
RESOLUTION 23/09
ON A FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES (FADS) WORKING GROUP

Keywords: Fish aggregating device (FAD); working group on FADs; drifting FADs; anchored FADs; purse seine

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) encourages 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;

MINDFUL of the call upon States, either individually, collectively or through regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 67/79 on Sustainable fisheries to collect the necessary data in order to evaluate and closely monitor the use of large-scale fish aggregating devices and others, 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;

NOTING that the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing provides that States should compile fishery-related and other supporting scientific data relating to fish stocks covered by subregional or regional fisheries management organisations and provide them in a timely manner to the organisation;

RECOGNISING that all gears deployed to target resources under the competence of IOTC should be managed to ensure the sustainability of fishing operations;

AWARE that the Commission is committed to adopt conservation measures to reduce juvenile bigeye tuna and yellowfin tuna mortalities from fishing effort on Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs);

AWARE that the availability of adequate information is fundamental to carrying out the objectives of the IOTC Agreement laid down in its Article V;

NOTING that the IOTC Scientific Committee advised the Commission to conduct an investigation of the feasibility and impacts of a temporary FAD closure as well as other measures in the context of Indian Ocean fisheries and stocks;

NOTING that the IOTC Scientific Committee recommended that an ad hoc working group on FADs, drifting and anchored, be created to assess the consequences of the increasing number and technological developments of FADs in tuna fisheries and their ecosystems, in order to inform and advise on future FAD-related management options;

NOTING that ICCAT and WCPFC have already approved at their 2014 sessions the establishment of FAD working groups, and that the SC agreed that at least the ICCAT and IOTC working groups on FADs work jointly whenever possible;

NOTING that ad hoc Working Group on FADs was held three times after adoption of the relevant Resolution in 2015;

RECOGNISING that the 3rd ad hoc Working Group on FADs noted that there was some uncertainty as to the role and reporting structure and agreed that the working group should be technical in nature;

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

1. A Working Group on Fish Aggregating Devices (WGFAD) shall be established in accordance with Article XII.5 of the IOTC Agreement and Rule XIII.1 of the IOTC Rules of Procedure (2022).
2. The Terms of Reference of the WGFAD shall be those prescribed in Annex I.
3. The WGFAD shall meet annually as set out in the Annex unless otherwise decided by the Commission.

ANNEX I

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A WORKING GROUP ON FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES (WGFAD)

- 1) The WGFAD is a technical and scientific working group to assess the effectiveness of management measures for FADs and provide advice on other potential FAD management options.
- 2) The objectives of the WGFAD would be the following:
 - To collect and compile information about past and present numbers of buoys and FADs, changes in FAD technology and activities of supply vessels;
 - To review the requirements relating to the collection of data on FADs established through Resolution 23/01 and Resolution 23/02 (or any subsequent revisions), and to provide advice on potential amendments that may be useful;
 - To assess the developments in FAD technology notably with regards to:
 - changes in catchability due to technological improvements;
 - using FAD and buoys marking and identification as a tool for monitoring, tracking and control of FADs;
 - reducing the ecological impacts of FADs through improved design, such as non-entangling FADs and biodegradable material.
 - To evaluate ways to improve the use of information related to FADs in the process of stock assessment, particularly in the standardisation of catch per unit effort;
 - To identify potential management options, including the appropriate deployment limits, area closures, set limits, and characteristics of FADs;
 - To assess the consequences of FAD management options, on IOTC-managed species and on the pelagic ecosystems;
 - To share scientific and technical experience, knowledge and information on current practices and challenges in FAD associated fisheries.
- 3) The IOTC Secretariat should consider holding the WGFAD via an online format or using the meeting participation fund (MPF) to facilitate the participation of scientists from IOTC coastal state Members who would contribute significantly in the WGFAD.
- 4) The access to data used for the WGFAD will follow the confidentiality policy and procedures presented in Resolution 12/02 (or any subsequent superseding Resolution).
- 5) The WGFAD should be composed mainly by scientists and technical experts, but not limited to fisheries managers, fishing industry Representatives, administrators and other interested stakeholders.
- 6) The discussion should prioritise technical documents.
- 7) The WGFAD should bear in mind the elements of the Recommendation 12/15.
- 8) The WGFAD shall meet annually and shall report on its work to the Working Party on Tropical Tunas, Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch and Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics annual sessions, as appropriate. Relevant Working Parties should make recommendation, as appropriate, to the Scientific Committee.
- 9) The IOTC Commission, at its annual session, will review the progress and outcomes of the WGFAD through the Report of the Scientific Committee and might decide on possible suggested amendments of Resolution 23/01 and 23/02 (or any subsequent revisions), as appropriate, to apply appropriate FAD management measures.