

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](https://pewtrusts.org/ElectronicMonitoring).



## Electronic Monitoring Benefits Every Link in Seafood Supply Chain

Widespread use of the technology can improve sustainability, traceability, and compliance in the fishing industry

### Overview

In 2018, 67 million metric tons of fish, valued at over \$164 billion, were traded internationally.<sup>1</sup> And as global demand for responsibly sourced fish products grows, so does the call for more sustainability and transparency within the seafood supply chain.

Regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs), which oversee some of the most valuable marine species around the globe, have long relied on human observer programs to collect data to inform management decisions. Although these programs are a critical tool for effective fisheries management, 100% coverage of fishing activities is often difficult—and sometimes impossible—to attain using just human observers.

Comprehensive electronic monitoring (EM) programs (those that include clear objectives and standards for data collection and review<sup>2</sup>) will enable RFMOs to build upon existing observer programs, expand monitoring coverage, and support sustainable management solutions. Producers, distributors, and retailers along the supply chain that are involved in catching, sourcing, and selling seafood have a direct interest and an important role to play in encouraging the implementation of EM at RFMOs.

## Electronic monitoring can improve vessel operations and strengthen transparency

EM programs provide up to 100% continuous coverage of all fishing and vessel activity. Vessel owners and captains can use this technology to accurately track and report catch, bycatch, and fishing effort and demonstrate compliance with RFMO rules, fishing company regulations, and seafood sourcing policies. EM may also reduce the occurrence of illicit activities onboard vessels and help deter illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) products from entering the supply chain.

EM programs can also increase monitoring of transshipment, the transfer of catch between vessels. Without adequate oversight, transshipment can facilitate illicit activities, such as laundering illegally caught fish. EM can help fishery managers—and other industry members whose products are transshipped—to verify the legality of this important link in the seafood supply chain.

## EM programs can help demonstrate regulatory and ecolabel certification compliance

Comprehensive EM programs can help seafood buyers confirm their adherence to international import and/or domestic regulations and show that their products are sourced sustainably.

For fisheries seeking ecolabel certification (e.g., Marine Stewardship Council or fishery improvement projects), EM programs can help demonstrate sustainability through compliance with RFMO conservation management measures, data collection requirements, and other obligations that are necessary to receive certification.

Table 1

### Examples of Domestic Regulations and Where EM Can Help

Domestic or import regulation	How it works	How EM can help
<b>U.S. Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP)</b>	This program requires importers to provide reports that ensure seafood entering the U.S. market is not IUU caught.	Importers can more easily validate information on fishing activity, such as gear type, protected area compliance, and chain of custody to help meet reporting requirements.
<b>U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act</b>	This act mandates an ecosystem-based approach to marine management and includes a moratorium on the catching and importing of marine mammals.	Companies can demonstrate the effectiveness of marine mammal bycatch mitigation measures such as proper on-board handling and release procedures.
<b>European Union (EU) IUU Regulation's "Carding Scheme"</b>	This scheme assesses whether non-EU countries comply with international and regional rules to combat IUU fishing. Failing to do so may result in a fishery import ban.	Countries can use EM to improve fisheries oversight by capturing data needed to verify legality of catch and demonstrate effective governance of their fishing fleets.
<b>EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)</b>	The CFP provides rules for fisheries in EU member states. This includes the landing obligation (LO) that requires all species with quotas to be landed and documented.	EM can help enforce catch retention regulations and compliance with the LO. EM can also provide the robust and verifiable catch data needed for fish stock assessments and efforts to mitigate the bycatch of protected species and can inform management decisions that successfully encourage stock recovery and sustainable practices within the EU fleet.

# Supply chain actors should encourage adoption of EM programs by RFMOs

Members of the seafood supply chain can play an important role in accelerating the adoption and implementation of EM technology. Seafood companies should advocate for countries and RFMOs to adopt and implement EM programs that include standards and pathways for improving and increasing observer coverage. They should also actively participate in national RFMO advisory bodies to encourage governments to support EM programs and use the data provided to help ensure compliance with management measures. Additionally, market partners have the power to help drive EM implementation by committing to sustainable sourcing policies, supporting non-governmental organization collaborations and educational efforts, and amplifying EM messaging through statements and RFMO letters.

## Conclusion

Supporting the implementation of comprehensive EM programs at RFMOs can help the fishing industry meet the growing market demand for sustainability and transparency. The entire supply chain can benefit from this technology from ship to shelf—including seafood processors, buyers, and retailers. By advocating the development, adoption, and implementation of robust EM programs, industry can help guarantee a consistent supply of sustainable seafood for the global market.

## Endnotes

- 1 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, “The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020” (2020), <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9229en>.
- 2 The Pew Charitable Trusts, “5 Key Elements for Designing an Electronic Monitoring Program” (2020), [https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/2020/10/em-toolkit/toolkit\\_1\\_final\\_oct.pdf](https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/2020/10/em-toolkit/toolkit_1_final_oct.pdf).



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**Contact:** Leah Weiser, associate manager, communications  
**Email:** [lweiser@pewtrusts.org](mailto:lweiser@pewtrusts.org)  
**Project website:** [pewtrusts.org/ElectronicMonitoring](https://pewtrusts.org/ElectronicMonitoring)

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