



SHRIMP: MEXICO WILD HARVEST

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US CERTIFIES MEXICAN SHRIMP COMPLIANCE WITH TED LAWS

On October 15, 2010, the US recertified Mexico as being in compliance with Section 609 US Public Law 101-162 which prohibits the import of shrimp and shrimp products harvested in ways that may adversely affect some sea turtle species. This certification is based on a determination that Mexico's turtle excluder devices (TEDs) program is comparable in effectiveness to the U.S. program. The United States and Mexico have been working in close cooperation on sea turtle conservation since mid-1970's. Mexico implemented a plan of action in 2010 to strengthen sea turtle conservation and use of TEDs in its shrimp trawl fisheries as described below. US certification means that wild-harvested shrimp from Mexico's commercial trawl fisheries are in compliance with US TED laws and may be imported into the US.



Distribution of fishing gear by area

TEDs & BRDs

Vessel inspections are conducted annually prior to the fishing season for all trawlers before vessels are allowed to leave port to ensure compliance with Mexican regulations including proper installation of TEDs. In season enforcement of TED compliance for 2009-2010 covered 1,219 vessels out of fleet of 1,234 or 98% of the offshore fleet.

Thirty-eight percent of these inspections (462) took place in port. Sixty-two percent (757) occurred at-sea of which 519 were daylight inspections and 238 were night inspections. TED compliance violations are subject to new stiff penalties which include loss of fishing license, fines and imprisonment. In the 2009-2010 season, six captains were imprisoned for turtle violations. If a sea turtle is found on a vessel, the vessel can be confiscated. While TEDs are mandatory on shrimp trawlers, BRDs (bycatch reduction devices) are only required in the upper Gulf of California. Bycatch rates are similar to the US shrimp fishery, but in Mexico controlled by area specific BRD requirements, closed areas, and satellite vessel monitoring (VMS).



Enforcement Enhancements

Mexican has a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) to monitor 100% of the Mexican fishing fleet 24/7 to identify and track each vessel's location allowing the government remote capability to monitor closed areas, seasons and vessel activities, more advanced than the US vessel monitoring system. Shrimp trawlers have VMS monitors mounted in the wheel house and signal monitors if a vessel enters a prohibited zone. Inshore pangas have microchips installed on each individual vessel in addition to vessel registration and crew identification documents. New video monitoring program is being tested on trawlers for active surveillance of catch and bycatch composition on deck as well as disposition of catch to prevent illegal handling of protected species or transfers of permitted catch at-sea to other vessels. The Mexican Government also upgraded its capacity to enforce fishing activities with Zodiac vessels to enhance at-sea night inspections in preparation for the 2010-2011 shrimp season.



VMS monitor

Observer & Data Collection

Mexico also uses observer coverage on boats in the Pacific and Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery. Vessel owners are required to allow observers on vessels to provide additional confirmation on fishery compliance, logbook data collection, catch and bycatch composition, and interactions with prohibited species like sea turtles or vaquita marina as well as species of interest such as snapper. Observer coverage is reported to be 10-15 percent. Additionally, landing data are collected at the port along with vessel logbook data.

TED Training & Certification

There are 1,234 vessels which have received permits to fish for shrimp. 100% of the crew are required to be licensed and complete a TED training course in order to fish. Between November 2009 to March 2010, CONAPESCA and PROFEPA conducted nine workshops with the shrimp fishing industry focusing on TED training and compliance. By July 2010, 4,500 people had been trained and received certification of completion of TED training. Three additional workshops were held in July in Tampico, Mazatlan and Guaymas. A total of 15 workshops were held with almost 4,000 people certified (3,957 people).



Effort Reduction

In order to reduce fishing effort and capacity of the shrimp fleet, the Mexican government instituted a vessel buy-back program funded at \$2.54 million USD. During the past four years, 400 boats have been decommissioned. This initiative also reduces interactions with sea turtles.

Catch Share Program

The Mexican government has also instituted a pilot project in the Upper Gulf of California to introduce a catch share program. The first phase of the initiative focuses on inshore shrimp “panga” fishery. Under this program, all vessels and fishermen are registered and quotas are set per boat to control catch volume. Small inshore “panga” fishermen who opt out of the shrimp gill net fishery may continue to fish with alternative gear such as traps or small drag nets, and are provided opportunities to become owners and work on a shrimp aquaculture farm run by professionals to reduce number of nets.



Sea Turtle Protection

The Mexican government has been a leader in sea turtle protection since 1966 when they instituted programs to prevent the harvest of sea turtle eggs from nesting beaches. The US government joined as a bi-national partner in the mid-70s. The bi-national initiative patrols nesting beaches on both Gulf of Mexico and Pacific coasts to prevent predation on endangered sea turtles. The US and Mexican shrimp industry has been a supporting partner in this program since 1995 providing funding and infrastructure support. The shrimp industry participation has been cited as a model for the restoration of all endangered species.



Nest Protection Camps

Closed Areas

Several closed areas are established to protect shrimp spawning and juveniles as well as endangered species such as sea turtles and vaquita marina. Shrimp fisheries are closed from May to mid-August on the Gulf of Mexico and March to mid-September in the Pacific shrimp fisheries. In addition to seasonal closures, inshore areas are closed to trawler fleet and areas in the Upper Gulf of California are closed to for the protection of vaquita marina and biosphere zone where the Colorado River empties into the Upper Gulf.

Industry Programs

The Mexican fishing industry manages two mandatory programs jointly with government agencies. These include the Clean Fleet Program where every summer fishermen are required to go through training for handling dangerous material such as oil, filters, plastics and procedures for recycling of oil during fishing season. The second program, Survival of Life At Sea conducted by the industry provides training on what to do in an accident, how to take care of instruments, and general vessel operations.

Net Program

The Mexican shrimp fleet is in the process changing to knotless, lighter and more fuel efficient “Spectra” net. It is reported that 70% of vessels use “spectra” nets to reduce fuel consumption and impacts on the bottom. The remainder of the fleet uses a monofilament, still less weight than dipped nylon used in the Gulf of Mexico. The fleet is working cooperatively on a modernization program to improve fuel efficiency, handling of refrigeration equipment and cold storage, and other technological advances with matching funding support from the Mexican government.



Conclusions

Mexico is a leading partner in sea turtle protection at nesting beaches and has enhanced its enforcement and compliance with US TED laws and requirements which includes:

- Nation-wide mandatory TED certification workshops to fulfill new certification requirement on TED training for crew
- Licensing and documentation of crew for both trawl and panga fleet
- Zodiac vessel purchases for at-sea, night time enforcement of TEDs
- Satellite VMS on 100% of shrimp vessels operating in Mexico
- Dual TED inspections with 100% pre-season dockside and 98% in-season coverage
- BRD requirements in sensitive fishing areas (Upper Gulf of California)
- Closed and prohibited area restrictions monitored by VMS
- Onboard observer coverage on shrimp vessels reported at 10%
- Introduction of live video deck monitoring system on offshore shrimp trawlers
- Introduction of Catch Share management pilot program in shrimp inshore fishery

Mexican fisheries are strictly regulated with advancements not found in US shrimp fisheries (VMS, catch share pilot, video deck monitoring). Enhanced TED enforcement and surveillance systems have been approved by the US as being in compliance with TED laws, and BRDs are required by region with closed areas to limit bycatch and interactions with sensitive species.