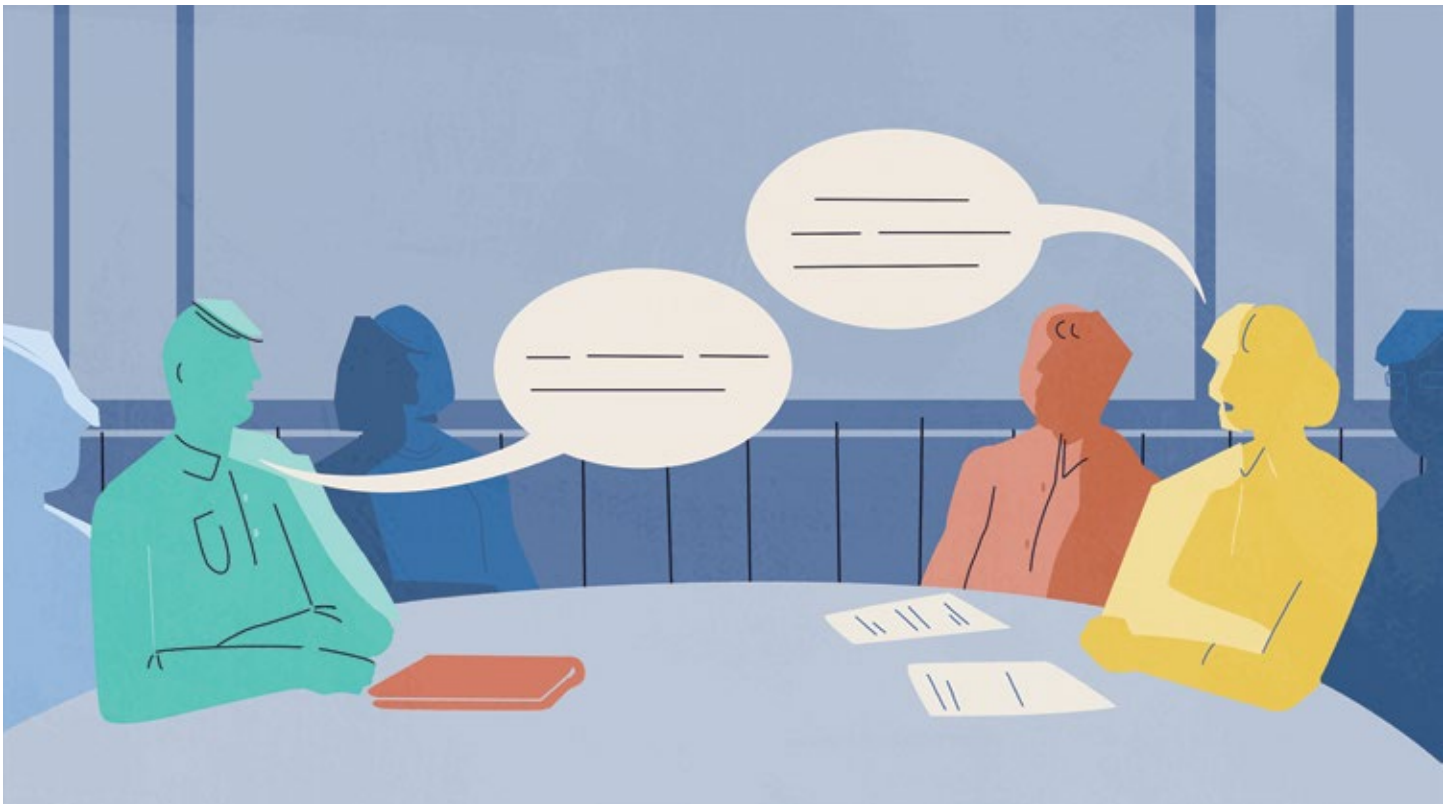
This fact sheet is one in a series outlining key elements for regional fisheries management organizations to consider as they develop electronic monitoring programs. More information is available at pewtrusts.org/ElectronicMonitoring.



Stakeholder Outreach and Communication

Transparency by decision makers can ease adoption of electronic monitoring

Overview

When regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) design and implement an electronic monitoring (EM) program, it is vital that the process be transparent and include all stakeholders. Frequent engagement with stakeholders as the program is developed is necessary to garner broad support for its adoption. Several studies show that a lack of buy-in by relevant entities can hinder a program's success.[1] Because an RFMO's EM program can cover many countries and a wide range of vessel sizes, gear types, fishing locations, and catch compositions, a representative group of stakeholders should be consulted to address concerns before they become intractable.

Table 1 provides an overview of common stakeholders, their key interests, and relevant discussion topics related to electronic monitoring.

Table 1

Stakeholder Interest in EM and Discussion Topics

Stakeholder	Possible interests in electronic monitoring (EM)	EM discussion topics
RFMO secretariat and science agency staff	• Improve compliance with conservation management measures (e.g., bycatch mitigation) • Increase data collection (e.g., for stock assessments) • Verify human observer data • Adapt and scale up for various gear/vessel types	• Development of standards • Implementation logistics (labour and costs) • Reasons some stakeholders are reluctant to use an EM system • Inability to collect biological data
Vessel flag State officials and coastal State officials	• Improve transparency of vessel activities (e.g., catch quotas and protected areas) • Ensure sustainability of catch to boost market access • Ensure a legal and verifiable supply chain • Meet the 20% observer coverage requirement recommended by some RFMOs	• Operational costs of an EM system • Potential loss of revenue for coastal States if vessels move to the high seas to avoid EM requirements • Adherence to or need for national legislation or regulations
Vessel owners	• Meet observer coverage requirements • Verify fishing operations • Ensure quality control of products • Improve communication and tracking devices • Increase oversight of crew • Ensure sustainability of catch to boost market access	• Initial costs of EM equipment and analysis • Concerns that infractions may be misconstrued • Additional requirements for EM compliance
Major tuna companies	• Ensure legality of vessel operations • Ensure sustainability of catch	• Concerns that confidential data could become public
Vessel crew	• Save space: More room for crew instead of observer • Eliminate logistical problems involving observers, including loss of fishing time • Protection from frivolous claims by observers	• Privacy concerns • Additional tasks to ensure the EM system is operational/effective (e.g., camera maintenance)
Observers	• Increase observer safety • Possibility of onshore employment as EM reviewer	• Audits of observer reports • Loss of on-vessel employment
Non-governmental organizations	• Increase observer coverage and improve transparency of vessel activities • Ensure sustainability and legality of vessel operations	• Formulation of standards and effective implementation
Markets	• Ensure a legal and verifiable supply chain for the public	• Additional costs

Collaboration opportunities

The first steps of the collaboration process are to identify the relevant stakeholders and then create engagement opportunities. They can be in the form of an RFMO EM working group, stakeholder workshops, EM pilot showcases, or other gatherings. To allow for both top-down and bottom-up communication, the events could be hosted in collaboration with RFMOs, NGOs, or United Nations bodies. Regardless of the forum, the gatherings would provide a platform for industry, government agencies, and secretariats to ask questions, offer lessons learned, and develop solutions.

While engaging stakeholders is a clear starting point for designing an EM program, feedback mechanisms must also be established to ensure that such engagement continues once a program has been put in place.

Industry Engagement

Collaboration with vessel owners, captains, and crew must occur in the early phases of designing an EM program to help ease industry uncertainty about how the systems would affect fishing operations. Pilot partnerships between industry and governments could help inform decisions on scaling up EM programs.

Conclusion

To ensure the long-term success of an EM program, fisheries managers must create opportunities to collaborate with, and incorporate feedback from, a variety of stakeholders. Formal processes for stakeholder engagement should continue for the duration of the program.

Endnote

1 R. Fujita et al., "Designing and Implementing Electronic Monitoring Systems for Fisheries: A Supplement to the Catch Share Design Manual," Environmental Defense Fund, San Francisco (2018), http://fisherysolutionscenter.edf.org/sites/catchshares.edf.org/files/EM_DesignManual_Final_0.pdf.

For further information, please visit:

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