



2ND QUARTER | 2022



**COMPETENT AUTHORITY  
QUARTERLY REPORT**

**PREPARED BY  
COMPETENT AUTHORITY TEAM**



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## I.0 INTRODUCTION

The second quarter of 2022 comprised several official control activities, such as inspection, sampling, and verification of imported products. In-house training, a self-study from the comprehensive CA and industry food safety training provided in 2021, continued into the 2nd quarter where CA officers are required to revisit the materials and conduct a presentation based on what they have learned and understood. The CA team was also part of the World Bank and MIMRA recruitment drive this quarter, including World Bank budgetary meetings that concluded in the budgetary allocations for each division.

A CA-Industry meeting was held for key industry players in the value chain of fisheries activities, including fishing vessel operators, truckers loading and transporting fish, exporters, and processing plant workers. The purpose of the meeting was to gauge an understanding of each participant's role in the value chain, and how their understanding of CA sanitary and health requirements determine the main exporter's Health Certificate authorization that will be in force soon.

Noteworthy, the RMI CA received a response from the EU about the 2nd assessment of the RMI submission requesting to be listed as an EU-authorized country intending to export to the EU. The CA team swiftly made the response via diplomatic channels to the EU. The CA waits in anticipation of their response and the next course of action.

## 2.0 RMI RESPONSE TO THE EU SECOND DOCUMENT ASSESSMENT

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The RMI request to be an EU-authorized country has resulted in an initial letter to the EU in 2019 to be listed as an EU-authorized country to export to the EU. From 2019 to date, regulations, standards, and policy protocols were developed and certified including many CA-led initiatives, to meet the EU requirement and conditions.

Two documental assessments were carried out by the EU on the RMI CA submission.

The second assessment from the EU highlighted an improvement over the previous response, noting only five (5) minor areas in need of attention. **The EU has indicated that the current MIMRA CA established legal framework and protocols, if properly implemented, will provide sufficient guarantees of compliance with EU rules.**

The CA responded directly to the RMI contact point in the EU and by sending original documents via diplomatic channels through the RMI Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

MIMRA and CA are awaiting the EU response and the next course of action.



## 3.0 INSPECTION AND VERIFICATION ACTIVITIES

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Inspection and verification of official control activities are a core function of the Competent Authority and are mandatory requirements scheduled in the CA work programs. Non-scheduled inspections are also conducted to observe industries' levels of adherence to mandated protocols and regulatory requirements, especially during an impromptu visit.

## 3.1 PPF INSPECTIONS AND VERIFICATION ACTIVITIES

### 3.1.1 - Plant Inspections

The CA team conducted its initial inspection of the PPF processing facility for 2022. Unfortunately, the facility has not been in operation since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic due to the restrictions on vessels entering Majuro port, which led to a shortage of tuna supply to facilitate processing. The QC team toured the CA around the facility. Despite no processing, the facility was kept in good condition thanks to efforts given to maintenance and cleaning during this time of inactivity.



CA officer, Lyla Lemari, inspecting PPF processing facility



Hand washing stations in PPF processing facility

### 3.1.2 Offloading and Containerization Operations

The CA team observed an unloading activity at the Delap containerization dock. The purpose of the observation was to assess PPF's unloading and transportation of frozen tuna from the dock to their facility for sorting, containerization, and exporting. The vessel uses the crane to lift nets with fish from the storage holds from the hatches, transferring the fish into PPF's bins with workers onboard the bins controlling the net and placement of tuna. Once full, the bins are forklifted onto a cart that delivers the bins on a one-minute drive to the facility.

An additional purpose of the random CA inspections is to monitor the state and condition of the surroundings and practices, including support transportation and storage, and observe fish temperatures to affirm the requirements of the RMI Standards and the operator's own documented procedures. These random inspections are carried out by the CA as part of its regulatory verification roles.



Taking the temperatures of the fish



Site inspection at Delap dockyard

### 3.1.3 - Traceability Inspections

Among the many aspects of the CA inspections is a documentary assessment of a company's traceability system. This allows the officer to have a birds' eye view of the system the company has to ensure the fish sourced is from a vessel that follows management and conservation measures for the country it has authority to fish in, whilst at the same time has all the controls necessary to ensure safe fish production. Traceability assessment is part of the CA regulatory functions and must be built into its schedules and inspection plans.



CA officers evaluate fish origin and documents to confirm legality and other sanitary records at PPF

## 3.2 PII Follow-Up Inspection

### 3.2.1 Docking Site Inspection

A follow-up inspection was conducted at the PII landing site as part of the CA routine activity. Follow-up inspections are carried out to investigate whether previous non-conformances have been adequately addressed. These issues are addressed in the report properly and presented to PII for action.



Fish unloading and containerization at the PII loading dock

# 3.3 MIFV Inspection

## 3.3.1 Plant Inspection

The CA team conducted its first initial inspection of MIFV’s processing plant for 2022. MIFV has been doing weekly processing while keeping its facility up to RMI industry standards by maintenance and cleaning when possible. MIFV showed improvements since their last inspection in 2021 and they plan to improve and meet the RMI industry standards.



CA officers inspecting MIFV processing plant



CO-treated tuna loins area destined for the US Market

## 3.3.2 Inspection of imported tuna loins from China

MIFV has been receiving imports of frozen and CO-treated tuna loins from China as raw materials for their bandsaw products for further processing to be exported to their buyers. This was done to fulfill MIFV's order request and meet quotas. The CA inspected these containers to verify the information sent in from China. MIFV also sent in testing results from China and the CA verified these results are correct by comparing them to testing results done at the MIFV and PPF laboratories.



Imported tuna loins inspection by Oceanic, CA, and Customs officials

### 3.3.3 Fish Unloading and Containerization Inspection

The CA team evaluated the loading and containerization operations for MIFV at Delap Dockyard.



MIFV employees loading freezer containers of fish at Delap Dock

## 3.4 Water, Product Evaluation, Sampling, and Testing

### i) Water

Water safety is crucial for safe food/fish handling for consumption. Apart from the company's water samples submitted to EPA for testing, the CA has regulatory oversight, where water is sampled regularly from the operations and submitted for testing. The results of such testing enable the CA to assess the safety of water used for preparing food. In this quarter all three operators (PPF, MIFV, and PII) water were sampled and submitted to the lab for testing.

### ii) Product (fish)

Tuna is a scombrototoxin fish due to its high histidine content, which through a bacterial enzymatic action converts histidine into histamine. This chemical compound can result in serious health consequences for some consumers, if not controlled by operators by proper handling and storage with regular oversight by the regulator (CA).

Therefore as part of the CA function, the products are sampled for histamine testing. During this quarter, a total of 36 product samples and 17 water samples were submitted for testing.

### 3.4.1 Water and product sampling at MIFV



CA officer, Lyla, sampling tuna at MIFV



CA officer, Lyla, collecting water samples at MIFV

### 3.4.2 Product sampling & testing and water sampling at Pan Pacific Foods



CA officers, Tatiana & Lyla, conducting organoleptic evaluation at PPF

CA officer, Lyla, assisting with Histamine testing at PPF



CA officer, Lyla, collecting water samples at PPF

### 3.4.3 Water, Product Sampling, and Evaluation at PII



CA officer, Lyla, undertaking water and product evaluation and sampling at the PII Docking area

## **4.0 Exports**

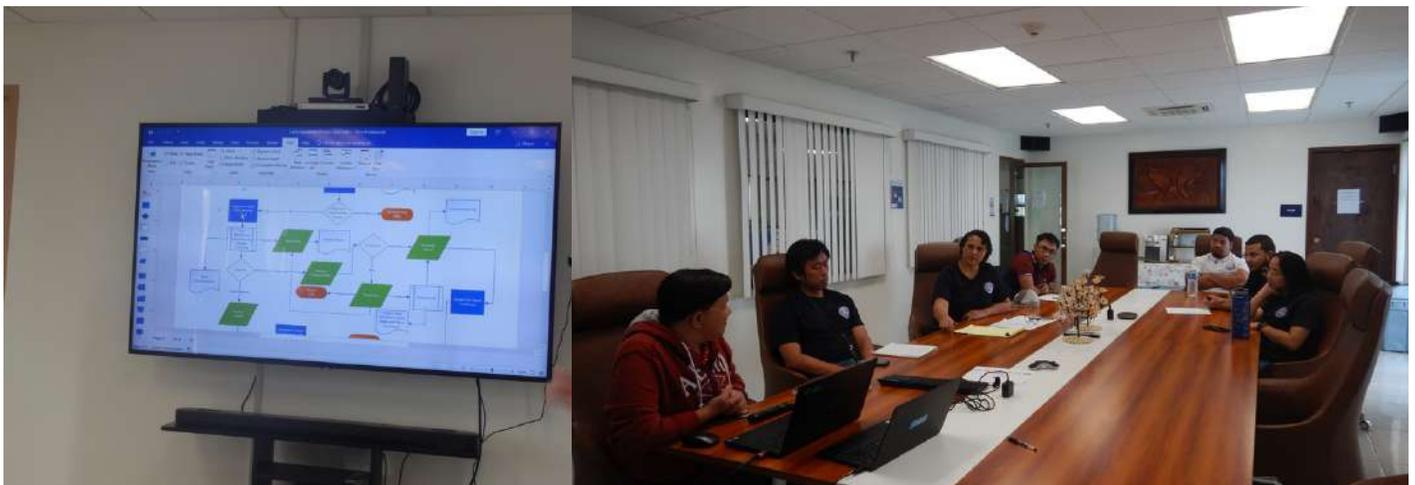
The CA officers are now verifying all exports of tuna submitted by the operators. Initially, the Oceanic Division was responsible for all exports. So far 47 export certifications have been approved since the CA took over this task, mainly to destinations in Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Random product verification is carried out to verify export documents, container integrity, and temperature requirements for frozen products loaded for exports.

## 5.0 Industry CDS & Traceability System Awareness (MIFV & PPF)

The MIMRA CA and IT teams met with the PPF and MIFV representatives to present CA CDS and traceability requirements. This is an effort for the development of the e-traceability system for the CA and Oceanic Divisions from landing to export.



MIMRA CA team and IT meet with MIFV to discuss traceability system



PPF team presenting to MIMRA CA and IT on their traceability system at MIMRA conference room

## 6.0 Training and Mentorship (Internal & External)

### 6.1 CA officers Internal Presentations

As part of the CA officers' capacity development, numerous in-house presentations were done to reinforce past teachings. One revisited material was training delivered by a Portugal consultant, Helder Silva, engaged by the World Bank in 2021 to deliver comprehensive food safety training to the RMI MIMRA CA and industry. The CA officers were tasked to re-visit the zoom training materials, take notes, and prepare and make a presentation. This allowed for a re-evaluation of the officers' level of understanding of the study materials. The experience benefited the CA team by retaining their knowledge and improving their public speaking skills for future meetings where they will be given the opportunity to make presentations.

For this quarter the topics covered were;

- Food Safety International Frame, Basics of fish quality and spoilage, Fish hazards, Seafood Safety & Quality, Bacteria growth & control.



CA officer, Tatiana, presenting on Fish Quality & Spoilage

### 6.2 SAW Introductory Course

The CA officers have participated in their second Stock Assessment Workshop introductory course conducted by the Pacific Community (SPC) via Zoom. The introductory workshop involves a mix of lectures & practicals with the following topics;

- Tuna fisheries of the Pacific
- Tuna data collection
- Tuna data issues
- Tuna management
- Oceanography and climate
- Tuna blood, guts, environment
- Understanding mortality, growth, recruitment
- Why do we model tuna populations
- Introduction to stock status
- Harvest strategy introduction

The materials guided the participants in understanding tuna and stock assessments conducted in support of the fisheries. This course will be followed by the advanced workshop in early July.



CA officers, Tatiana and Lyla, presenting on Food Safety

## 7.0

# Workshops/ Meetings/ Recruitments/ Internship

## 7.1 Ports & Truckers Meeting

A meeting was conducted in mid-June among the CA, Port & Truckers, and service providers for the fishery operators. The meeting established the roles each stakeholder would play in the supply chain of fishing operations.

Now that the CA has a functioning regulatory division within MIMRA, the CA will be exercising its oversight role on all fishery operators, while the supporting services remain the role of the main operator through its arrangements with these services and contractors.

The meeting highlighted to the operators and stakeholders the requirements needed to meet the food safety and sanitary conditions to enable them to qualify for health certification.

The landing sites (PII & Delap Dock) managed by PII and Ports Authority have duties to perform during fish offloading under areas of compliance. Truckers (Stevedore) will need to maintain any of their loading trucks that carry tuna from the facilities to the Stevedore yard to be shipped out on container vessels.

The Q&A section took up most of the time indicating positive feedback as the stakeholders were now aware of the CA and its sanitary requirements.



## 7.2 Meetings/ Recruitments/ Interviews

### **7.2.1 Prop World Meetings/ Interviews/ Recruitment**

i) A series of WB PROP meetings were held with all MIMRA divisions and sections on their budgetary allocations, which concluded in July 2022. These budgetary allocations for each division span activities for the next 5 years.

ii) The CA was part of the selection panel that carried out selections and interviews for the various positions within the PROP Project.

### **7.2.2 Oceanic/CA Recruitment**

The CA team was also a part of the selection panel that carried out interviews and selection of the new fisheries officer who will work with the Oceanic and the CA Divisions.

## 8.0 Internship Program with MIMRA Divisions

The CA team welcomed a new intern for the MIMRA summer internship program, Isabella Narruhn. Isabella was assigned to the division as she is interested in laboratory work. She, along with fellow interns, spent a day of orientation led by Coastal Deputy Director, Ms. Florence Edwards. The presentation provided an introduction to MIMRA, its various divisions, and the role each one plays.



Coastal Deputy Director, Ms. Florence Edwards, orientating the interns at MIMRA

To introduce Isabella to the CA division, CA Officer Tatiana Shoniber provided an overview of the Competent Authority. Isabella was then assigned to reading material to understand CA regulatory oversight of operations and products (specifically tuna), and the necessary measures the industry members & Competent Authority must take to ensure the production of safe fish products intended for human consumption.

The CA intern was also taken to observe a sampling exercise of imported loins from MIFV. She was assigned to the PPF laboratory to observe and assist in product testing. The experience will provide her with a good understanding of laboratory procedures and some processes regarding sampling and testing.



CA Intern Isabella Narruhn



CA Intern, Isabella, assisting with Histamine testing at PPF



## 9.0 Budget

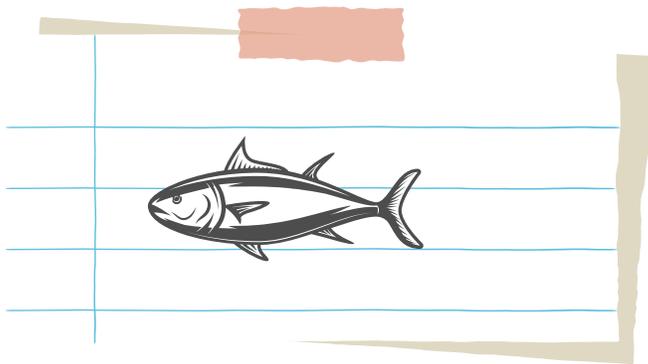
The CA budgetary allocation will begin in 2023 under the World Bank. In the interim, all its operational funding comes from MIMRA. A budgetary allocation for the CA is made available but will be accessible in 2023 earmarked for the next 5 years.

## 10.0 Summary of all CA Activities

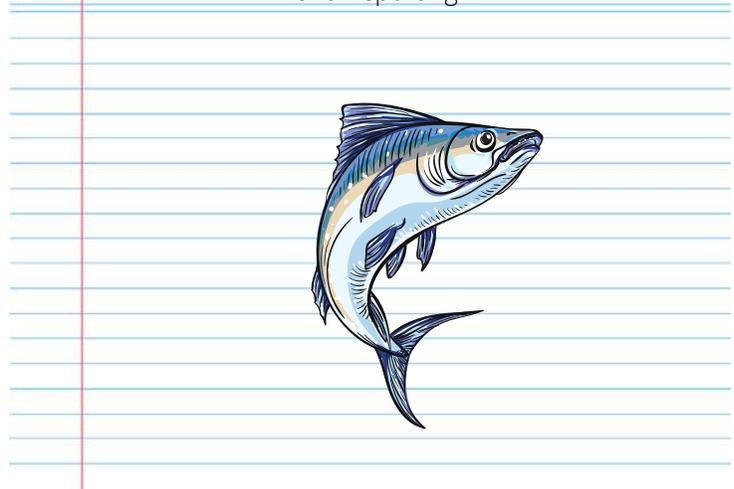
<b>Number of Inspections</b>  2 Facility Inspections (PPF, MIFV) 2 Landing Site Inspections (PII, MIFV)	<b>Number of Product Samplings</b>  9 (PPF) 18 (MIFV) 9 (PII)	<b>Number of Water Sampling</b>  9 (PPF) 6 (MIFV) 2 (PII)
<b>Number of Workshops/ Trainings/ Meetings</b>  3 Internal Presentations SAW Introductory Course	<b>Number of Export Form Approvals</b>  47	<b>Number of Import Inspections</b>  3
<b>Number of Organoleptic Evaluations</b>  5 (PPF) 5 (MIFV) 9 (PII)	<b>CA Participation in World Bank Interview</b>  3	<b>Reports</b>  6

## 11.0 Annual Reporting

The CA compiled the annual 2021 report as part of the MIMRA division's reporting and submitted the report to Mr. Giff Johnson from the Marshall Islands Journal to complete MIMRA's yearly report. The report will provide an overview of the CA program implementation for the preceding year.



Tuna Reporting



## 12.0 Corporate Reporting

Each division meets quarterly to provide up-to-date work plans, activity programs, and progress as part of the MIMRA Corporate Strategic Planning. The purpose is to ensure each division's programs are measurable and delivered as planned. Where programs are not delivered as expected, justification and challenges will be reported.

# 13.0 2nd Quarter Program Evaluation

Item Number	Area of Program	Implementation Status	Comments
1	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Initial of the EU listing Process</b></p> <p>a) Lodging of official letter  b) EU questionnaire submission  c) 1st &amp; 2nd document assessment, feedback, and response  d) External CA assessment (TBA)  e) RMI authorization (TBA)</p>	80%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All elements a-c attended to. 2nd EU assessment response was made with the response from the EU. Five (5) minor areas were identified in the 2nd assessment for correcting, which was speedily attended to.</li> </ul>
2	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Workshop /Legal Framework/Standards</b></p> <p>a) Development of the CA regulatory instruments (regulations, standards, and protocols)  b) Certification of the CA regulatory instruments  c) Awareness and training  d) Transitional period</p>	90%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All CA regulatory instruments have been developed, promulgated, and certified, and workshops internal and external were held</li> <li>Comments from the EU 2nd assessment were incorporated</li> <li>An internal review is in progress to simplify documents as necessary on repetitive phrases</li> </ul>
3	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Development of Database and all e-reporting for the CA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated database for inspection, imports, sampling, and testing traceability and CDS</li> </ul>	70%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved progress made for inspections, imports, exports, and traceability</li> <li>Review needed once implementation to amend and improve</li> </ul>
4	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Meetings and Participation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World Bank Prop budget meetings</li> <li>Recruitment, selections, and interviews of PROP and Oceanic officers</li> <li>Internship orientations</li> <li>Corporate plan</li> <li>Traceability meetings with MIFV and PPF operators</li> </ul>	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CA is fully participative in meetings and collaborative initiatives within MIMRA</li> </ul>

Item Number	Area of Program	Implementation Status	Comments
5	<p><b>Trainings and Stakeholder Awareness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SAW introductory training</li> <li>• Internal CA officer's presentation</li> <li>• Ports and Truckers awareness</li> </ul>	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CA has continuous training and awareness, which is essential for the team, industry, and stakeholders</li> </ul>
6	<p><b>Staffing requirements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2x CA officers</li> <li>• 1x Manager</li> </ul>	80%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sufficient capacity for now</li> <li>• Recruitment of Manager required</li> </ul>
7	<p><b>Labratory Building/Construction</b></p>	90%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The construction phase is imminent</li> </ul>
8	<p><b>Laboratory Testing Requirements</b></p>	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to covid-19, only possible tests are carried out in RMI e.g water and histamine using a fluorometer</li> <li>• Numerous tests are still in requirement of an external lab</li> </ul>

Item Number	Area of Program	Implementation Status	Comments
9	<p><b>Official control undertakings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facility inspection</li> <li>• Sampling of water and products and submitted for testing</li> <li>• Organoleptic assessment</li> </ul>	90%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 facility inspections this quarter</li> <li>• 38 products samples for histamine</li> <li>• 19 organoleptic samples</li> </ul>
10	<p><b>Budget</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Series of meetings held with World Bank concerning CA budget</li> </ul>	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All budgetary allocation is confirmed for 2022-2027, however, the use of funds is until 2023</li> </ul>
11	<p><b>Records Management and Files</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspection records/reviewed and up to date</li> <li>• Staffing records of training up to date including CVs</li> </ul>	80%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A review is needed to ensure records are up to date</li> </ul>
12	<p><b>Reports</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual reports</li> <li>• Quarterly newsletters</li> <li>• Quarterly reports</li> <li>• Inspections reports</li> </ul>	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produced every quarter detailing all the CA work for the last 3 quarters including annual reports</li> </ul>

Item Number	Area of Program	Implementation Status	Comments
13	<p><b>Evaluation and Monitoring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quarterly review (immediate action)</li> <li>Annual review (medium)</li> <li>External assessment (TBA)</li> </ul>	60%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual and quarterly reviews need to be completed as soon as all the CA systems are fully established and running</li> <li>Quarterly reports are mandatory to correct issues as they occur promptly</li> <li>External assessment (TBA)</li> </ul>
14	<p><b>CA admins</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team meetings</li> <li>CA admin purchases</li> </ul>	60%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compensated by planning out work plans for which everyone knows what to do</li> <li>CA in-house presentations and meeting together with stakeholders and industry</li> </ul>
<b>Average Performance</b>		79%	

Summary: The average performance for the 2nd Quarter of 2022 is 79%. Areas that are affected due to low rating are external testing of water, product, and vessel inspection due to covid-19. Physical meetings which are compensated by CA electronic work plans and calendars provide the CA team with a program for every quarter, though physical team meetings must be encouraged. External CA assessment is yet to be carried out, if and when required. The budgetary allocation is available through the World Bank but will be accessible in 2023. These are the areas that have lower ratings.

## 14.0 Achievements

The highlight of this quarter is the EU response to the RMI CA document assessment. The EU concluded that all the elements and requirements set out in the submission have met the EU requirements and, if properly implemented, provide sufficient guarantees of compliance with the EU rules.

Only five minor areas needed to be addressed, for which the CA swiftly attended to those concerns and provided the response.

## 15.0 Challenges

The challenge at this stage is ensuring now that the CA consistently meets its objective of timely regulatory and verification roles per its protocols in keeping in line with guarantees that will be seen as sufficient to meet the EU requirements as well as the enforcement of the new RMI Industry Standards to all operators coming 2023. Furthermore, the industry members' challenge is to make major improvements to the facility infrastructure.

## 16.0 Recommendations

Ensuring the operators are fully aware of the CA regulatory requirements and its enforcement regime. Continuous dialogue is vital between the industry and the CA and both be on board with all CA developments and journeys.

# Acknowledgments

Competent Authority | 2nd Quarter Report 2022

MIMRA Management and the Board

Fisheries Industry

Competent Authority Team

World Bank

Prop World Bank Team

We thank you for your continued support.

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