

Remote Electronic Monitoring: Assessing the technological capabilities of CCTV for EU fisheries

The EU Fisheries Control Coalition hosted on the 12th of May the online event “Remote Electronic Monitoring: Assessing the technological capabilities of CCTV for EU fisheries”. NGOs, industry and fishery managers participated in the webinar with the aim to further understanding on challenges and opportunities related to the future development of the Electronic Monitoring Systems.

The next event organized on Remote Electronic Monitoring organized by the EU Fisheries Control Coalition was scheduled on May the 18th, but it has been now postponed at a date to be determined.

The webinar was opened by the **EU Fisheries Control Coalition**, led by the Environmental Justice Foundation, Oceana, Seas at Risk, The Nature Conservancy, WWF, Client Earth, The Fisheries Secretariat, Our Fish, and Sciaena.

Jason Bryan - Archipelago Marine Research Ltd introduced Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS) and their role in fisheries control. It was said that, in general, monitoring defines what should be measured, values data and review, helps to modify behavior and supports policy development. Yet, Electronic Monitoring is only one of the many tools for Fishery Monitoring, together with Vessel Monitoring Systems, Dockside Monitoring, Automatic Identification System, Human Observers, and Fishing Logs.

Importantly, it was pointed out that the technology does not change from small to large vessels. However, there are requirements for the technology hardware, such as removable data storage, power management, fault tolerance and tamper evident, user interface with function testing, multiple camera and sensor inputs, multiple recording triggers, high capacity data storage and data encryption.

Privacy is an important element, and it was remarked that all fisheries monitoring data is considered confidential by law, that video data focuses on fish and fishing activities, not on people, and that fishers can typically see or request their data. With regards to the costs, it was said that is important to determine who will pay and for what. It was underlined that EMS are different from Vessels Monitoring Systems, as the two systems collect different data and have different data streams.

Mike Gerner - Independent Fisheries Management Expert outlined considerations on EMS from the fisheries management perspective. It was explained that EMS is an effective tool to know what species are being caught as well as when, where and how they are fished. The importance to have robust, reliable, and cost-effective information was also underscored. It was reiterated that there are a number of tools to gather these data, although EMS can be considered a game-changer, as benefits include: improved data quality, auditability, improved compliance and risk assessments, understand and regulate handling practices, minimized health and safety risks.

It was also underlined that Electronic Monitoring will play a role in the future for other reasons as well, such as seafood traceability, support to certification, biological data collection and new approaches for fisheries management. Furthermore, there are also important opportunities ahead in relation to EMS: for example, new technological tools allow for image recognition. There is also a lot of potential for roll-out to more fisheries.

In Australia, financial assistance was given by the government, but after the first years costs were covered by industry. The system is highly cost-efficient in the long-term. Within the next five years, Australia aims to cover all fisheries with Electronic Monitoring Systems. The usual life span of cameras is 3 years, however most systems in Australia have been installed in 2014 and they are still working.

Julio Morón – OPAGAC, speaking on behalf of OPAGAC, stressed the key elements to consider: integration with VMS, high-value information beyond videos, data integrity, data confidentiality, encryption, robustness, tamper-proof, and sea environment design. It was also said that camera coverage can be customized according to vessel. Moreover, it was stressed that amongst the strengths of EMS there are enhanced transparency, easy adaptation to different vessels, human rights watch and cost-effectiveness, which increases with new technologies. It was also highlighted that ensuring a level-playing field and combatting IUU fishing need to be understood as high priorities in order to avoid unfair competition.

Mark Zimring - The Nature Conservancy concluded the webinar saying that, overall, EMS represent an important opportunity to ensure enhanced transparency in fisheries. The main factors driving adoption from industry were presented: EMS constitute an alternative to human observers, reduce supply chain risk management (especially for retailers), improve reputation, can offer an opportunity to influence EM regulations and, if adopted at an early stage, fishers can have early-adoption incentives. For the EU context, EM regulation needs to be accelerated and this is relevant especially for those businesses concerned about sustainability certifications.