

WWF calls for satellite technology on all commercial vessels to increase transparency of fishing activities

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Deep sea fishing: Landing the catch on a deep sea trawler. Credit: Mike R. Jackson / WWF-Canon

A new pilot project initiated by WWF proves that the use of satellite technology in the surveillance of fishing activities can be an efficient and simple method to increase safety on fishing vessels and promote legal and transparent fishing operations. WWF cooperates with Sea Quest, a fishing company in Fiji in the South Pacific that agreed to install

Automatic Identification System (AIS) transmitters on its tuna fishing vessels to demonstrate full transparency of the company's fishing operations.

Since June 2013, six AIS transmitters have been activated round-the-clock on the long-line albacore tuna fishing vessels of Sea Quest. The AIS is a reliable supplier of data constantly sending signals from the vessels where it has been installed to the WWF database to monitor and evaluate fishing and vessel operations on the water. WWF can retrace the routes and activities of Sea Quest's fishing vessels and ensure that boundaries of sensitive areas and no take zones are respected.

"Our cooperation shows that this MSC-certified tuna fishery is willing to make their fishing operations fully transparent," said Alfred Schumm, WWF's Smart Fishing Initiative Leader. "I hope that the Sea Quest project will become a global example of how to make fishing transparent, and that it will trigger other companies to join us aboard."

Sea Quest is a tuna fishing and processing company of substantial size based in Fiji which employs more than 200 people. The fishing vessels haul in their catch using a selective, sustainable long line fishing method and all fisheries in the Economic Exclusive fishing Zones (EEZ) of the waters of Fiji in the South Pacific are certified against Marine Stewardship (MSC) standards, a certification program that promotes sustainable fishing. The company exports tuna mainly to the U.S. and Japan and newly upcoming markets such as the EU, New Zealand and Australia.

"With the AIS installation, safety and transparency of compliance with fishing areas are being addressed. Other issues like illegal fishing, barcoding of [fish](#), electronic monitoring of fisheries as well as satellite monitoring need to be part of a larger framework to be addressed through regulatory measures. I believe that the Maritime Safety

Authority of Fiji could look at implementing mandatory use of AIS units on all Fiji flagged vessels as a means of increasing vessel safety at sea. This could also be a back up surveillance for fisheries." said Brett Haywood, owner of Sea Quest.

"We want to create transparency and understanding and show that the fisheries management, monitoring and control measures are essential to make fishing sustainable. Governments over the world should make AIS installation mandatory for every commercial fishing vessel to increase safety and transparency," said Schumm.

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