

OUTCOMES OF THE 25th SESSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

PREPARED BY: IOTC SECRETARIAT, 15 MAY 2023

PURPOSE

To inform participants at the 4th Meeting of the Working Group on FADs (WGFAD04) of the recommendations arising from the 25th Session of the IOTC Scientific Committee (SC) held from 5 -9 December 2022, specifically relating to the work of the WGFAD.

BACKGROUND

At the 25th Session of the SC, the SC noted and considered the recommendations made by the WPTT in 2022 that included requests to address the deficiencies in data collection, monitoring and reporting by CPCs, as well as to carry out targeted research and analysis on FADs.

Tropical tunas caught in the IOTC area of competence and under the WPTT mandate

Common name	Species	Code
Bigeye tuna	<i>Thunnus obesus</i>	BET
Skipjack tuna	<i>Katsuwonus pelamis</i>	SKJ
Yellowfin tuna	<i>Thunnus albacares</i>	YFT

The recommendations on the deficiencies in data collection, monitoring and reporting by CPCs in relation FADs will be discussed in paper IOTC–2023–WGFAD04-05 and are therefore not presented in this paper.

DISCUSSION

The following extracts from the SC25 Report (2022) are provided here for the consideration and action of the WGFAD04:

Update in the WGFAD03

84. The SC **NOTED** the report of the 3rd ad hoc working group meeting on FADs ([IOTC-2022-WGFAD03-R](#)). The meeting was attended by 111 participants (cf. 93 in 2021).
85. The SC **THANKED** the WGFAD for their work and the chair for the presentation which included a summary of the progress made on the terminology and definitions related to FAD-fishing as proposed by a Small Working Group on FAD definitions who worked intersessionally between the WGFAD and the WPDCS.
86. The SC **NOTED** the presentation of the three updated forms for reporting FAD-related data to the Secretariat, **NOTING** that the resolution of the data is higher than in the previous form 3FA (i.e., at vessel and operational levels) to better reflect the data requirements set in Resolutions 15/02 and 19/02.
87. The SC **NOTED** that the new 3FA forms would become available for download on the IOTC website in the forthcoming weeks and that they could be used for the 2023 data cycle, i.e., for reporting data for the statistical year 2022.
88. The SC **NOTED** that several FAD-related definitions were agreed on by the Small Working Group that was held after the WGFAD, but that no consensus was reached on the general definition of a FAD, **NOTING** further that two alternate definitions were proposed by the Small Working Group.
89. The SC **AGREED** that both definitions have some merit and that each one could be used if all FAD-related data are included as part of the submissions to the Secretariat, **NOTING** however that the definition derived from the EU-funded CECOFAD project (i.e., a FAD is a floating object constructed and deployed by fishers with the purpose to aggregate fish) makes a clear distinction between man-made rafts and natural floating objects, which is essential for some scientific analyses, e.g., to assess the contribution of FAD-fishing to marine pollution.

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90. The SC **REQUESTED** the WGFAD to discuss further the FAD definition and report to the WPEB and WPDCS in 2023.
 91. The SC **NOTED** that the implementation of time-area closures for FAD fishing has been discussed for several years at the IOTC while found to be an effective management tool in other oceans, e.g., to reduce fishing mortality on juveniles of tuna. The SC **ACKNOWLEDGED** the need to provide clear guidance to the Commission on this matter and **REQUESTED** the WGFAD to prioritise this undertaking.
 92. The SC **NOTED** that no agreement was reached by the WGFAD regarding the potential efficacy of time-area closure for FAD fishing in absence of scientific assessment on their location and duration, further **NOTING** that FAD purse seine fishing grounds are widely spread in the Indian Ocean as compared to other oceans (e.g., Atlantic Ocean).
 93. The WGFAD **NOTED** that some research is currently conducted by some CPCs to assess the feasibility and effects of seasonal closing of FAD fishing.
 94. **NOTING** that the WGFAD endorsed the need to move towards biodegradable FADs and **RECALLING** that the transitioning to biodegradable FADs is explicitly included in Resolution 19/02, the SC **NOTED** that more guidance might be required by the Commission so support the concrete implementation of biodegradable FADs.

RECOMMENDATION

That the WGFAD:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IOTC–2023–WGFAD04–03 which outlined the main outcomes of the 25th Session of the Scientific Committee, specifically related to the work of the WGFAD.
- 2) **CONSIDER** how best to progress these issues at the present meeting.