

Fishing Vessel Circular Letter No. 053

27 November 2023

Series: GEN-2023

To: All Ship Owners, Operators, Deputy Registrars, Resident Agents, Representatives, and other Stakeholders

Subject: **REQUIREMENT FOR VESSELS ENGAGED IN TRANSSHIPMENT ACTIVITIES**

Reference: Issued in accordance with Part VIII, Section 50(1)(c) of the High Seas Fishing Act, 2013

Circular Superseded: FVC-001/2013, Issued 23rd January 2013

BACKGROUND:

Transshipment, the process of transferring goods or cargo from one vessel to another, is a crucial part of international trade and commerce. However, it is also a high-risk activity that can lead to various illegal activities such as illegal fishing, drug and human trafficking and money laundering. Therefore, monitoring transshipment activities at ports and in the high seas is of paramount importance to ensure the safety and security of the global maritime industry, as well as to protect the environment and ensure sustainable fishing practices.

MANAGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Monitoring transshipment activities is essential and as such the following measures shall be implemented.

1. Transshipment at sea is prohibited unless carried out under an established Regional Observer Program.
2. Transshipment activities can only take place between vessels that have been authorized or licensed to do so by this Administration.
3. All transshipment activities must be notified to this Administration prior to the engagement in such activities to ensure that a comprehensive desk review of the activity is conducted. Desk review shall verify the accuracy and validity of the documentation provided as well as ensuring proper licensing and permits are up to date as well as the review of catch and VMS data.
4. A copy of the transshipment declaration form shall be submitted to the State where landing will take place and to this Administration at least 48 hours before transshipment takes place.
5. Vessel shall not engage in transshipment unless a formal transshipment authorization has been granted to the owner by this Administration.
6. Transshipment activities that occur under the jurisdiction of another State are subject to prior authorization from that State and prior notification to this Administration of its intention to carry out such activities.

7. After transshipment activities have been completed, owners are required to submit the completed transshipment declaration form as proof of completion of transshipment activities and in order for this Administration to verify accuracy of the data compared to the authorization granted.

APPLICABILITY

Circulars setting out mandatory requirements shall be construed to have the same effect and applicability of rules and policies under the provisions of the HSFA 2013. Each circular is applicable to all Belize flagged fishing vessels engaged in fishing and related activities. The owner, operator and master of every Belize flagged fishing vessel shall be familiar with all applicable Circulars applying to their vessel and it shall be no defense that any person in breach of any Circular was not aware of it or has not been advised of it.

MAINTENANCE

Ship owners, and operators shall ensure that all Circulars are disseminated to their master and crew as well as any other person affected by or having an interest in the subject matter in a language understood by all. A Circular one issued shall be disseminated electronically to all stakeholders and a listing of ALL Circulars shall be published on the BHSFU website www.bhsfu.gov.bz.

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

Failure to comply with any Circular shall result in disciplinary actions taken in accordance with Belize's Sanction Regulations S.I. 32 of 2014

IMPLEMENTATION

All previously issued Circulars issued by the Belize Fisheries Department and the International Merchant Marine Registry as it relates to fishing vessels shall remain valid. These circulars shall have the same effect and applicability of rules and policies promulgated under the provision of the High Seas Fisheries Act 2013 unless repealed and/or superseded.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information direct all inquiries about this Circular to the Director of High Seas Fisheries of the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit, Ministry of Finance, Government of Belize.

Issued by

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