



International Consultations on the Establishment of the
South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation

Standardised Fish Length Measurements and Precision by Species

Interim Secretariat

1. Introduction

Currently, a well-defined data standard for the collection of fish Length Frequency data does not exist. The Observer Data Standard at Annex 8.E (of the newly consolidated draft standards) is attached at Annex 1 of this document for reference. The current standard gives a broad description of how length-frequency data are to be collected, but does not define any specific data fields or length measurement standards.

2. Standards for the Collection of Fish Length-Frequency Data

It would be beneficial to have agreed and consistent standards for the collection, recording and submission of length-frequency data to the Interim Secretariat. The adoption of such a standard may be particularly timely given the plan to carry out an initial stock assessment of Chilean jack mackerel during 2009.

The following conclusion from the Guayaquil DIWG meeting report is pertinent:

“During the inter-sessional period, the DIWG will work to advance the following:
Develop standardized type of length measurements to be taken and precision of those measurements on a species by species basis, in particular for jack mackerel during the 2008 workshop.”

Note that the Interim Secretariat already holds one set of jack mackerel length-frequency data which is currently stored in spreadsheet format. If Participants envisage that length-frequency data should be stored by the Interim Secretariat in the future, then it would be very useful if an agreed Fish Length Frequency data standard could be adopted.

Discussion items:

- Recommend standardised length measurements to use, and the corresponding precision of such measurements on a species-by-species basis, following the Chilean Jack Mackerel Workshop (2008)
- Development of a Length Frequency Data Standard for fish length frequency data collection and/or submission for stock assessment purposes, if feasible.

Recommendations

- That a data standard for the collection and submission of length-frequency data be developed if feasible
- That any agreed standardised length measurements for the collection of length-frequency data, and any correspondingly agreed precisions of these measurements on a species by species basis, be included in the Observer length frequency standard documentation
- That the draft collated data standards are updated as appropriate.

Annex 1**Standard for Observer Data****E. Length-Frequency Data to Be Collected**

1. Representative and randomly distributed length-frequency data are to be collected for the target species and, time permitting, for other main by-catch species. Length data should be collected and recorded at the most precise level appropriate for the species (cm or mm and whether to the nearest unit or unit below) and the type of measurement used (total length, fork length, or standard length) should also be recorded. If possible, total weight of length-frequency samples should be recorded, or estimated and the method of estimation recorded, and observers may be required to also determine sex of measured fish to generate length-frequency data stratified by sex.