

## REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON FISHERY INTERACTIONS

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Mortality of franciscana in fishing operations has been observed for almost sixty years. Reports on by-catch in shark gillnet fisheries off Uruguay date back to the early forties (Van Erp, 1969). Although gillnetting in Argentina and southern Brazil also emerged in the forties as a consequence of Second World War demands for cheap protein and vitamins (De Buen, 1950, 1952; Popovici and Angelescu, 1954; Crespo *et al.*, 1994; Haimovici *et al.*, 1997), no record of by-catch exists for those areas. Gillnet fisheries for bottom-dwelling fish became the major conservation concern for franciscana in both countries only in the eighties. Nowadays, by-catch has been reported from all main fishing villages along most of the species geographical distribution (e.g. Corcuera, 1994; Praderi, 1997; Secchi *et al.*, 1997; Zanelatto, 1997; Di Benedetto *et al.*, 1998; Ott, 1998). Gillnet fishing characteristics are summarized in Table 1. By-catch estimates for each of the proposed Franciscana Management Area (FMA) (see Report of the Working Group on Stock Identity) are shown in Figure 1.

**Uruguay:** Franciscana by-catch exists since the beginning of the gillnet fishery for sharks off Punta del Diabo (Van Erp, 1969). As early as the late sixties, annual by-catch may have reached 1,500 to 2,000 animals (Brownell and Ness, 1970; Pilleri, 1971). Results of the first systematic survey indicated a by-catch of at least 536 dolphins between 1971 and 1973 (Brownell and Praderi, 1974; Brownell, 1975). A mean annual by-catch of 279 franciscanas was reported for the following four years (Praderi 1985). Between 1974 and 1994, at least 3,683 dolphins were killed (Praderi, 1997). Annual estimates ranged between 66 and 418 dolphins caught in 1994 and 1974, respectively. In general, nets were set in water depths ranging from 6 to 30m, but most of the by-catch occurred in water from 10 to 20m deep (Praderi, 1997).

Franciscana by-catch occurs in gillnets with stretched mesh sizes varying from 10 to 34cm. However, nets with the largest mesh size, targeting sharks (e.g. *Carcharhinus* spp, *Carcharias platensis* and *Galeorhinus galeus*), were responsible for about 70 to 90% of the captures (e.g. Praderi, 1997). During the last decades the stocks of targeted sharks have declined to an extent that the fisheries became unprofitable. Consequently, the fishing effort with the larger mesh sizes (i.e. 32-34cm) dropped from almost 100% in the sixties and seventies to only 20% in the mid nineties. Most of the fishers who traditionally used large boats with large mesh-sized nets to catch sharks are currently using smaller boats with small mesh-sized nets and now target bonny fishes (e.g. Sciaenidae fishes). Some are trawling for shellfish (*Adelomelon brasiliense*) (Praderi, 1997). These changes in the Uruguayan coastal fishery may allow franciscana to recover from the by-catch experienced in the past (Praderi, 1997). However, an uncontrolled increase of fishing effort using small mesh-sized nets for coastal bonny fishes and an intense by-catch of franciscana in adjacent areas of southern Brazil (see below) could compromise this recovery process.

**Argentina:** Perez-Macri and Crespo (1989) presented the first mortality estimates and Catch Per Unit of Effort (CPUE) for franciscana in Argentine waters. This study surveyed several fishing communities between 1984 and 1986 and

estimated an annual mortality of at least 340-350 animals. Corcuera (1994), Corcuera *et al.* (1994) and Crespo *et al.* (1994) provided further information concerning franciscana and gillnet interactions along the Argentine coast, especially for the fishing communities placed along the Buenos Aires Province coast. The most complete information available comes from Necochea and Claromecó, where fisheries have been monitored since 1984 and 1988, respectively. The CPUE of franciscana has decreased considerably during the last years in Necochea, which holds one of the largest gillnet fishing fleet in Argentina. Such a decrease is mainly due to movements of the fleet to fishing grounds further offshore (Corcuera *et al.*, 1994). Nowadays, most of the franciscana by-catch in Argentine waters occurs fisheries carried out from small fishing camps in the Buenos Aires Province. Thus, the coastal habitat of franciscana makes it vulnerable to by-catch in small scale inshore gillnets (Corcuera, 1994; Cappozzo *et al.*, 2000). Data over seven years, from mid 80's and early 90's, suggested an average annual by-catch of 228 (95% CI: 200 to 260) franciscana in southern Buenos Aires Province (Corcuera, 1994; Corcuera *et al.*, 1994). Fishing villages of the northern Buenos Aires Province were monitored in 1997 and 1998 and annual by-catch in this area was estimated to be 237 (95% CI: 208 to 269) animals (Corcuera, 1998). Estimates of by-catch for the same region from 1999 suggested a mean by-catch of 343 (95% CI: 241 to 487) franciscana (Cappozzo *et al.*, 2000). It is important to note that research carried out onboard artisanal fishing boats off Cabo San Antonio resulted in much higher annual by-catch (17 dolphins per boat) than estimates obtained from interviews (10 dolphins per boat) (Bordino *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, since most of the available data on by-catch in Argentine waters (e.g. Corcuera, 1994; Corcuera *et al.*, 1994; Cappozzo *et al.*, 2000) were obtained from interviews, it is likely that the total annual by-catch for this area is considerably underestimated.

A variety of fisheries operate along the Buenos Aires Province coast, depending on season and target species. However, most of the captures of franciscana in water shallower than 20m deep occur in gillnets set for croaker (Sciaenidae species) and sharks (*Galeorhinus galeus*, *Mustelus* spp, *Eugomphodus taurus*, *Squatina argentina*) (Corcuera *et al.*, 1994; Crespo *et al.*, 1994). In Necochea, gillnets catching most of the franciscana are set at the bottom and have stretched mesh sizes from 18 to 28cm. Off Claromecó, franciscana by-catch also occurs in gillnets with stretched mesh sizes from 7 to 36cm (Corcuera, 1994; Corcuera *et al.*, 1994).

Gillnet fishing effort has decreased in some important fishing ports (e.g. Necochea and Claromecó) due to the decline of some shark stocks (see Chiaramonte, 1998). Reduction in fishing effort has also occurred off Cabo San Antonio because of interactions with southern sea lions (*Otaria flavescens*), which damage the nets and the catches (Cappozzo *et al.*, 2000). Although this decline of gillnetting activities might reduce franciscana by-catch, shrimp trawling nets have recently been responsible for a high by-catch off Ingeniero White and Puerto Rosales, southern Buenos Aires Province (Cappozzo *et al.*, 2000).

**Table 1.** Summary of incidental mortality of franciscana and the involved fisheries in the western South Atlantic.

Locality	Geographic Sector*	Annual Mortality	General Characteristic of the Fisheries	Data Source	Reference
Regência and Povoação, ES/Brasil Latitude: 19°38'S	2	Min.: 5 Ave.: - Max.: 10	Fleet: 12 small boats Power engines: - Gear: gillnets Main target species - Mesh size: - Net width: - Net length: - Depth:- Distance from the coast: 1 nautical mile offshore Fishing season: - CPUE: - Dolphin use: blubber as bait for lobster trap and muscle for human consumption.	Occasional interview (1987 and 1989).	Siciliano <i>et al.</i> , 1994; Ramos <i>et al.</i> , 1994.
Atafona, RJ/Brasil Latitude: 21°37'S	3	Min.: 8 Ave.: 15 Max.: 22	Fleet: 140 boats (7-12m long) (~45% use gillnets). Power engines: 15-60Hp Gear: surface and bottom gillnets Main target species: sciaenids and sharks Mesh size: 14cm Net height: 5.6m Net length: up to 2,400m Depth: 6-70m Distance from the coast: up to 60 nautical miles offshore Fishing season: year-round CPUE: - Dolphin use: blubber as shark bait in longline fishery	12 years (1987-1999) fleet monitoring program (45% of the fleet).	Di Benedetto <i>et al.</i> , 1998; Di Benedetto and Ramos, 2000.
Santos, SP/Brasil Latitude: 23°57'S	4	Min.: 13 Ave.: - Max.: -	Fleet: - Power engines: - Gear: - Main target species: - Mesh size: - Net width: - Net length: - Depth: Distance from the coast: - Fishing season: - CPUE: - Dolphin use: -	2 years (1998-2000) survey of stranded cetaceans.	Vicente <i>et al.</i> , 2000.

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References: (Est.) estimation, (Min.) minimum, (Ave.) average, (Max) maximum.

\* Geographic Sectors are shown in the Report of the Fourth Workshop (in this volume)

**Table 1.** Summary of incidental mortality of franciscana and the involved fisheries in the western South Atlantic.

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Locality	Geographic Sector*	Annual Mortality	General Characteristic of the Fisheries	Data Source	Reference
Praia Grande, SP/Brasil Latitude: 24°00'S	5	Min.: - 14 Ave.: - Max.: -	Fleet: 6 small boats (6-8m long) Power engines: 18-40Hp Gear: surface and bottom gillnets Main target species: sciaenids, sharks Mesh size: 7-16cm Net height: 1.6-3.3m (bottom gillnets); 7.4-10m (surface gillnets) Net length: 120-1,800m Depth: up to 25 m Distance from the coast: - Fishing season: year-round CPUE: 0.0020 franciscana x(1,000 m <sup>2</sup> of net x day) <sup>-1</sup> Dolphin use: no records	2 years (1998-2000) fleet monitoring program (100% of the fleet). Interview and onboard surveys	Bertozzi and Zerbini, 2000.
Cananeia, SP/Brasil Latitude: 25°00'S	5	Min.: 11 Ave.: - Max.: 330	Fleet: 30 boats (18m long) Power engine: Gear: surface and bottom gillnets Main target species: sciaenids and sharks Mesh size: 7-13cm Net height: 5-10m Net length: up to 6,000m (bottom gillnets); up to 2,000m (surface gillnets) Depth: - Distance from the coast: 10-40 nautical miles offshore Fishing season: year around (bottom gillnets), May-July (surface gillnets) CPUE: - Dolphin use: no records	2 years (1998-2000) fleet monitoring program (3% of the fleet, n = 30). Interview.	Rosas <i>et al.</i> , 2000.
Pontal do Sul and Matinhos, PR/Brasil Latitude: 25°18'S-25°58'S	6	Min.: 10 Ave.: - Max.: -	Fleet: small boats (7-10m long) Power engine: 11-36Hp Gear: surface and bottom gillnets Main target species: sciaenids, sharks, mullets, flounders Mesh size: 6-22cm Net height: 2-5m (bottom gillnets); 8-12m (surface gillnets) Net length: 500-1,200m Depth: - Distance from the coast: up to 5 nautical miles offshore Fishing season: year around CPUE: - Dolphin use: eventually human consume	2 years (1998-2000) fleet monitoring program. Interview.	Rosas <i>et al.</i> , 2000; Zanellato, 1997

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Locality	Geographic Sector*	Annual Mortality	General Characteristic of the Fisheries	Data Source	Reference
Farol de Santa Marta, SC/BR Latitude: 28°29'S	7	Est. a: 20-30  Est. b: 120	Fleet: 60-70 small boats Power engine: - Gear: gillnet Main target species: sciaenids, gadids and sharks Mesh size: 10-40cm Net height: 3m Net length: 1,500-2,225m Depth: - Distance from the coast: ~8-10 nautical miles Fishing season: year-round CPUE: - Dolphin use: -	a) Occasional Interview.  b) 1 year (1994-1995) fleet monitoring program (25% of the fleet). Interview and onboard data.	a) Pinedo, 1994b  b) Cremer <i>et al.</i> , 1995
Torres and Tramandai/Imbe, RS/BR Latitude: 29°15'S-29°58'S	8 and 9	Min.: 300 Ave.: 425 Max.: 550	Fleet: 30 boats (10-18m long) Power engine: 90-160Hp Gear: bottom and surface gillnets Main target species: sciaenids, gadids and sharks Mesh size: 9-38cm Net height: 3m (bottom gillnets); 8-15m (surface gillnets) Net length: up to 4,500m (bottom gillnets); 300-1,500m (surface gillnets) Depth: 10-40m Distance from the coast: up to 20 nautical miles offshore Fishing season: year-round CPUE: 0.0540 to 0.0880 franciscanas x (1,000 m of net x day) <sup>-1</sup> Dolphin use: no records at the present (occasionally in the past)	5 years (1992-1997) fleet monitoring program (40 % of the fleet). Interview and onboard surveys	Ott <i>et al.</i> , 2000
Rio Grande, RS/Brasil Latitude: 32°05'S	10	Est. a: Min.: 196 Ave.: 461 Max.: 518  Est. b: 810	Fleet: 140 – 150 boats (12 – 16m long) Power engine: 90 –120Hp Gear: gillnets (passive and active) Main target species: sciaenid and pomatomids fishes Mesh size: 9 to 16cm Net height: 2 to 4 (passive nets) and 6 to 14m (active) Net length: 3,000 to 11,000m (passive); 800 to 4,000m (active) Depth: up to 35m Distance from the coast: up to 30 miles Fishing season: year round CPUE: 0.0066 franciscanas x (1,000m of net x day) <sup>-1</sup> (passive); 0.0038 franciscanas x (operation x day) <sup>-1</sup> Dolphin use: few fishers use the oil to waterproof boats and the meat is sometimes used for feeding dogs and even rarely for human consumption.	a) 1 year (1994) fleet monitoring program (25% of the fleet). Interview.  b) 1 year (2000) fleet monitoring program (7% of the fleet). Interview.	a) Secchi <i>et al.</i> , 1997; Kinas and Secchi, 1998, 1999.  b) Secchi <i>et al.</i> , unpubl. data

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Locality	Geographic Sector*	Annual Mortality	General Characteristic of the Fisheries	Data Source	Reference
Uruguay Latitude: 33°45'S-34°55'S	11 and 12	Min.: 66 Ave.: 174 Max.: 418	Fleet: 20 boats in the 70's, 3 boats in the mid 1990's, fishing only off Punta del Diablo. (6-8m long) Power engine: up to 80Hp Gear: gillnets Main target species: historically sharks, currently sciaenids Mesh size: 10-12, 20-22 and 32-34cm Net height: 3-5m Net length: up to 1,680m Depth: 6-30m Distance from the coast: 2-30 nautical miles offshore Fishing season: mostly in summer CPUE: 0.0064 franciscanas x (1,000 m of net x day) <sup>-1</sup> Dolphin use: recent commercial use of franciscana oil	20 years (1974-1994) fleet monitoring program for most of the fleet). Interviews	Praderi <i>et al.</i> , 1989; Praderi, 1994
North Buenos Aires Province/Argentina Latitude: 35°00'-38°08'S	12, 13 and 14	Est. a: Min.: 200 Ave.: 228 Max.: 260  Est. b Min.: 145 Ave.: 208 Max.: 298	Fleet: 27 boats (5-12m long) Power engine: - Gear: gillnets Main target species: sciaenids and sharks to a less extent Mesh size: 10-30cm Net height: 3-5m Net length: 200 to 4,000m Depth: up to 25-30m Distance from the coast: up to 25-30 nautical miles Fishing season: mostly in summer CPUE: 0.0046 to 0.0825 franciscanas x (1,000 m of net x day) <sup>-1</sup> Dolphin use: human consume ("mushame") in some areas	a) 1 year (1997-1998) fleet monitoring program. Interviews.  b) 1 year (1999-2000) fleet monitoring program. Interview and onboard surveys	a) Corcuera <i>et al.</i> , 2000  b) Capozzo <i>et al.</i> , 2000
South Buenos Aires Province/Argentina Latitude: 38°08'S -40°30'S	14, 15 and 16	Est. a: Min.: 208 Ave. = 237 Max.: 269  Est. b: Min.: 96 Ave.: 135 Max.: 189	Fleet: 22 boats using gillnets (5-12m long), 58 using shrimpers Power engine: - Gear: gillnets and shrimp trawling nets Main target species: sciaenids and sharks to a less extent (gillnets), <i>Pleoticus</i> sp. and <i>Artemesia</i> sp. (shrimpers) Mesh size: 10-30cm for gillnets, 2-6cm for shrimpers Net height: 3-5m for gillnets for gillnets Net length: 200 to 4,000m Depth: up to 25-30m Distance from the coast: up to 25-30 nautical miles Fishing season: mostly in summer CPUE: 0.0029 to 0.0167 franciscanas x (1,000 m of net x day) <sup>-1</sup> High mortality also reported for shrimp trawling nets Dolphin use: -	a) 7 years (1988-1994) fleet monitoring program. Interview and onboard surveys  b) 1 year (1999-2000) fleet monitoring program. Interview and onboard surveys	a) Corcuera, 1994; Corcuera <i>et al.</i> , 1994; Corcuera <i>et al.</i> , 2000  b) Capozzo <i>et al.</i> , 2000

References: (Est.) estimation, (Min.) minimum, (Ave.) average, (Max) maximum.

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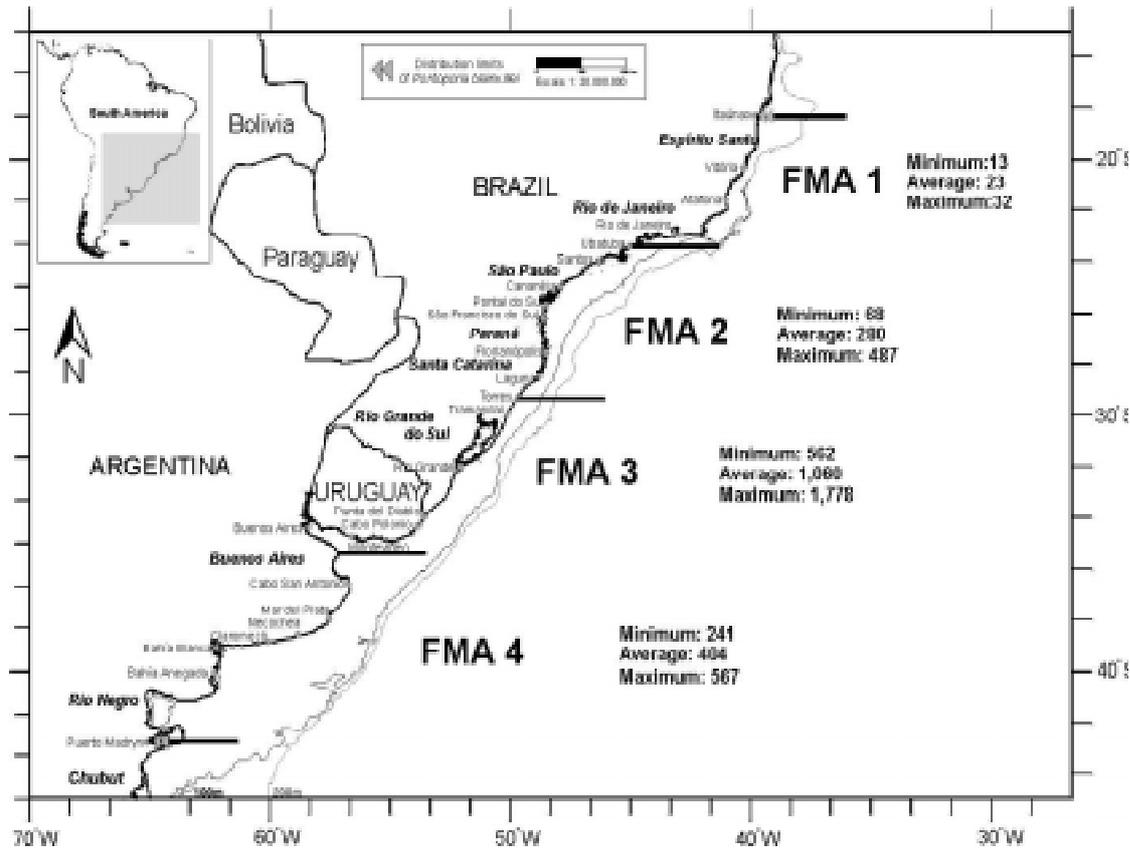


Figure 1. By-catch estimates for each of the proposed Franciscana Management Area (FMA).

Coastal gillnetting activities are highly seasonal, occurring only during spring in some areas and extending from spring to summer in others (Corcuera, 1994; Cappozzo *et al.*, 2000). However, the annual level of franciscana by-catch seems to be high and should be evaluated according to the population size. Therefore, abundance estimates for franciscana off Argentina are a priority for the near future.

To date, no surveys to estimate by-catch in Rio Negro Province have been done. In the Province of Chubut no gillnet is used. Bottom trawling fisheries directed to hake, *Merluccius hubbsi*, predominate. However, the hake fishery occur further offshore beyond the franciscanas' habitat. Also dredge trawls are used to catch shellfish (e.g. *Mytilus edulis* and *Chlamys tehuelchus*). Although they occur in coastal waters, no franciscana catches have been reported in these fisheries (Crespo *et al.*, 1994).

**Brazil:** The coastal gillnet fishery emerged in the forties and increased especially during the eighties. Vessels expanded in size and engines became more powerful, which allowed longer trips and the use of larger nets (Haimovici *et al.*, 1997). A wide variety of vessels and fishing gears are employed according to the season and target species. However, active and passive gillnets targeting sciaenids (e.g. *Micropogonias furnieri*, *Cynoscion* spp, *Menticirrhus* spp), pomatomids (*Pomatomus saltatrix*) and sharks (e.g. *Mustelus* sp., *Sphyrna* spp, *Rhizoprionodon* sp.) predominate in coastal waters (see Table 1). The boats used in this fishery range in length from 6 to 18m and

normally operate from coastal to offshore (60 nautical miles) waters. Gillnets vary in length from 120 to 11,000m (e.g. Rio Grande), with stretched mesh sizes varying from 7 to 40cm. Most of the gillnets are set in waters 30m deep, which corresponds to the preferred habitat of the franciscana (Praderi *et al.*, 1989; Secchi and Ott, 2000). The fishery as well as captures of franciscanas occur throughout the year.

Although the gillnet fishery exist since the 40s, the first information regarding franciscana by-catch was published in the eighties (e.g. Pinedo, 1982, 1986; Praderi *et al.*, 1989). However, this information was based exclusively on the number of animals with gillnet marks found dead on beaches in southern Brazil. According to Pinedo (1994a), 1,085 specimens were found along the Rio Grande do Sul coast between 1976 and 1987. Further information on franciscana strandings was also published for other areas along the Brazilian coast (e.g. Schmiegelow, 1990; Pinedo, 1994b; Danilewicz *et al.*, 1998; Rosas *et al.*, 2000; Vicente *et al.*, 2000). However, the first study of incidental mortality of franciscana dolphins based on monitoring of fishing operations was started in the late 80's for a small village (Atafona) in Rio de Janeiro State, southeastern Brazil (Lodi and Capistrano, 1990). Since then, this fishing village has been systematically surveyed. From 1986 to 1999, a total of 181 franciscanas were incidentally caught in gillnets in this area, representing a mean annual mortality of  $15 \pm 7$  dolphins (Di Benedetto *et al.*, 1998; Di Benedetto and Ramos,

2000). Franciscana by-catch in fishing communities of the Rio Grande do Sul State, southern Brazil, has also been systematically studied. The estimated annual mortality of franciscana for this area ranges from 495 to 1069 dolphins (Moreno *et al.*, 1997; Secchi *et al.*, 1997; Ott, 1998; Kinas and Secchi, 1998, 1999; Secchi, 1999; Ott *et al.*, 2000). These are the highest levels of incidental kills of franciscana (Table 1). Removal rates relative to population size are high and possibly unsustainable on a long-term basis (Secchi, 1999; Kinas, 2000; Secchi and Kinas, 2000; Secchi *et al.*, 2000; Secchi *et al.*, 2001).

It is worthwhile to notice that these by-catch values, estimated from monitoring the gillnet fishing fleet in southern Brazil, are appreciably higher than earlier data for the same region based on beached animals (Pinedo, 1994a). Again, this strongly suggests that data gathered from beach surveys should be viewed with caution when evaluating the impact of fisheries (Secchi *et al.*, 1997).

In recent years, many other studies concerning the franciscana and gillnet interactions have been carried out along the Brazilian coast. Although data from monitoring of fishing fleets are not available for many areas between Rio Grande do Sul and Rio de Janeiro States, some villages along the Santa Catarina, Paraná and São Paulo States coasts have been monitored recently. Preliminary by-catch estimates are available for some of them (e.g. Cremer *et al.*, 1995; Bertozzi and Zerbini, 2000; Rosas *et al.*, 2000). Some of these data (e.g. Bertozzi and Zerbini, 2000) suggest that small fishing villages can impose a great impact on franciscana population, similar to the situation off the Argentine coast. On the coast of Paraná State, there are a few records of franciscana deaths in longlines (Zanellato, 1997), though this seems to be rare.

To summarize the information from fleet monitoring schemes and beach surveys, annual mortality of franciscana due to by-catch off the Brazilian coast ranges from 577 to 1,879 (Table 1). These results certainly represent an underestimation of the by-catch in Brazilian waters because many coastal fishing villages are either poorly or not surveyed at all. In addition, fishers in general tend to under-report by-catches. Therefore, increasing the monitoring effort of the gillnet fishery, including the small fishing camps, is urgently needed. Moreover, levels of franciscana mortality in longlining and trawling operations need to be investigated in order to obtain a more complete understanding of the threats fisheries pose to franciscana in Brazilian waters.

**General characteristics of the bycatch of franciscana dolphins:** The mortality of franciscana is incidental and there is no indication of direct exploitation of the species. The dolphins are typically found dead in gillnets when fishers retrieve their catch. Even though there are a few records of dolphins released alive from nets (e.g. Crespo *et al.* 1994; Bertozzi and Zerbini, 2000), in general there is little opportunity for live release of the dolphins. This is likely due to the long time that gillnets remain in the water. Soak time ranges typically from 8 to 24 hours.

Fishers normally discard by-caught dolphins offshore, although in some regions captured animals may be

consumed or used otherwise. Blubber has been used as shark bait in longline fisheries in a fishing village in southeastern Brazil (Atafona), although this fishery is currently uncommon in that area (Di Benedetto and Ramos, 2000). Along the Paraná coast, there are records of franciscana meat being used for human consumption (Zanellato, 1997). In southern Brazil, fishers sometimes use oil obtained from franciscana carcasses to waterproof boats. In addition, meat may be used to feed dogs and rarely for human consumption (Secchi *et al.*, 1997). Nevertheless, this is not a tradition in these communities and dolphins killed in gillnets are typically discarded at sea. In Uruguay, franciscana oil is recently being used commercially to treat horsehair (UNEP/CMS, 2000). In Argentine waters there is little utilisation of by-catch, although in a few areas (e.g. San Clement del Tuyú) sun dried and salted meat, locally known as "mushame", is consumed by Turkish, Jewish and Arabian members of the communities (Praderi *et al.*, 1989). In several coastal communities in the Buenos Aires Province there are also popular references to the use of franciscana oil in the early 20th century, chiefly for domestic medical treatments and improvement of horse saddle leather (R. Bastida, pers. commn).

Fishers do not consider franciscana as a competitor for fish resources. Although the carcasses of an entangled dolphin can cause damage to nets during hauling, these damages are typically small, especially when compared to those caused by southern sea lions (*Otaria flavescens*) (e.g. Corcuera *et al.*, 1994; Ott, 1998).

Most franciscanas are caught in gillnets in spring and summer in Uruguayan and Argentine waters and year around off Brazil (Table 1).

Although most of the captures involve one or two animals (e.g. Corcuera *et al.*, 1994; Ott, 1998; Rosas *et al.*, 2000), up to nine dolphins were caught in the same net (2,000m long) off southern Brazil (Moreno *et al.*, 1997). Both males and females are vulnerable to fishing operations, although the sex ratio of incidentally caught animals varies between regions (e.g. 1.61 males/female [n=47] in Buenos Aires Province, Argentina; 1.1 males/female [n=107] in Rio Grande, Brazil) (Corcuera, 1994; Secchi *et al.*, 1997, respectively).

Similar to other small cetaceans, a large proportion of by-caught franciscana are immature. (e.g. Kasuya and Brownell, 1979; Crespo *et al.*, 1986, Perez-Macri and Crespo, 1989; Corcuera *et al.*, 1994; Ott *et al.*, 2000; Ramos *et al.*, 2000). For example, in fishing communities of Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, more than half of the caught specimens were less than 3 years old (Table 2). This bias towards higher catches of juveniles compared to adult individuals could reflect either the age structure of local populations or different behaviour of young animals, making them more vulnerable to incidental catches. Since we have no information on local age structures and age-related behavioural differences, it is not possible to determine the reason for this age bias in incidental catches. Nevertheless, potential effects of these captures on future recruitment rates of the population are a cause for concern, especially considering the low reproductive potential and short life span of the franciscana (Secchi, 1999).

**Table 2.** Age structure of franciscana dolphins incidentally caught in gillnet fisheries.

Locality	Geographic Sector	Period	n	Mode Age (% in brackets)	% of < 3 years	Maximum Age	Reference
Brazil (RJ)	3	1989-98	91	2 (28.5)	75.0	9	Di Benedetto and Ramos, 2000
Brazil (RS) <sup>a</sup>	8-10	1976-80	97	1 (23.7)	42.3	16	Pinedo, 1994
Brazil (RS) <sup>a</sup>	8-10	1982-86	81	3 (16.0)	37.0	13	Pinedo, 1994
Brazil (RS)	8-10	1992-97	147	1 (34.7)	64.0	11	Ott <i>et al.</i> , 2000
Uruguay <sup>b</sup>	11-12	1970-73	218	1 (46.8)	73.9	16	Kasuya and Brownell, 1979
Uruguay	11-12	1969-72	102	1 (29.4)	52.0	21	Pinedo, 1994
Uruguay	11-12	1973-75	108	1 (38.0)	63.9	14	Pinedo, 1994
Uruguay	11-12	1980-82	34	1 (55.9)	70.6	19	Pinedo, 1994
Uruguay	11-12	1980-81	114	1 (45.6)	80.7	5	Crespo <i>et al.</i> , 1986
Argentina (BA)	13-14	1983-86	22	1 (36.4) - 3 (36.4)	50.0	4	Perez-Macri and Crespo, 1989
Argentina (BA)	14	1988-90	42	0 (21.4) - 1 (21.4)	57.1	8	Corcuera <i>et al.</i> , 1994

References: <sup>a</sup> sample from stranded animals; <sup>b</sup> sample bias toward adult females for reproductive studies; \* Geographic Sectors are shown in the Final Report of the Fourth Workshop (in this volume); n = sample size; RJ = Rio de Janeiro; RS = Rio Grande do Sul; BA = Buenos Aires Province. Age estimated based on growth layer groups (modified from Ott *et al.*, 2000).

**Conservation measures:** Although gillnet fishing is recognized as the major threat to franciscana populations, few attempts have been made to reduce or eliminate the incidental capture of this species in gillnets. Until recently, only two management actions were proposed for some fishery communities: replacing gillnets with longlines (Corcuera *et al.*, 1994) and seasonal area closures in southern Brazil (Secchi, 1999). Even though these measures may be effective, both may reduce fishers' income and would be difficult to implement. Therefore, new approaches are urgently needed.

Bordino (2000) carried out an experiment using acoustic pingers to reduce by-catches of franciscana off Cabo San Antonio, Argentina. Although the pingers reduced the by-catches, they also increased the rate of attacks of southern sea lions on fish caught in the nets. Therefore, acoustic devices seem unsuitable as a long-term management option in this region. However, further pinger studies should be carried out in other areas. New approaches to gillnet modifications to minimise franciscana mortality should be encouraged. Nevertheless, evaluation of potential solutions must consider possible effects on the wider marine ecosystem in which they are to be employed. In addition, impacts on the social and cultural aspects of the local communities involved must be taken into account.

### Recommendations

The rate of by-catch of franciscana across its distribution urgently requires management measures to prevent the collapse of local populations or stocks. These measures need to be based on reliable and up-to-date information. Therefore, we recommend (see also the recommendation of the workshop):

- To estimate by-catch as accurately as possible using direct monitoring by independent on-board observers, wherever it is practical;
- To estimate CPUE using standardised and complete description of fishing effort, including its seasonal variability and fishing characteristics (e.g. type of nets, size and power of boats);
- To identify areas and/or season of highest by-catch; and
- To model the effects of fishing by-catch on the potential rate of population increase by varying fishing effort and population parameters.

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