

Status of the development of the IOTC scheme to operationalise the FAO voluntary guidelines on the marking of fishing gear

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT¹, 4 FEBRUARY 2022

PURPOSE

To provide participants at the Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures (WPICMM) an update on the Status of the development of an IOTC scheme to operationalise the FAO voluntary guidelines on the marking of fishing gear.

BACKGROUND

On marking of fishing gear and prevention of marine pollution, in 2019 the Commission reached no consensus on proposal, [IOTC-2019-S23-PropL](#), which sought to introduce a management measure for marking of fishing gears. In view of the lack of support for such a measure at the time, the proponent agreed to defer the proposal for further discussion and possible presentation at the next Commission meeting (para 50, [IOTC-2019-S23-RE Rev1 FINAL](#)), and requested the IOTC Secretariat, through the Commission, to initiate a process to develop draft guidelines on how IOTC might operationalize the FAO voluntary guidelines on the marking of fishing gear. The process should utilize the expertise of IOTC technical bodies and review the guidelines by electronic means, before being made available to the Commission.

Subsequently, the IOTC Secretariat, in conjunction with the Fishing Operations and Technology Branch (NIFO) of the FAO, set about to develop an initial draft of the terms of reference for a consultant to develop the scheme to operationalise the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear (VGMFG) and FADs, in the IOTC Area. The terms of reference was endorsed by the Compliance Committee ([CoC17](#)) and subsequently by the Commission ([S24](#)), in 2020.

The consultant, Dr Pingguo He, has been contracted as of 01 April 2021 to undertake this work, under the joint supervision of the FIAO and the IOTC Secretariat. The preliminary results of the consultant's work is presented to the fifth meeting of the Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures (WPICMM), in the paper [IOTC-2022-WPICMM05-13 Add1](#) - Operationalisation of FAO voluntary guidelines for the marking of fishing gears in the IOTC area of competence

The proposal, and recommendations of the WPICMM05, will be made available to the 2022 Sessions of the Compliance Committee, the Standing Committee on Administration and Finance and the Commission, for their considerations.

DISCUSSION

The summary of the consultant's report is reproduced below:

A system of fishing gear marking should be an integral component of and serves as an important tool for fisheries management. It is recognized that gear marking is an important tool to reduce gear loss and aid recovery, as well as in determining ownership, assisting in fishing effort management and control, facilitating monitoring, control and surveillance, and deterring IUU fishing. Fishing gear marking is also an important means for safe navigation. Fishing gear marking can be physical, chemical, electronic, and virtual. They can bear various types of information, and should be linked to its owner or license and/or permit to fish.

In accordance with the [VGMFG \(FAO, 2019\)](#), development of a system of fishing gear marking

¹ IOTC-Secretariat@fao.org

should include risk assessment. A system for the marking of fishing gear should include:

- gear specific marking requirements,
- a reporting, recording and data management system,
- mechanism for the application of data for monitoring control and surveillance,
- mechanism for mitigate the negative impact ALDFG (including retrieval of ALDFG),
- provision of adequate port reception facilities for the disposal of ALDFG and end-of-life
- fishing gear, and
- reuse and recycle of end-of-life fishing gear.

A system of gear marking should provide a simple, affordable and verifiable means of identifying the ownership and position of fishing gear, be compatible with related traceability and certification systems, be supported by a monitoring process for compliance, link with fishing authorization or license, and to vessel, its owner or operator engaged in fishing, and have minimal environmental risk. This document provided an example on how major fishing gears managed by IOTC may be evaluated through a risk assessment to determine the level of complexity for implementing a system of fishing gear marking for the IOTC Area of Competence. Five IOTC managed fishing gear types, which represent 90% of fishing landing in the IOTC area and two FAD types were included in the analysis.

When implementing a system of fishing gear marking, a risk assessment should be carried out to evaluate available data and information on both the fishery utilizing the gear and the ecological and economic characteristics of the fishery. The determination of risk levels involves the estimation of the consequence (impact) of the lack of a gear marking system in the fishery, an estimation of the likelihood of occurrence of the identified impacts, a score of the risk, and categorization of the risk, for both fishing gear in normal fishing conditions and after they become ALDFG. The consequences and impacts analysed include ecological risks (plastic pollution; ghostfishing (fishery resource and ETP species), habitat impact, economic risks (including loss due to IUU fishing, cost of implementation, and economic loss due to gear loss and theft), operational risks (gear conflict, ownership disputer), and navigational risks. Risk resulted in priority for gear marking and level of complexity. In IOTC managed gears, purse seines, drift gillnets, and drifting FADs are considered as having “high” or “very high” overall risks, anchored FADs having medium risks, while handline and pole-and-line, and trolling lines having low overall risks.

While anchored FADs can be considered as a type of untended gear, drifting FADs have special considerations regarding marking, reporting and recovery. Consequently, procedures for marking, reporting and recovery for dFADs are provided for consideration. As requested, draft text for a resolution for implementing a system of fishing gear marking for IOTC area of competence has been provided (Annex I). The general requirement for surface marking of unattended gear should follow Annex 4 of the [FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries, 1. Fishing Operations \(FAO, 1996\)](#), which is attached as Appendix III of this report.

To address the establishment of an IOTC fishing gear marking scheme, the WPICMM05 is invited to discuss the following topics related to the consultant’s report:

- Major Fishing Gears of Interests to IOTC,
- Gear Marking Technologies and Practices,
- Risk Assessment for the Marking of Fishing Gear: Categorization of risk, Prioritization and complexity. In particular the consultant would like invite participants at the WPICMM05 to reflect on whether the proposed framework for conducting risk assessment is appropriate for IOTC or if a simpler approach with less steps is preferred.
- Economic assessment for implementation of gear marking in the IOTC area: costs to fishers, CPCs and IOTC,

Awareness raising and capacity building for the implementation of gear marking: Awareness raising and communication, Capacity-building measures, requirements of Developing States.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the WPICMM05:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2022–WPICMM05–13 and IOTC–2022–WPICMM05–13_Add1.
- 2) **NOTE** the progress made by the IOTC Secretariat in securing the service of a consultant to develop a scheme to operationalise the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear and FADs in the IOTC Area.
- 3) **RECOMMEND** that CPCs not represented at the WPICMM05 be provided with the opportunity to provide their feedback on the draft report of the consultant (document [IOTC-2022-WPICMM05-13_Add1](#)), and especially on Section 5, where their input on whether the proposed framework for conducting risk assessment is appropriate for IOTC or if a simpler approach with less steps is preferred.
- 4) **RECOMMEND** that the drafting of a “roadmap/work plan” be considered by the Compliance Committee (CoC19) to progress the work to operationalise the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear and FADs in the IOTC Area and progress the work on the Draft Resolution for a System of Fishing Gear Marking in the IOTC Area of Competence, which is proposed in Annex 1 of the consultant’s paper (IOTC–2022–WPICMM05–13_Add1).