

Marine Stewardship Council - Variation Request

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| Date submitted to MSC | <i>Originally Submitted: 13 March 2017</i> <i>Re-submitted: 24 April, 2017</i> |
| Name of CAB | <i>SCS Global Services</i> |
| Fishery Name/CoC Certificate Number | <i>SMALL PELAGICS FISHERY IN SONORA, GULF OF CALIFORNIA</i> |
| Lead Auditor/Programme Manager | <i>Carlos Alvarez/Sian Morgan</i> |
| Scheme requirement(s) for which variation requested | <i>7.4.14.2 Allow fish or fish products considered as coming from IPI stocks to enter chains of custody, with an exemption to the additional assessment requirements for IPI stocks given in PA4.2.</i> |
| Is this variation sought in order to fulfil IPI requirements (FCR 7.4.14)? | <i>Yes</i> |

1. Inseparable or practicably inseparable (IPI) catches

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| Is this request to allow fish or fish products from IPI stocks to enter into chains of custody? | Yes |
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The fishery targets seven different species of small pelagics: Pacific sardine, thread herring, bocona sardine, chub mackerel, red-eye round, California anchovy and leather-jackets. Only Pacific sardine and thread herring are assessed as P1 target species. Aside from small pelagic species, the fleet is reported to incidentally capture over 100 fish species and invertebrates, the latter were classified as 'minor' retained species.

*SCS identified catches of non- target stock(s) that are considered to be inseparable or practicably inseparable (IPI) from target (P1) stock(s), these are organized into two groups: **(1)** Thread herring (*Opisthonema bulleri* and *Opisthonema medirastre*) and **(2)** Non-small pelagic species 'minor' retained species. The catches under consideration fulfil all requirements under FCR 7.4.13 & 7.4.14 and the sub-clauses:*

a) *(1) Thread herring (*O. bulleri* and *O. medirastre*):*

*Thread herring is the common name for the genus *Opisthonema* that groups five different species. In the Gulf of California three species of *Opisthonema* are found: *O. libertate*, *O. bulleri* and *O. medirastre*. The target species assessed is in the thread herring UoA is *O. libertate*. The two other species of thread herring (*O. bulleri* and *O. medirastre*) account only for a marginal proportion of the catch of the fishery. A review conducted by INAPESCA (Martinez-Zavala 2013) sampled species composition from five fishing seasons from 2007/08 to 2011/12 and found that 96% of thread herring catch was *O. libertate* and 3.6% *O. bulleri*. Although the review recognized that species composition changes from season to season, it was concluded that *O. libertate* is the dominant species in this region of the Gulf of California. *O. libertate* is distinguishable from the other two *Opisthonema* spp. only by the number of gill rakers, making these two practicably visually indistinguishable during normal fishing operations.*

*For the 2013-14 season estimated landings of thread herring amounted to 235,266 mt (Nevárez-Martínez et al, 2016) out of which ~4% (9,410 mt) is estimated to be *O. bulleri* and *O. medirastre*, representing 1.2% of*

catch of the UoAs for Pacific sardine and thread herring.

The other small pelagic species targeted in this fishery can be distinguished from Pacific sardine and thread herring and are not considered IPI.

b) (2) Non-small pelagic species 'minor' retained species: Aside from small pelagic species, the fleet is reported to capture approximately 100 fish species, and 29 invertebrates categorized as 'minor retained', (not including ETP species and vulnerable elasmobranch species). During the onsite-meeting, staff responsible for the observer program explained that due to the operational challenges of separating these 'non-target' species from the rest of the catch of small pelagics, they are mostly retained. Though these species are distinguishable from thread herring and Pacific sardine, it is not commercially feasible to separate them during the harvesting and processing operations and thus are considered IPI stocks. According to data from the observer program the combined volume of these minor retained species accounts for <0.15% of the total catches of the fishery.

The combined proportion of catches from the IPI stock(s) identified above (both thread herring species and minor retained species) are estimated to average 1.36% of the total catches of the UoA/UoC in the 2012-13 and 2013-14 fishing seasons, which are the most recent fishing seasons with available observer data.

None of the species identified above as IPI are designated as ETP nor are they certified separately.

Records from the observer program indicate that the fleet additionally captures eight fish species designated as ETP and thirteen elasmobranch species which are not listed as ETP species, but include some vulnerable species. This request to allow IPI stocks to enter into chain of custody does not include ETP species or the additional thirteen elasmobranch species. According to observer records and information provided during the onsite the number of individuals of these species are very low, and the assessment team believes the risk of mixing fish ETP species or vulnerable elasmobranch species with the rest of the catch is negligible as the total volume of ETP and elasmobranch catch is extremely low and these are mostly larger individuals that may be separated during operations.

The assessment team was unable to verify the effectiveness of the traceability and segregation systems in mitigating the risk of mixing between certified and non-certified catch. For this reason at the Client Draft stage SCS concluded that certain fish products (fishmeal and fish oil) originating from the UoAs were not eligible to be sold as MSC-certified or carry the ecolabel. The client has already started to implement additional systems (observer program and on-board cameras), which are expected to provide verification for current traceability systems, however, these systems will need to undergo verification before the determination can be revised. Thus this request to allow fish or fish products from IPI stocks to enter into chains of custody, will enter into effect only once the fishery obtains a positive determination of the sufficiency of the tracking and tracing systems.

Is this request to allow an exemption to detailed requirements for IPI stocks?

Yes

Include a detailed and substantiated rationale showing that, in addition to FCR 7.4.14.2, the proportion of IPI stocks is less than or equal to 2% and the total catch of IPI stock(s) by the fishery under assessment does not

create a significant impact on the IPI stock as a whole.

As described in detail in Section (1) of this variation request, the catch proportion of all IPI stocks calculated is less than 2%.

And;

*The total catch of the IPI stocks by the UoA does not create a significant impact on the IPI stock(s) as a whole. The majority (~1.2%) of the total catch of IPI is *O. bulleri* and to a lesser degree to *O. medirastre*. These are widespread species with high fecundity and low vulnerability. The volume caught by the fishery is not considered to be large enough to pose a risk to the health of these IPI stocks. Aside from small pelagic species, the fleet is reported to capture approximately 106 fish species, and 29 invertebrates. From this group the dominant species in terms of weight are bronze-stripped grunt (*Orthopristis reddingi*), finescale triggerfish (*Balistes polylepis*) and Pacific sierra (*Scomberomorus sierra*). There is currently no population information available for these species: the IUCN lists them as 'Least Concern', with a wide distribution along the Mexican coast and no major threats. Though there are no known species-specific conservation measures for these species in Mexico, the volumes captured by the fishery are considered too low to pose a risk to the stocks of these species.*

For this fishery, the catches by the UoA of the target species have remained under 250,000 mt/fishing season in the last five years of data, and thus are not considered to be 'exceptionally large catches' by MSC requirements (400,000mt; GSA 3.4.4 v2.0), as to present a significant risk to the population of the impacted P2 species.