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The tuna fishing fleet based at Northeast Brazil, from Ceará and Rio Grande do Norte states, has been engaged in a tuna fishery associated with data buoys of the PIRATA Program (Pilot Moored Array in the Tropical Atlantic), which are anchored in the western Atlantic and has acted involuntarily as a fish aggregating device (FAD). Thus, the present study aims to describe the fishing technology employed in the vicinity of the data buoys, as well as identifying and discussing the likely impacts derived from this activity followed by the measures adopted by the Brazilian government to mitigate them. The data presented were compiled through five fishing campaigns, done from February 2011 to November 2015. The fleet is composed by 200+ wooden boats ranging from 12 to 16 m. The miscellaneous fishing gears are all made of polyamide monofilament and use natural or artificial baits, namely: bamboo poles with silicone lure; hand lines operating at different depths with silicone lures, strips or live skipjack and small yellowfin tuna; trolling with silicone, plastic, rubber or fiber lures; dip net to catch live bait, such as flying fish or squids. The main impacts include records of boats tied to the buoy structure and also fishing materials entangled on the data buoy mooring structure, mainly handline sinkers. The fleet has evolved to change the fishing strategy to operate with schools aggregated to the boat itself, which led to the reduction of fishing effort in the surroundings of PIRATA buoys. Recently, the Brazilian government, through the Secretary of Aquiculture and Fisheries from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply adopted several measures to regulate this fishery, including the issuing of specific fishing licenses, conditioned to the use of Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), the filling out of fishing logbooks, landing in designated ports and prohibition of any fishing activities in the surroundings of data buoys, as well as to tie the boats to them. It is important to highlight that education and outreach programs should be conducted to raise fishermen’s awareness about the importance of the data buoys and the need to protect them, in their own interest.
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Meeting name
PIRATA-24/TAV Meeting
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