions where implementation of effective mitigation measures and appropriate enforcement has occurred, reductions in seabird bycatch have been demonstrated, sometimes dramatically so and without perceived detrimental consequences arising.

ACAP was pleased to see that COFI 34 issued a Declaration on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) reiterated its commitment to the Code, including reiterating the importance of the ecosystem approach.

ACAP continues to investigate best practice mitigation measures and to provide updated advice and guidance. The most recent meetings of ACAP's Seabird Bycatch Working Group (SBWG10) and Advisory Committee (AC12), held in August-September 2021, reviewed ACAP's best practice advice. Two additional mitigation measures for pelagic longline fisheries were assessed against the six best practice seabird bycatch mitigation criteria adopted by ACAP. These were underwater bait setting devices, specifically the Underwater Bait Setter' (Skadia Technologies) and one additional hook-shielding device, the Hookpod-mini. Following this review, ACAP recommends that the most effective way to reduce seabird bycatch in pelagic

longline fisheries is the simultaneous use of weighted branch lines, bird scaring lines and night setting, or use of one of the assessed hook-shielding and underwater bait setting devices.

AC12 also adopted new guidelines for observers and for electronic monitoring, which we consider will be of interest to FAO members. All our updated advice and guidelines are available on the ACAP website (<https://acap.aq>).

As well as attending the COFI and RSN meetings, ACAP is a regular participant in the ABNJ (Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction) Common Oceans Tuna project coordinated by the FAO (and financed by the GEF). Phase 1 of this project provided financial support to ACAP's production of mitigation factsheets for fishers in several languages. We are pleased to see that Phase 2 of the Common Oceans programme is about to get underway. Within this programme, ACAP is a partner in the CCSBT/Birdlife International initiative on enhancing education on, and implementation of, Ecologically Related Species seabird measures within CCSBT fisheries.