TRACEABILITY PRACTICES IN THE SEAFOOD SUPPLY CHAIN

What is Seafood Traceability?
Ability to trace/track fish & fish products along a supply chain.

Benefits of Seafood Traceability?
- A tool to reduce the risk of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing
- Potential of improving the socio-economic viability of fishing industry
- Promotes healthy fish stocks
- Global interest for robust traceability systems (e.g. e-data capture systems/e-catch documentation schemes)

Traceability is a complex system involving different market players, with fish travelling long distances, across multiple landing ports, handling from processing factories to wholesalers, retailers and finally the individual consumers. Some of these global retailers and owners of tuna brands have made commitments to import food sourced from countries that engage in sustainable fishing practices such as Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified fisheries or fisheries that do not associate themselves with IUU fishing activities.
TRACEABILITY PRINCIPLES

WWF has developed six principles of traceability to guide State actors and stakeholders in improving traceability systems as a means to also combat IUU fishing problems.

1. Essential information
2. Full chain traceability
3. Effective tracking of product transformations
4. Digital information & standardised data formats
5. Transparency and public access to information
6. Verification

DIGITAL TRACEABILITY

Digital traceability can be a way forward in regard to improving the effectiveness of business transactions as well as reducing IUU fishing practices for Pacific island countries as well as countries in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO). The transfer of information becomes more reliable and conducted in a timely manner in comparison to paper-based procedures which is widely practiced. It becomes efficient as information is collated, shared and communicated over networks electronically. Although there may be challenges for business operators in the setup of electronic systems, the system allows authorised users to access information of a product at various points in the supply chain.

TOOLS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF IUU FISHING

There are various tools in place to support traceability systems and reduce the risk of IUU fishing

- Licensing systems
- Vessel monitoring system (VMS)
- Observer programmes
- Aerial and sea surveillance
- Dockside boarding and inspections
- Landing reports
- Supply chain risk analysis approach
- Possibility of verifying the legality of the catch
- Traceability and fish accountancy

GAPS ON TRACEABILITY

In spite of the many available tools and practices for seafood traceability, the fact remains that these approaches are still underdeveloped in many countries, and across market sectors. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), some of these gaps include among other things:

- Lack of awareness and understanding of the term traceability, and how the concept differs from chain of custody or CDS
- Lack of understanding of how traceability can streamline fishing industries internal processes and improve financial performance
- Commitment gap among the public and private sectors is significant when dealing with seafood traceability systems
- Significant gaps between regulatory requirements and implementation from the fishing industry
- Lack of cheap, functional technologies to extract data automatically

GOOD MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR SEAFOOD TRACEABILITY

| Regulatory framework for combating IUU Fishing | National laws | Clearly defined control mechanism | Regional cooperation |
| Measure at sea | Registration/licensing/authorisation/permit for all fishing vessels | Compliance and enforcement at sea |
| Measures on landing | Access to port/landing sites | Records at landing site |
| Verifiability | Possibility of verifying the legality of the catch | Traceability and fish accountancy |