



**BELIZE HIGH SEAS FISHERIES UNIT
MINISTRY OF FINANCE
GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE**

Policy Name:	BELIZE HIGH SEAS FISHERIES FLEET POLICY				
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1.0 GENERAL**1.1 Executive Summary**

The effective management and control of our fleet is paramount to any future expansion in an effort to maintain Belize's integrity. As at 23 January 2018, the Belize high sea fishing fleet consisted of 49 active vessels, signifying a 40% reduction in fleet size when compared to figures in 2014. The fleet engages in fishing and related activities on the high seas has and continue to undergo a comprehensive transformation. This is as a result of the adoption of a revised High Seas Fishing Act in 2013 complemented by several new and important subsidiary regulations in 2014.

This Fleet Policy provides the framework to strategically develop, manage and maintain the fleet which operates in the high seas. Since the adoption of new legislation, Belize has undertaken a fleet reduction and development campaign to ensure that fleet size is aligned with current future and institutional capacity. Our fleet has undergone a significant reduction. However, since that time we have ensured a gradual but strategic increase in our fleet size which is likely to continue in that trajectory over the next few years.

This Administration shall also undertake to ensure that only those RFMO areas to which we can sustain a viable presence will be maintained, for this reason we have withdrawn our membership from two RFMO areas, the IOTC and the WCPFC areas. This initiative will also allow us to streamline our current fleet composition in the effort to ensure effective management and control. However, we do envisage to rejoin these RFMOs in the future.

1.2 Citation

This Policy shall be cited as the **BELIZE HIGH SEAS FISHERIES FLEET POLICY**, hereinafter referred to as the Policy.

1.3 Objective

The fundamental objective of this Policy is to provide a framework of established guidelines for a more robust accountability and enhanced vessel management of the Belize fisheries fleet which operates in the high seas and in third country waters.

The Policy provides an environment for greater flexibility to:

- Manage the fleet in accordance with approved guidelines and standards adopted pursuant to this Policy.

- Ensure effective implementation of applicable conservation and management measures relating to fleet expansion.
- Ensure that any fleet development will be consistent with its ability to manage such fleet

1.4 Scope

The Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit (BHSFU) has autonomy for the implementation of this Policy. This Policy applies to all Belize registered vessels engaged in fishing or fishing related activities on the high seas, and shall be applied consistently with the requirements of all relevant legislation, policies and regulations as may be determined.

1.5 Legal and Policy Framework for the Management of Belize High Seas Fishing Fleet

The legal and policy framework for the management of the fleet which operate in the high seas comprise several domestic and international laws, primarily the High Seas Fisheries Act, 2013, the Sanctions Regulation, the Licensing Regulation and the Regulation for Monitoring, Control and Surveillance, the Registration of Merchant Ships Act, 2010 and other implementing regulations.

In addition to the basic fisheries laws, regulations and conventions, there are several other laws and policies relating to the environment, trade, sanitary and phytosanitary conditions and safety of fishing vessels which also form a part of the general framework for the effective management and control of our fleet.

The international legal basis for the management of the fleet are the various agreements that Belize has adopted, ratified, or acceded to. These international agreements include, inter alia:

- (a) The United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS),
- (b) The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Compliance Agreement
- (c) The United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA)
- (d) International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)
- (e) Convention for the Strengthening of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission

It is also a party to a number of environmental treaties that have an impact on fisheries such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES). Belize is committed to implementing non-binding international instruments such as the Food and Agriculture

Organization (FAO) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance. In so doing Belize adopted its National Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing in the High Seas on 20th May 2014. ||

As members of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), Belize implements the conservation and management measures adopted by these regional bodies as a part of its fiduciary responsibilities as a member of these organizations. Belize is also conscious of its obligation to cooperate within the framework of other regional organizations and bodies which may affect national fisheries management policies.

We are also mindful of various international rules that affect other aspects of fisheries management such as trade, particularly World Trade Organization (WTO) rules on tariff and non-tariff barriers, sanitary and phytosanitary measures. Other trade related measures implemented under regional fisheries management organizations also apply, such as catch documentation schemes, the EU IUU Catch Documentation Scheme, the Economic Partnership Agreement between the European Community and Cariforum States and other such trade related measures.

1.6 Institutional Framework

The management and control of the fleet which operates on the high seas is primarily administered by national government through the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit (BHSFU) under the Ministry of Finance and the Office of the Prime Minister. The BHSFU is responsible for the following:

- The overall management and control of the fleet which is licensed to operate on the high seas;
- Adopting effective monitoring, control and surveillance measures to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing;
- Exercise effective jurisdiction over Belize flagged vessels operating in areas under the jurisdiction of other States and on the high seas areas managed by Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs);
- Ensure that the Policy is current and aligned with relevant local and international legislations and government strategies;
- Upgrade the Policy as new issues develop;

- Advise the Ministry on fleet issues;
- Review capacity to manage fleet in line with fleet expansion;
- Develop applicable plans and guidelines consistent with this Policy;
- Advise other intergovernmental agencies on matters relating to this Policy;
- Any other responsibility as explicitly indicated in the HSFA 2013.

In addition to the BHSFU, there are other government agencies that have a direct or indirect function relating to the management of the high seas fishing fleet. These agencies include the International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize (IMMARBE), the Belize Agriculture Health Authority (BAHA), the Belize Customs and Excise Department, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International Financial Services Commission. The functions of these agencies include, vessel registration, sanitary inspections, regulation of fish trade and foreign negotiations.

Belize is committed to strengthening its instruments to encourage the efficient management and control of its high seas fishing fleet and in so doing has adopted a revised and robust High Seas Fishing Act and effective Licensing, Sanctions and Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Regulations.

STRATEGIC FLEET MANAGEMENT

2.0 FLEET COMPOSITION AND DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Target and Current Fleet Composition

Belize intends to maintain a total fleet size of 75 operational vessels. Our current operational fleet is 49 vessels and the authorized areas of operation are outlined in the table below:

Size in GT	Tuna and Sharks		Non-Tuna	Transport	Support
	ICCAT	IATTC			
100 gt or less	8	5			
101-200 gt	1	2			
201-300 gt	1				1
301-500 gt	3		2		2
501-1000 gt	4		4		
1001-2000 gt			2		
2001-5000 gt			6		
50001 gt or more			4		
TOTAL	21	7	18		3

2.2 Fleet Development

This Administration envisages maintaining the fleet composition outlined above over a three-year period. A margin of variance will be utilized to allow for an increase of a maximum 20% above the target of 75 vessels. The fluctuation of the fleet size within this margin of variance shall be considered at the time of review of this Policy to determine the target fleet size.

Institutional capacity and the ability to monitor the fleet shall be the primary consideration in the development of our fleet. New vessels shall not be added simply to increase fleet composition; therefore, this Policy will allow only for the application of an entry and exit system to ensure fleet maintenance once the margin of variance has been fully utilized.

2.3 Types of Vessels and Activities

Only vessels engaged in fishing and fishing related activities in accordance with the High Seas Fishing Act, 2013 shall be considered under this Policy, these include, but are not limited to the following:

- Vessels targeting tuna and tuna like species
- Vessels targeting sharks
- Vessels targeting non-tuna species
- Vessels engaged in support activities
- Vessels engaged in the transport of marine resources

Other vessels may be considered at the discretion of the BHSFU and in accordance with the High Seas Fishing Act, 2013.

2.4 Types of Gears

Only gears that are compatible with the aforementioned type of vessels shall be considered under this Policy. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Long-liners
- Purse-seiners
- Mid-water trawlers
- Jiggers
- Traps
- Crab Pots

Other gears may be considered at the discretion of the BHSFU and in accordance with the High Seas Fishing Act, 2013.

2.5 Areas of Operation

Areas of operation shall include, for the vessels engaged in tuna fisheries, only those areas which are regulated by a Regional Fisheries Management Organization to which Belize is a Member. These include:

- The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)
- The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC).

The participation in the above RFMO areas shall be reviewed on a yearly basis. For non-tuna vessels, transport and auxiliary/support vessels, the area of operation shall be approved on a case by case basis in accordance with the High Seas Fishing Act 2013 and any applicable international regulations and measures.

3.0 OPERATIONAL FLEET MANAGEMENT

3.1 Registration

Only vessels that have been registered by the International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize (IMMARBE) and licensed by the BHSFU shall be considered under this Policy.

3.2 Licenses and Authorizations

Allocation of licenses shall be in accordance with the High Seas Fisheries Act, 2013 and the High Seas Fishing License Regulation S.I. No. 33 of 2014.

3.3 Records Management

A record of vessels licensed by the BHSFU shall be maintained in accordance with this Policy. Records shall include but not limited to the following information:

- Specifications of the vessel;
- License authorization period;
- Conditions of the license issued;
- Areas, species, gears authorized

All vessels licensed by the BHSFU shall be reported to the relevant RFMO and the FAO in accordance with the RFMO reporting requirements and the FAO Compliance Agreement, respectively. Only vessels in the regional record of vessels are entitled to fish in areas under the competence of a regional fisheries management organization. The

list of authorized vessels shall be updated and submitted to the Secretariats of relevant fisheries management organizations as required by such organizations.

3.4 Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring, Control and Surveillance shall be carried out in accordance with the Regulations for Monitoring, Control and Surveillance, S.I. 39 of 2014

3.5 Charter Arrangements

Charter arrangements are mostly confidential arrangements under domestic regulations. However, to ensure that such arrangements do not support IUU fishing activities or undermine conservation and management measures, vessels under charter registration are required to comply with our monitoring, compliance and surveillance measures.

3.6 Transshipment Activities

Only Authorized transshipment at ports are allowed. Transshipment requested under the scope of the Regional Observer Program of an RFMO may be considered only if there is observer coverage on board both the donor and receiving vessels. All transshipment activities are governed by the Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Regulation.

3.7 Belize High Seas Inspection Program (BHSIP)

Belize has developed a port inspection program to facilitate the inspection of discharge and transshipment operations as well as vessel compliance inspections. Inspections shall be planned and carried out in accordance with our Inspection Policy pursuant to the Monitoring Control and Surveillance Regulations, S.I. No. 39 of 2014

3.8 At Sea Observer Program

Belize's at-sea observer program shall cover all commercial fishing and transport/transshipment vessels that target and/or transport tuna, tuna like species, sharks and non-tuna species on the high seas and vessels fishing in the EEZ of other States. The level of observer coverage shall be in compliance with the requirements of our at-sea observer policy. Full details of the at-sea observer program are contained in our at-sea observer policy pursuant to our Monitoring, Control and Surveillance, Regulation S.I. No. 39 of 2014.

Belize also participates in the regional observer programs established by regional fisheries management organizations for transshipment at sea. Vessels on the high seas and those fishing in areas under the jurisdiction of other states are required to accept observers on

board vessels in accordance with the procedures established in relevant regional fisheries management organizations.

3.9 Laid up Vessels

No fishing shall be registered where its operational status is undetermined. A vessel may be considered for registration under laid up status for up to three months once an operational plan is submitted and accepted by the BHSFU. A vessel under this status, where its three-month period has expired, will be required to request deletion or shall be cancelled ex-officio. The extension of this period may be extended at the discretion of the Director and is subject to all fees and requirements as may be prescribed.

3.10 Infringements and Sanctions

Pursuant to the adoption of the High Seas Fishing Act, 2013, Belize adopted a holistic Sanction Regulation S.I. No. 32 of 2014 to be applied to all vessels, owners, operators, charters who commit an offense against any fisheries law and/or regulations applicable to Belize flagged vessels.

3.11 Control of Fishing Capacity

The number of Belize licensed fishing vessels has seen a declining trend. This is largely due to measures implemented and/or adopted to limit not only fishing effort but capacity as well. Policies have also been established for the allocation of fishing rights as well as new requirements for the obtainment of a fishing license. An electronic catch reporting system has been implemented for the efficient reporting of fishing activities and catch reporting. Our vessel monitoring system has been modified to ensure hourly reporting and geo-fencing with alert notification.

3.12 Annual General Inspection

All licensed vessels shall be subject to an annual general inspection to ensure compliance with safety regulations as well as applicable compliance measures such as gear specifications, mitigation measures, marking of vessels. This will be done in close collaboration with IMMARBE.

3.13 Implementation Mechanism

The effective execution of this Policy dictates the continued adoption of new regulations and updates to existing regulations. These will give legal effect to the proposed strategic actions outlined in this Policy.

3.14 Review of Policy

This Policy shall be reviewed and revised as deemed necessary by the Director of the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit based on changes within management capacity as well as any amendments in domestic laws and regulations or relevant conservation and management measures which may have an impact on our fleet development. The review and expansion will be undertaken in consultations with all relevant stakeholders, as appropriate.

Approved this 4 day of February 2018, at BELMOPAN, Belize



Mr. Claude B.F. Haylock
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