



ON MANAGEMENT OF DRIFTING FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES (DFADS) IN THE IOTC AREA OF COMPETENCE

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Explanatory Memorandum

The management of drifting fish aggregating devices (DFADs) is an issue of common interest to tuna fisheries and is becoming increasingly important for tropical tuna fisheries in general. After discussions at the last meeting of the Kobe process Steering Committee, the tuna-RFMO Secretariats held discussions in 2016 about the possibility of holding a joint tuna RFMO meeting on FAD fishing issues, sometime in 2017. The First Joint Tuna-RFMO FAD Working Group meeting was held in Madrid, Spain, in April 2017 and IOTC participated in this process.

The Chair of the FAD WG made the following statement at the start of the meeting: *“fish aggregating devices (FADs) have been used as a fishing technique for centuries and are now extensively used in purse seine fisheries for tropical tuna. However recent exponential increases in their numbers and technological developments, and the possible adverse impact these trends might have on the fish stock dynamics and also on the oceanic ecosystem, have put FADs in the spotlight. While the use of FADs does not automatically lead to overfishing of tropical tunas, there is a risk that the continued growth of their use in tuna fisheries at the current pace could increase overall fishing pressure on tuna stocks (and in particular juveniles) unless framed by adequate management measures. In addition, FAD associated fishing has impacts on by-catch species and when lost and dismantled by currents and tide effects, man-made FADs may also have consequent impact on the environment, due to the non-biodegradable material they are made of or due to damages they may cause to vulnerable coastal habitats, such as coral reefs”*.

Following this initial meeting, the Second Joint Tuna-RFMO FAD Working Group meeting was held in San Diego, USA, in May 2019. Some of the priorities identified at this meeting was that tuna-RMFOs develop, as a matter of priority, systematic monitoring and reporting procedures on the number of active FADs/buoys in the IOTC area of competence. Another priority that was identified was that FAD management objectives should be defined, both within each tuna-RFMO and jointly, to guide research, data collection, and the development of effective conservation measures. It was also recommended that a system for marking both buoys and FADs should be explored and high-resolution buoy position data should be made available for research purposes. RFMOs were also urged to accelerate progress to reduce contributions of FADs to marine litter and mitigate negative impacts on coastal habitats and marine ecosystems and endangered, threatened and protected species, such as use of FADs without netting and those made with biodegradable materials, as well as mechanisms and incentives for recovering FADs.

The 2nd IOTC *ad hoc* FAD Working Group (WGFAD), held in October 2021 further noted that there is a need to quantify the contribution of DFADs to marine pollution and ecosystem damage in the Indian Ocean, while also noting that fleets should be in compliance with MARPOL Annex V and the London Convention. The WGFAD further noted that while some progress was being made in terms of fleets adopting biodegradable FAD materials and designs, with some variability between companies, there is still work required to roll these out across the wider Indian Ocean region.

It is clear that amendments are required, aligned with these recommendations, to further strengthen Resolution 19/02 to mitigate the ecological impacts associated with DFADs, especially their stranding, damage to coral reefs, and inshore habitats and their contribution to marine debris and pollution. The proposal also aims to reduce the catch of juveniles of tropical tuna and to facilitate the rebuilding of Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna as envisaged under Resolution 21/01.

The 20th Scientific Committee requested that FAD ownership should form part of the mandatory information to be collected by IOTC as this was considered necessary to model and report the tracking status of all FADs. This aspect is strengthened and revised in this proposal.

Noting that IOTC, along with other tuna RFMOs, recommended and adopted resolutions to promote reduction of the amount of synthetic marine debris by using natural or biodegradable materials for DFADs, the proposal also addresses this issue by strengthening the existing rules.

Cf. Resolution 19/02.

RESOLUTION 23/XX
ON MANAGEMENT OF DRIFTING FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES (DFADS) IN THE IOTC AREA OF
COMPETENCE

Keywords: *DFAD, FAD management, FAD registry, FAD limits, FAD closure period, FAD monitoring system.*

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

BEARING IN MIND that the Agreement for the implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (UNFSA) was adopted in conscience of the need to avoid adverse impacts on the marine environment, preserve biodiversity, maintain the integrity of marine ecosystems and minimise the risk of long-term or irreversible effects of fishing operations;

RECALLING that Articles 5 and 6 of the UNFSA require States to apply the precautionary approach widely to conservation, management and exploitation of highly migratory fish stocks in order to protect the living marine resources and preserve the marine environment;

RECALLING that, in applying the precautionary approach, Article 6 of the UNFSA requires States to be more cautious when information is uncertain, unreliable or inadequate and prohibits the use of an absence of adequate scientific information as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures, and that this is reiterated in the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries;

RECALLING that, in applying the precautionary approach, Article 6 of the UNFSA requires States to take into account, *inter alia*, uncertainties relating to the size and productivity of the stocks, levels and distribution of fishing mortality and the impact of fishing activities on non-target and associated or dependent species, as well as existing and predicted oceanic, environmental and socio-economic conditions;

RECALLING that Article 5 of the UNFSA requires States to assess the impacts of fishing, other human activities and environmental factors on target stocks and species belonging to the same ecosystem or associated with or dependent upon the target stocks and to adopt, where necessary, conservation and management measures for species belonging to the same ecosystem or associated with or dependent upon the target stocks, with a view to maintaining or restoring populations of such species above levels at which their reproduction may become seriously threatened;

BEARING IN MIND that Article 5 of the UNFSA requires coastal States and fishing States on the high seas to collect and share, in a timely manner, complete and accurate data concerning fishing activities on, *inter alia*, vessel position, catch of target and non-target species and fishing effort, as well as information from national and international research programmes, and that the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries provides that States should compile fishery-related and other supporting scientific data relating to fish stocks covered by sub-regional or regional fisheries management organisations and provide them in a timely manner to the organisation;

MINDFUL of the call upon States, either individually, collectively or through regional fisheries management organisations and arrangements in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 76/71 on Sustainable fisheries of 2021 to collect the necessary data in order to evaluate and closely monitor the use of large-scale fish aggregating devices (FADs) and other devices, as appropriate, and their effects on tuna resources and tuna behaviour and associated and dependent species, to improve management procedures to monitor the number, type and use of such devices and to mitigate possible negative effects on the ecosystem, including on juveniles and the incidental bycatch of non-target species, particularly sharks and marine turtles;

RECALLING that Articles 192 and 194 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) require States to protect and preserve the marine environment and to take, individually or jointly as appropriate, all measures consistent with UNCLOS that are necessary to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the marine environment from any source, and that these measures shall include those necessary to protect and preserve rare or fragile ecosystems

as well as the habitat of depleted, threatened or endangered species and other forms of marine life;

RECOGNISING that, in accordance with the UNFSA, FADs under the competence of IOTC must be managed to ensure the sustainability of fishing operations and to avoid adverse impacts on the marine environment, preserve biodiversity, maintain the integrity of marine ecosystems and minimise the risk of long-term or irreversible effects of fishing operations;

CONCERNED of the impact of Abandoned, Lost or Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) and plastic residues in the ocean greatly affecting marine life and the need to facilitate the identification and recovery of such gear;

NOTING that releasing fishing devices into the water, such as FADs, does not contravene to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) Annex V or the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Convention) and the Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Protocol) as long as such device is deployed with the intention of later retrieval;

RECOGNISING that, in accordance with MARPOL Annex V and the London Convention and Protocol, FADs under the competence of the IOTC must be managed to ensure that they are exclusively deployed with the intention of later retrieval and that they are not abandoned at sea except in situations of *force majeure*;

RECALLING that the objective of the IOTC Agreement is to ensure, through appropriate management, the conservation and optimum utilisation of stocks covered by the mentioned Agreement and encouraging sustainable development of fisheries based on such stocks and minimising the level of bycatch;

GIVEN that the activities of supply and support vessels and the use of Drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (DFADs) form part of the fishing effort exerted by the purse seine fleet;

CONSIDERING the concern of the 20th Session of the Working Party on Tropical Tuna held in Seychelles, 29 October – 3 November 2018, on the change in strategy of increased usage of DFADs by purse seine vessels to maintain catch level targets, which has led to a substantial increase of juvenile yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna being caught;

CONSIDERING the concerns of the 2nd IOTC Ad-hoc Working Group on FADs, on the need for clarity around data submitted to IOTC on FADs;

AWARE that the Commission is committed to adopt conservation and management measures to reduce juvenile Bigeye tuna and Yellowfin tuna mortalities from fishing effort on DFADs;

RECALLING that Resolution 12/04 established that the Commission at its annual Session in 2013 should consider the recommendations of the IOTC Scientific Committee as regards the development of improved DFAD designs to reduce the incidence of entanglement of marine turtles, including the use of biodegradable materials, together with socio-economic considerations, with a view to adopting further measures to mitigate interactions with marine turtles in fisheries covered by the IOTC Agreement;

RECALLING that Resolution 13/08 [superseded by Resolution 15/08, by Resolution 17/08, by Resolution 18/08 and then by Resolution 19/02] established procedures on a FAD management plan, including more detailed specifications of catch reporting from DFAD sets, and the development of improved DFAD designs to reduce the incidence of entanglement of non-target species;

NOTING that the IOTC Scientific Committee advised the Commission that only non-entangling DFADs should be designed and deployed to prevent the entanglement of sharks, marine turtles and other species;

NOTING that the IOTC Scientific Committee advised the Commission to conduct an investigation of the feasibility and impacts of a temporary DFAD closure period as well as other measures restricting the use of DFADs in the

context of Indian Ocean fisheries and stocks;

NOTING that the 2nd Ad-hoc Working Group on FADs highlighted the gaps, inconsistencies in data collection, reporting and analysis of the DFAD data.

ADOPTS, in accordance with Article IX, paragraph 1 of the IOTC Agreement, the following:

Definitions

1. For the purpose of this Resolution:

- a) “Fish Aggregating Device (FAD)” means a permanent, semi-permanent or temporary object, structure or device of any material, man-made or natural, which is deployed and/or tracked and may aggregate fish.
- b) “Drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (DFADs)” means a FAD not tethered to the bottom of the ocean.
- c) “Log” means a floating object of natural source or accidentally lost from anthropic activities and that was not built and deployed for the purpose of aggregating and/or locating target tuna species for subsequent capture.
- d) “instrumented buoy” means a buoy clearly marked with a unique reference number allowing identification of its owner and equipped with a satellite tracking system to monitor its position.
- e) “activation of a buoy” means the act of initialising satellite communication service, which is done by the buoy supplier company at the request of the buoy owner. The buoy can be transmitting or not, depending if it has been manually switched on.
- f) “deactivation of a buoy” means the act of cancelling satellite communications service, which is done by the buoy supplier company at the request of the vessel owner or buoy owner.
- g) “buoy owner” means any legal or natural person, entity or branch, who is paying for the communication service for the buoy associated with a DFAD that is registered on the DFAD Register, and/or who is authorised to receive information from the satellite buoy, as well as to request its activation and/or deactivation.
- h) “reactivation” means the act of re-enabling satellite communications services by the buoy supplier company at the request of the buoy owner.
- i) “abandoned DFAD” means a DFAD that was initially deployed with the intention of later retrieval but that is deliberately left at sea due to *force majeure* or other reasons,
- j) “lost DFAD” means a DFAD over which the buoy owner has lost control and that cannot be located and/or retrieved by the buoy owner.
- k) “discarded DFAD” means a DFAD that is released at sea without any attempt for further control or recovery by the buoy owner.
- l) “biodegradable materials” means renewable lignocellulosic materials (i.e., plant dry matter - here described as natural material). Those materials shall degrade in normal conditions of the use of DFADs and both be biodegradable in marine environments in accordance with international relevant standards for full biodegradability in marine environments and on land under natural environmental conditions. In addition, the substances resulting from the degradation of these materials shall not be toxic for the marine and coastal ecosystems or include heavy metals in their composition.

Application

2. This Resolution shall apply to Contracting Party and Cooperating Non-Contracting Party (CPC) flag purse seine vessels fishing on DFADs aggregating target tuna species in the IOTC area of competence as well as associated supply or support vessels.

DFAD Register and Limits

3. The IOTC Executive Secretary shall maintain a register for all DFADs deployed in the IOTC area of competence (DFAD Register). The IOTC Executive Secretary shall provide detailed guidelines and a dedicated technological tool. The DFAD Register shall be effective as of 1 January 2024.
4. CPCs shall submit electronically to the IOTC Executive Secretary, for each of their flag purse seine vessels that is authorised to operate in the IOTC area of competence, **after acquisition and before deployment**, the following information for inclusion in the DFAD Register:
 - a) **unique DFAD reference number;**
 - b) **unique instrumented buoy reference number that will allow the identification of its owner attached to the DFAD;**
 - c) name of the purse seine vessel to which the **DFAD** is assigned;
 - d) name of the buoy owner;
 - e) unique IOTC Vessel Register number of the purse seine vessel that is assigned to the instrumented buoy;
 - f) flag State of the purse seine vessel that is assigned to the instrumented buoy;
 - g) manufacturer of the instrumented buoy;
 - h) model name of the instrumented buoy.
5. The maximum number of instrumented buoys that may be registered on the DFAD Register to any purse seine vessel, at any one time, shall not exceed 250 as of 1 January 2024 and 200 as of 1 January 2026 (DFAD Limits). **The maximum number of instrumented buoys that may be acquired annually for each purse seine vessel shall not exceed 300.** Notwithstanding the completion of any study undertaken at the request of the Commission, the Commission may review the DFAD Limits. This paragraph is without prejudice to the right of CPCs to adopt more stringent DFAD Limits for their flag vessels or within their EEZ.
6. Reactivated instrumented buoys shall not count as new instrumented buoys under the DFAD Limits but shall be counted as part of the original limit of instrumented buoys that is allowed for each purse seine vessel.
7. Flag CPCs shall submit the information under paragraph 4 to the IOTC Executive Secretary at least 24 hours before an instrumented buoy is activated, switched on and deployed at sea on a DFAD or any floating object.
8. CPCs shall promptly notify, after the establishment of their initial DFAD Register record, the IOTC Executive Secretary of any addition to, any deletion from and/or any modification of the information mentioned in paragraph 4 as included in the DFAD Register at any time such changes occur.
9. The IOTC Executive Secretary shall make the DFAD Register available in a secure section the IOTC website that is accessible to CPCs. The IOTC Executive Secretary shall make the data contained in the DFAD Registry available **exclusively** for purposes of scientific research and monitoring of compliance. For other users, data shall be made available upon written request to the IOTC Executive Secretary following **written** agreement from the CPC concerned.

DFAD Management

10. CPCs shall ensure that only purse seine vessels and associated supply or support vessels use **and fish on** DFADs in the IOTC area of competence.
11. CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels exclusively **deploy** instrumented buoys registered to them in the DFAD Register on all DFADs and shall prohibit the use of any other buoys, such as radio buoys.

11bis. CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels exclusively deploy DFADs with an instrumented buoy that has been activated.

11ter. CPCs shall ensure that they flag vessels do not deploy instrumented buoys on DFADs which were deployed before the entry into force of this Resolution and which do not comply with the requirements of this Resolution.

11quater. CPCs shall ensure that their flag purse seine vessels and associated supply and support vessels encountering DFADs that do not comply with the requirements of this Resolution retrieve such DFADs.

12. CPCs shall ensure that their flag purse seine vessels and associated supply and support vessels do not attach their own instrumented buoys to DFADs that are already equipped with the instrumented buoy of another vessel.
13. CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels activate instrumented buoys only when physically present on board the purse seine vessel to which they are registered.
14. CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels record the deployment of each DFAD and their associated instrumented buoy in the appropriate logbook, specifying the instrumented buoy unique reference number and the date, time and geographical coordinates (decimalised degrees) of its deployment.

14bis. Flag CPCs shall ensure that the buoy owner records any deactivation of a previously activated buoy at sea in the logbook, including the unique instrumented buoy reference number, date, time, last geographical coordinates and the reasons for deactivation.

15. CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels reactivate instrumented buoys only once this has been authorised by the flag CPC and once the instrumented buoys have been brought back to port.
16. CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels fishing on DFADs annually submit the number of instrumented buoys assigned to them. This shall include instrumented buoys which have been lost, abandoned and/or discarded by 1° by 1° grid area and month strata and DFAD type.
17. CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels record fishing and fishing-related activities in association with DFADs using the specific data elements found in Annex II (DFAD) in the section of the “FAD-logbook”.
18. CPCs shall report any factual information showing reasonable grounds for suspicion of violations against paragraphs 10-17 to the IOTC Executive Secretary.

DFAD Management Plans

19. CPCs with flag vessel fishing on DFADs shall submit to the IOTC Executive Secretary, each year in their Annual Implementation Report, a DFAD Management Plan for the use of DFADs and associated technologies in accordance with the Guidelines for Preparation of FAD Management Plans as provided for DFADs in Annex I.
20. The Management Plans shall include initiatives or surveys to investigate and shall, to the extent possible, minimise the capture of juvenile tropical tuna, in particular bigeye tuna and yellowfin tuna, and non-target species associated with fishing on DFADs. Management Plans shall also include guidelines to prevent the abandonment, discarding and loss of DFADs.
21. The IOTC Compliance Committee and the IOTC Scientific Committee shall analyse the Management Plans and report the results of this analysis to the Commission.

DFAD Closure Period

22. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall provide advice and recommendations no later than 31 December 2023 on appropriate DFAD management options, in particular a DFAD closure, including the area, period and other details, with the objective of achieving a high probability of reducing fishing mortality of juvenile tropical tuna, in particular bigeye and yellowfin tuna. If the IOTC Scientific Committee concludes that it does not currently possess access to sufficient scientific data to provide recommendations to the Commission, it shall provide

advice on the data necessary for science-based recommendations.

23bis. In producing its advice and recommendations, the IOTC Scientific Committee shall take into account, *inter alia*:

- a) available IOTC fisheries data;
- b) experiences of implementing similar management measures with similar objectives, including DFAD closures, from other RFMOs; and
- c) fishing behaviours/patterns in the Indian Ocean, both historically and those anticipated as a consequence of the implementation of any new management measures, including a DFAD closure.

23ter. The Commission, at its 28th Session in 2024, shall consider the advice and recommendations, if any, from the IOTC Scientific Committee, and take a decision on the adoption of a DFAD closure in accordance with the received advice and recommendations.

23quater. If the IOTC Scientific Committee concludes that it does not have access to sufficient data to provide the recommendations referred to in paragraph 23 to the Commission, or the Commission, at its 28th Session in 2024, does not adopt a DFAD closure as provided by paragraph 23ter, CPCs shall, as a precautionary measure, as of 2024, ensure that their flag purse seine vessels fishing for bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack tunas do not fish on, deploy or maintain DFADs in the IOTC area of competence between 00:00hrs of 1 July and 00:00hrs UTC+4 11 September (72 days) each year (DFAD Closure Period). To prevent a disproportionate burden on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) whose economy depends on purse seine fisheries on DFADs, for SIDS, the DFAD Closure Period shall apply exclusively to the high seas of the IOTC area of competence.

23quinquies. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall review DFAD closures under paragraphs 23 to 23quater at its session in 2027.

23. CPCs shall ensure that, if their flag purse seine vessels and associated supply and support vessels retrieve the electronic equipment on their DFADs during the DFAD Closure Period, they retrieve the entire DFAD and keep it on board the vessel until landed in port or until the end of the DFAD Closure Period.
24. CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels do not deploy or maintain DFADs during a period of 15 days prior to the beginning of the DFAD Closure Period.
25. CPCs shall ensure that during the DFAD Closure Period, their flag vessels do not conduct any part of a set within five nautical miles of a DFAD, meaning that at no time may the vessel or its fishing gear or tenders be located within five nautical miles of a DFAD while a set is being conducted.
26. CPCs shall ensure that during the DFAD Closure Period their flag purse seine vessels or associated supply or support vessels are not used to aggregate fish, or move aggregated fish, including through the use of underwater lights and chumming.

DFAD Monitoring System

27. In order to support the monitoring of compliance with this Resolution and to improve scientific data collection flag CPCs shall ensure that the instrumented buoy supplier company or their vessels report daily information on all active DFADs in compiled form to the IOTC Executive Secretary with a time delay of at least 30 days, but no longer than 60 days. Such information shall contain:

- a) the geographical location (decimalised degrees);
- b) the date;
- c) the time;
- d) IOTC FAD Registry number;
- e) the name and IOTC registration number of the vessels assigned to the instrumented buoy.

28. The IOTC Compliance Committee, in support of the IOTC Secretariat, shall work on identifying administrative

arrangements and developing rules of procedure, with the aim of establishing a real-time DFAD Monitoring System (DFAD-MS) to be activated by 1 January 2026. The rules of procedure of the DFAD-MS may include, *inter alia*:

- a) minimum data standards and formats;
- b) rules on polling of instrumented buoys;
- c) cost recovery;
- d) cost sharing;
- e) measures to prevent tampering; and
- f) geofencing capabilities.

Recovery and Reporting of Lost, Discarded and Abandoned DFADs

29. CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels report, within **72 hours**, any loss of a DFAD, or parts of a DFAD, owned by them to the flag CPC and the IOTC Executive Secretary. If the loss of a DFAD occurs in the EEZ of a coastal CPC, the flag CPC shall additionally report this information to the relevant coastal CPC within **72 hours** of that loss. The report shall contain the following information:
- a) unique reference number of the instrumented buoy;
 - b) unique IOTC Vessel registration number and name of the vessel;
 - c) construction materials and dimension of the DFAD components, including the raft and subsurface structure;
 - d) time when the DFAD or part thereof was lost;
 - e) geographical position (degrees, minutes and seconds) where the DFAD or part thereof was lost;
 - f) measures taken to retrieve the DFAD or part thereof;
 - g) any perceived threats of the imminent beaching of the DFAD;
 - h) geographical position (degrees, minutes and seconds) of potential location of beaching; and
 - i) plans to recover beached DFADs and how the recovery costs will be collected and shared.
30. CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels, before reporting the loss of a DFAD, or part of a DFAD, in accordance with paragraph 29, attempt to locate and retrieve such a DFAD as soon as possible and carry equipment on board for these purposes.
31. CPCs shall ensure that if their flag vessels cannot retrieve an active DFAD before it enters the EEZs of a coastal CPC that they report the information provided in paragraph 329 to the relevant coastal CPC within **72 hours** after the DFAD has entered its EEZ.
32. CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels record additional information for all lost, discarded and abandoned DFADs in accordance with Annex II.

Non-entangling and Biodegradable DFADs

33. To reduce the entanglement of sharks, marine turtles or any other species, CPCs shall ensure that the design and construction of any DFADs to be deployed in the IOTC **area** of competence shall comply with the following specifications in accordance with Annex III:
- j) the use of mesh materials shall be prohibited for any part of a DFAD;
 - k) only non-entangling material and designs shall be used; and
 - l) the sub-surface structure shall be limited to a length of 50 meters.
34. To reduce the amount of synthetic marine debris, CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels:
- m) use only DFADs of biodegradability categories I, II and III, as defined in Annex III;

- n) no longer deploy any DFADs of category IV, as defined in Annex III;
 - o) as of 1 January 2026, use only DFADs of categories I and II, as defined in Annex III; and
 - p) as of 1 January 2027, use only DFADs of category I, as defined in Annex III.
35. CPCs are encouraged to share their experiences and scientific knowledge on the use of biodegradable materials in DFADs.
36. CPCs shall ensure that any observers deployed on their flag purse seine vessels collect detailed information on the DFAD design used and its conformity with the requirements set out in Annex III prior to the deployment of each DFAD.

DFAD Marking

37. Until a scheme to operationalise the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear (VGMFG) is endorsed by the Commission in accordance with the *Proposal of Terms of Reference for developing a scheme to operationalise the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear (VGMFG)*; IOTC-2020-CoC17-14, CPCs shall implement the measures provided for in the following paragraphs.
38. CPCs shall ensure that the instrumented buoy attached to the DFAD contains a physical, unique reference number marking (ID provided by the manufacturer of the instrumented buoy) and marked permanently and clearly visible the vessel's unique IOTC registration number.

38bis. As of 1st of January 2025, and with the specific objective to collect information on how to mitigate FAD loss and abandonment, in addition to the marking of the instrumented buoy, CPCs shall ensure that each DFAD is permanently marked with a specific IOTC DFAD unique identifier. This IOTC DFAD unique identifier shall be attributed by the Secretariat to the CPC who will communicate them to the master of the vessel. The marking shall be separate from the instrumented buoy. The standards for the individual marking of DFADs shall be developed by the IOTC Scientific Committee, following preparatory work by the ad hoc working group on FADs and in close collaboration with the Secretariat, at the latest at its 2024 session. These standards shall take into account the requirements of paragraph 34 on DFAD biodegradability to avoid the erasing or loss of the marking and the work to operationalise the *FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear (VGMFG)*; IOTC-2020-CoC17-14.

39. CPCs shall ensure that their flag vessels only use DFADs whose raft and the sub-surface structure underneath the raft have a permanent mark showing the unique vessel IOTC registration number attached to it. Each mark must be:
- q) at least 75mm x 65mm in size;
 - r) made of durable material; and
 - s) securely fixed to the sub-surface structure and not removable.
40. CPCs shall conduct inspections, both at sea and at port, to ensure that their flag vessels comply with gear marking and other requirements. CPCs shall report deployed DFADs found without required markings to the relevant flag CPC and the IOTC Executive Secretary. CPCs shall conduct port state inspections of fishing gear in accordance with the procedures set out in Annex B, paragraph e) of the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA), including with respect to conditions relating to the marking of fishing gear.

Data Reporting and Analysis

41. CPCs shall submit the data elements provided in Annex II to the Commission, consistent with the IOTC standards for the provision of catch and effort data, and these data shall be made available for analysis to the IOTC Scientific Committee on the aggregation level set by Resolution 15/02 (or any subsequent superseding Resolution), and under the confidentiality rules set by Resolution 12/02 (or any subsequent superseding Resolution).

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42. The IOTC Scientific Committee will analyse the information and data gathered under this Resolution, when available, and provide scientific advice on additional DFAD management options for consideration by the Commission, including recommendations on the number of DFADs to be operated and new and improved DFAD designs. When assessing the impact of DFADs on the dynamics and distribution of targeted fish stocks and associated species and on the ecosystem, the IOTC Scientific Committee will, where relevant, use all available data on abandoned, lost and discarded DFADs.

Purse Seine Vessels, Supply and Support Vessels

- 43.
44. Flag CPCs shall gradually reduce the number of supply and support vessels to one supply or support vessel per flag CPC by 1 July 2024. Flag CPCs shall submit information on the status of reducing the use of supply and support vessels in their annual Implementation Report.
45. Flag CPCs with more than two purse seine vessels actively operating in the IOTC area of competence each year shall ensure that, after 1 July 2024, no supply or support vessels deploy, maintain or use DFADs in the IOTC area of competence.

Entry Into Force

46. Without prejudice to paragraph 23quinquies, this Resolution shall be reviewed by the Commission, at the latest, at its Session in 2028 based on recommendations from the IOTC Scientific Committee.
47. The IOTC Scientific Committee shall undertake evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures detailed in this Resolution. If the IOTC Scientific Committee lacks sufficient scientific evidence which may prevent it from formulating management advice on DFADs, it shall provide advice to the Commission.
48. With the exception of paragraphs 23 to 23quinquies, which shall enter into force immediately after the adoption of this Resolution, this Resolution shall enter into force on 1 January 2024.
49. Without prejudice to paragraphs 44 and 45, CPCs not yet involved in purse seine fisheries using DFADs are exempt from the application of this Resolution for a period of 6 months from when their vessels deploy DFADs for the first time.
50. The IOTC Executive Secretary shall submit a report, on an annual basis, to the IOTC Compliance Committee on the level of compliance of each CPC with all the obligations under this Resolution.
51. Resolution 19/02, Procedures on a fish aggregating devices (FADs) management plan, including more detailed specification of catch reporting from FAD sets, and the development of improved FAD designs to reduce the incidence of entanglement of non-target species is superseded by this Resolution.

ANNEX I**GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF DRIFTING FISH AGGREGATING DEVICE (DFAD) MANAGEMENT PLANS**

To support obligations in respect of the DFAD Management Plan (DFAD–MP) to be submitted to the Executive Secretary by CPCs with fleets fishing in the IOTC area of competence, associated to DFADs, DFAD–MP should include:

1. An objective
2. Scope
 - Description of its application with respect to:
 - vessel-types and support and tender vessels
 - DFAD numbers and DFADs beacon numbers to be deployed
 - reporting procedures for DFAD deployment
 - incidental bycatch reduction and utilisation policy
 - consideration of interaction with other gear types
 - plans for monitoring and retrieval of lost DFADs
 - statement or policy on “DFAD ownership”
3. Institutional arrangements for management of the DFAD Management Plans:
 - institutional responsibilities
 - application processes for DFAD and /or DFAD beacons deployment approval
 - obligations of vessel owners and masters in respect of DFAD and /or DFAD beacons deployment and use
 - DFAD and/or DFADs beacons replacement policy
 - reporting obligations
4. DFAD construction specifications and requirements:
 - DFAD design characteristics (a description)
 - DFAD markings and identifiers, including DFADs beacons
 - lighting requirements
 - radar reflectors
 - visible distance
 - radio buoys (requirement for serial numbers)
 - satellite transceivers (requirement for serial numbers)
5. Applicable areas:
 - Details of any closed areas or periods e.g. territorial waters, shipping lanes, proximity to artisanal fisheries, etc.
6. Applicable period for the DFAD–MP.
7. Means for monitoring and reviewing implementation of the DFAD–MP.
8. DFAD logbook template (data to be collected specified in Annex II).

**ANNEX II
DATA COLLECTION FOR DFADS**

a)

- 1) For each activity on a DFAD, floating object and/or instrumented buoy, whether followed by a set or not, each fishing, supply vessel shall report the following information:
 - a) Vessel (name and registration number of the fishing, supply vessel)
 - b) Position of the floating object or the buoy at the time of the operation (as the geographic location of the event (Latitude and Longitude) in degrees and minutes)
 - c) Date (as DD/MM/YYYY, day/month/year)
 - d) Type of floating object (as defined in Table 1)
 - e) Type of activity with the floating object
 - f) In the case of floating objects that are DFADs, information on the design characteristics, including the presence of meshing elements, the biodegradability category, the materials and the dimensions. These information are mandatory at the time of DFAD deployment. They should be provided to the extent possible during DFAD visits (i.e. without having to lift the DFAD out of the water)
 - g) the instrumented buoy unique identifier
 - h) the type of buoy activity and, in the case of buoy deactivation, the cause (DFAD is either retrieved from the sea, abandoned or lost)
- 2) If the visit is followed by a set, the results of the set in terms of catch and bycatch, whether retained or discarded dead or alive. CPCs shall report these data aggregated per vessel at 1*1 degree (where applicable) and monthly to the Secretariat.
- 3) Classification of Floating Objects

Code	Description	Example	Type of impact
DFAD	Drifting FAD	Bamboo or metal raft	Fishing effort, habitat modification, pollution
AFAD	Anchored FAD	Anchored floating platform	Fishing effort, habitat modification, pollution
FALOG	Artificial log resulting from fishing activities	Nets, wreck, ropes	Fishing effort, pollution
HALOG	Artificial log resulting from other human activities	Wooden board, oil tank	Fishing effort, pollution
ANLOG	Natural log of animal origin	Dead whale	Fishing effort
VNLOG	Natural log of plant origin	Branches, palm leaf	Fishing effort

4) Classification of activities with floating object and buoys

Code	Name	Description
floating object	Deployment	Deployment of a FAD at sea
	Encounter	Random encounter (without fishing) of a floating object belonging to another vessel or not equipped with a buoy
	Visit	Visit (without fishing) of a floating object (known position, owned by the vessel)
	Consolidation	Deployment of a FAD on a floating object (e.g. to enhance floatability)
	Fishing	Fishing set on the floating object
	Retrieval	Retrieval of the floating object
	Loss	Unvoluntary end of use of the floating object (end of transmission of the buoy)
	Abandonment	Deliberate end of use of the floating object due to a case of force majeure or the floating object is unreachable (buoy still present and able to transmit)
BUOY	Deployment	Deployment (tagging) of a buoy on a floating object already drifting at sea without buoy or

	deployment of a FAD equipped with a buoy
Transfer	Replacement of the buoy owned by another vessel by a buoy of the vessel
Retrieval	Retrieval of the buoy on a floating object drifting at sea
Loss	Involuntary end of use of the buoy (end of transmission of the buoy)
Abandonment	Voluntary end of use of the buoy (buoy still able to transmit)

5) Classification of outcome of DFADs deployed

DFAD is deployed + buoy activated						
↓						
Buoy is operational						
Signal is active and buoy can be located				Signal is lost and buoy cannot be located		
DFAD can be retrieved		DFAD cannot be retrieved		DFAD cannot be located, so not retrievable		
Reason to deactivate buoy	DFAD and buoy are taken from the sea	Buoy owner decides not to recover the DFAD	Not reachable (i.e. in the EEZ of another country)	Buoy is robbed but signal is active	DFAD is robbed	Buoy is broken/technical issue
Final status of the DFAD	Retrieved FAD	Discarded DFAD	Abandoned DFAD	Lost DFAD		

ANNEX III
PRINCIPLES FOR NON-ENTANGLING AND
BIODEGRADABLE DESIGNS OF DFADS

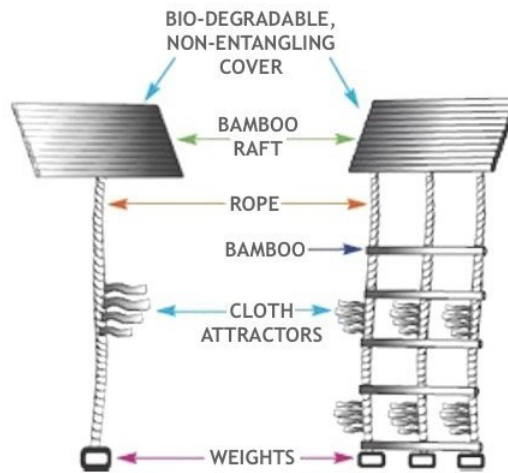


Figure: Example of a non-entangling, biodegradable FAD

1. The surface structure of the DFAD shall not be covered, or only covered with non-meshed material such as ropes or canvas sheets. No shade cloth or other entangling materials such as netting shall be used in the construction of the raft. The sub-surface structure of DFADs shall not exceed a length of 50 meters.
2. For the purposes of this Resolution, categories of DFAD biodegradability are:

Category I: All parts (i.e., raft and tail and floating components) of the DFAD, with the exception of materials used for the instrumented buoys, are built with biodegradable materials.

Category II: All elements (i.e., raft and tail) of the DFAD, with the exception of materials used for the instrumented buoys and floating components, are built with fully biodegradable materials.

Category III: The tail and other underwater hanging parts of the DFAD are fully biodegradable materials, whilst the raft and materials used for the instrumented buoys are made of non-biodegradable materials.

Category IV: All parts of the DFAD (i.e., raft, tail and instrumented buoy) are built partly or fully with non-biodegradable materials.