

Report of the 8th IOTC Working Group on FADs

Online, 8 – 9 June 2026

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ACRONYMS

AFAD	Anchored Fish Aggregating Device
ALD	Abandoned, Lost or Discarded
CECOFAD	Catch, effort and ecosystem Impacts of FAD fishing
CMM	Conservation and Management Measures (of the IOTC; Resolutions and Recommendations)
CPCs	Contracting Parties and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties
CPUE	Catch per unit of effort
DFAD	Drifting Fish Aggregating Device
EMS	Electronic Monitoring Systems
EPO	Eastern Pacific Ocean
FAD	Fish Aggregating Device
FOB	Floating Object
IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
MP	Management Procedure
MSE	Management Strategy Evaluation
RFID	Radio Frequency Identifier
RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organisation
ROS	Regional Observer Scheme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TAC	Total Allowable Catch
WCPO	Western-Central Pacific Ocean

KEY DEFINITIONS

Bycatch	All species, other than the 16 species listed in Annex B of the IOTC Agreement, caught or interacted with by fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species in the IOTC area of competence.
Discards	Any species, whether an IOTC species or bycatch species, which is not retained onboard for sale or consumption.
Large-scale driftnets	Gillnets or other nets or a combination of nets that are more than 2.5 kilometres in length whose purpose is to enmesh, entrap, or entangle fish by drifting on the surface of, or in, the water column.

STANDARDISATION OF IOTC WORKING PARTY AND SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE REPORT TERMINOLOGY

SC16.07 (para. 23) The SC **ADOPTED** the reporting terminology contained in Appendix IV and **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission considers adopting the standardised IOTC Report terminology, to further improve the clarity of information sharing from, and among its subsidiary bodies.

HOW TO INTERPRET TERMINOLOGY CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT

Level 1: *From a subsidiary body of the Commission to the next level in the structure of the Commission:*

RECOMMENDED, RECOMMENDATION: Any conclusion or request for an action to be undertaken, from a subsidiary body of the Commission (Committee or Working Party), which is to be formally provided to the next level in the structure of the Commission for its consideration/endorsement (e.g., from a Working Party to the Scientific Committee; from a Committee to the Commission). The intention is that the higher body will consider the recommended action for endorsement under its own mandate, if the subsidiary body does not already have the required mandate. Ideally this should be task specific and contain a timeframe for completion.

Level 2: *From a subsidiary body of the Commission to a CPC, the IOTC Secretariat, or other body (not the Commission) to carry out a specified task:*

REQUESTED: This term should only be used by a subsidiary body of the Commission if it does not wish to have the request formally adopted/endorsed by the next level in the structure of the Commission. For example, if a Committee wishes to seek additional input from a CPC on a particular topic, but does not wish to formalise the request beyond the mandate of the Committee, it may request that a set action be undertaken. Ideally this should be task specific and contain a timeframe for the completion.

Level 3: *General terms to be used for consistency:*

AGREED: Any point of discussion from a meeting which the IOTC body considers to be an agreed course of action covered by its mandate, which has not already been dealt with under Level 1 or level 2 above; a general point of agreement among delegations/participants of a meeting which does not need to be considered/adopted by the next level in the Commission's structure.

NOTED/NOTING: Any point of discussion from a meeting which the IOTC body considers to be important enough to record in a meeting report for future reference.

Any other term: Any other term may be used in addition to the Level 3 terms to highlight to the reader of an IOTC report, the importance of the relevant paragraph. However, other terms used are considered for explanatory/informational purposes only and shall have no higher rating within the reporting terminology hierarchy than Level 3, described above (e.g., **CONSIDERED; URGED; ACKNOWLEDGED**).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 8th Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) Working Group on FADs (WGFAD) was held online on Zoom from 8-9 June 2026. A total of 86 participants (72 at the 7th Session in 2025) attended the Session. The list of participants is provided in [Appendix I](#).

The 2026 Working Group on FADs meeting opened with the election of Dr Maitane Grande (EU, Spain) as the new chair. The group reviewed FAD data submissions collected through the 3DA form and discussed the development of validation tools to improve data quality. Key outcomes included agreement to develop FAD marking guidelines, standardise buoy identification formats in the DFAD registry, improve data collection and management systems for anchored FADs, and discussions on the biodegradable material standards to guide future implementation.

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The 8th Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) Working Group on FADs (WGFAD) was held online on Zoom from 8-9 June 2026. A total of 86 participants (72 at the 7th Session in 2025) attended the Session. The list of participants is provided in [Appendix I](#). The meeting was opened by the IOTC Secretariat.
2. The IOTC Secretariat informed participants that the Chair of the IOTC WGFAD, Dr Gorka Merino, has confirmed that, for personal reasons, he is no longer able to serve as Chair. As such, a new Chair will need to be elected to lead the meeting. The WGFAD **THANKED** Dr Merino for his leadership and contributions to this Working Group over the past four years.

2. ELECTION OF THE CHAIR OF THE WGFAD FOR THE NEXT BIENNIUM (IOTC SECRETARIAT)

3. In accordance with the Rules of Procedure (2023), the WGFAD **CALLED** for nominations for the position of Chairperson of the IOTC WGFAD for the next biennium. Dr Maitane Grande (EU.SPAIN) was nominated, seconded and elected as the Chairperson of the WGFAD for the next biennium.
4. The WGFAD also **NOTED** that the position of Vice-Chair (or Co-Chair) is currently vacant. The WGFAD **AGREED** that the option for appointing another Vice-Chair (or Co-Chair) will remain open for the next meeting if a suitable candidate becomes available.

3. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SESSION

5. The WGFAD **ADOPTED** the Agenda provided in [Appendix II](#). The documents presented to the WGFAD are listed in [Appendix III](#).

4. THE IOTC PROCESS: OUTCOMES, UPDATES AND PROGRESS

4.1 Outcomes of the 28th Session of the Scientific Committee

6. The WGFAD **NOTED** paper [IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-03](#) which summarizes the outcomes the report of the 28th Session of the Scientific Committee (SC28; [IOTC–2025–SC28–R](#)), particularly the recommendations specifically related to the work of the WGFAD:

(Para 198) The SC **NOTED** the report of the 7th Working Group meeting on FADs (IOTC-2025-WGFAD07-R). The meeting was attended by 72 participants (90 participants in WGFAD06 respectively in 2024).

(Para 199) The SC **NOTED** the recommendations from the WGFAD.

(Para 200) **NOTING** that the majority of the structure of most FADs are submerged underwater meaning that reading their unique FAD identifier can be challenging, the SC **NOTED** the WGFAD's recommendation to consider the following while developing a marking scheme: 1) including redundancy or checkbits in DFAD (and buoy) identifiers to allow errors to be identified; 2) embedding QR codes and Radio Frequency Identifiers (RFIDs) in buoys and potentially DFADs so that they can be easily scanned to avoid errors with manual input of the identifiers; 3) create standards for including the ID marking on DFADs, focusing on putting them as close to the surface as possible to facilitate reading their ID; and 4) assess the feasibility of marking bio-FADs.

(Para 201) There was no discussion during the SC regarding this point.

7. The WGFAD **AGREED** to prioritise the development of FAD marking guidelines, as requested by Resolution 24/02, integrating at-sea operational experience and lessons learned from previous

research initiatives. This process should align with and build upon ongoing work in other RFMOs and expert groups, such as the ICES-FAO Working Group on Fishing Technology and Fish Behaviour. The WGFAD **UNDERLINED** that particular attention should be given to ensuring that marking approaches avoid duplication, are practical, scalable, and supportive of long-term FAD traceability.

4.2 Outcomes of the 30th Session of the Commission and previous decisions of the Commission in relation to FADs

8. The WGFAD **NOTED** paper [IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-04](#) which summarizes the outcomes of the 30th Session of the Commission. The WGFAD **NOTED** the Commission has received an update on the progress made to the development of a DFAD register, as required by the [Resolution 24/02](#) (on Management of Drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) in the IOTC Area of Competence) that was of particular interest to the WGFAD.

5. REVIEW OF DATA AVAILABLE AT THE SECRETARIAT ON FADS

9. The WGFAD **NOTED** paper [IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-05](#) which provides Preliminary evaluation of IOTC Form 3DA implementation and proposed improved dataflow, with the following abstract provided by the authors:

“This paper presents an initial assessment of Form 3DA submissions under the IOTC Drifting Fish Aggregating Device (DFAD) reporting framework. The analysis focuses on reporting coverage, data completeness, internal consistency, and the extent to which submitted information can support the monitoring and management of DFAD activities in the Indian Ocean purse seine fishery. Rather than providing a general overview of the fishery itself, the paper evaluates the reporting system as an operational monitoring tool: what was submitted, how usable the data are, what patterns can already be described, and what practical improvements could strengthen future reporting”. See the paper for the full abstract.

10. The WGFAD **NOTED** that the use of an ISO date-time format (YYYY-MM-DDTHH:MMZ+TZ) could reduce issues associated with spreadsheet software automatically modifying date and time fields. The WGFAD **NOTED** that such an approach could remove the need for separating month and year fields. The Working Party further **NOTED** that pre-submission validation could facilitate the identification of formatting errors, thereby reducing the level of post-submission processing required.
11. The WGFAD **RECOGNISED** that Form 3DA is one of the most complex reporting forms required by the IOTC, comparable in complexity to the ROS reporting framework.
12. The WGFAD **NOTED** that changes to reporting forms are currently documented through change logs available on various information-sharing platforms. However, the WGFAD **SUGGESTED** that the Secretariat consider mechanisms to make such changes more visible to CPCs.
13. The WGFAD **SUPPORTED** the Secretariat's proposed timeline for updating Form 3DA and the associated codelists in advance of their consideration by the WPDCS.
14. The WGFAD **REQUESTED** the Secretariat to continue intersessional efforts to develop updated and standardised guidelines for Form 3DA, to be presented at the WPDCS. This revision should include: (i) standardisation of date and time formats; (ii) inclusion of vessel type classification; (iii) definition of biodegradability categories; (iv) clarification of mesh size reporting; and (v) revision and harmonisation of activity categories related to buoys and FADs. The WGFAD **REITERATED** the importance of the Secretariat's commitment to supporting CPCs before, during and after data submission to ensure that the highest possible data quality is achieved. The WGFAD **NOTED** that

such support may be provided through informal exchanges aimed at resolving reporting issues or, where necessary, through requests for resubmission.

15. The WGFAD **ACKNOWLEDGED** the need for further development of logical validation procedures, particularly with respect to the structure and measurement of FAD components. The WGFAD **REQUESTED** that the Secretariat improve the guidance available for measurement-related fields to support consistent reporting among CPCs.

6. REVIEW OF COMMISSION REQUESTS TO THE SC ON FADs (ALL)

6.1 *Resolution 24/02 On Management of Drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (DFADs) in the IOTC Area of Competence*

16. The WGFAD **NOTED** the presentation: [IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-10Presentation](#) by the developer on the state of play of the DFAD register application (e-DFAD). The WGFAD was reminded of the timeline of the application development and **NOTED** that the application is now in the mandatory testing phase, which has been extended to the end of June, with the formal launch of the register starting on 1 July.
17. The WGFAD **NOTED** that during the pilot and mandatory testing phases, feedback received from buoy owners and companies has been incorporated into the application.
18. The WGFAD **NOTED** that a number of open questions on the functioning of the register were raised and discussed at the Commission meeting in May. These questions relate to, for example, the deactivation coordinates of retrieved buoys and the exchange of FADs and buoys between vessels. The WGFAD **NOTED** that the questions are mostly related to the interpretation of Resolution 24/02 and, as such, there is no consensus at the Commission. These questions have been deferred to the WPICMM.
19. The WGFAD also **DISCUSSED** the buoy identifier format and **NOTED** that e-DFAD currently accepts any format (e.g., 123456, BOYA-123456, T8X123456, 4767) in the Buoy Identifier field. Experience (particularly the submissions of Form 3DA) shows that unrestricted formats create significant difficulties in identifying buoys. For example, FOB transfers, which must be reported in e-DFAD, require the exact UDI or buoy identifier as previously registered, if a UDI is not visible on the DFAD, the only identifier available is the Buoy ID. Without an adopted buoy identifier reporting standard, inconsistent formats will inevitably block legitimate operations and disrupt fishing activities.
20. The WGFAD **NOTED** the importance of a harmonised buoy ID coding system. To support the implementation of a standardised system for recording buoy IDs in the FAD registry, the WGFAD **AGREED** that the buoy identifier format should reflect what is marked on the buoys (i.e. referential number provided by buoy providers): "buoy model" followed by "buoy serial number" (e.g., MGO123456, ISD+498323, T8E115370059). The system should provide clear guidelines with fixed data entry schemes. The WGFAD **REQUESTED** the Secretariat to collect and maintain a list of manufacturers and models with the details of the serial number length for each buoy model. The WGFAD further **REQUESTED** the Secretariat to cross-check the list of buoy models and the specifications of their serial number formats with buoy providers, to ensure proper encoding within the FAD registry and to allow validation of the data provided.
21. The WGFAD **ACKNOWLEDGED** the DFAD management plans submitted by CPCs with drifting fish aggregating devices (DFADs) for 2027 ([Appendix IV](#)).

6.2 *Resolution 23/01 on the management of anchored fish aggregating devices (AFADs)*

22. The WGFAD **NOTED** Resolution [23/01](#) requires the SC to provide a scientific review of the AFAD management plan by CPCs.

23. The WGFAD **ACKNOWLEDGED** the AFAD management plans submitted by CPCs with anchored fish aggregating devices (AFADs) for 2026, namely the European Union (Mayotte and Réunion), Indonesia, Maldives, and Mauritius ([Appendix V](#)). While acknowledging that these plans are generally comprehensive, the WGFAD **NOTED** that data submissions from some fleets remain insufficient, attributing this to challenges faced by countries with small-scale fisheries. The WGFAD **SUGGESTED** that solutions be explored to support these countries in improving data submission.
24. The WGFAD **NOTED** ongoing data gaps in anchored FAD (AFAD) reporting due to insufficient data collection and management systems in some CPCs and **REQUESTED** CPCs with AFAD fisheries to develop and implement robust AFAD data management systems where required, with support, through collaboration with the IOTC Secretariat or via capacity-building activities.

7. REVIEW OF ANY NEW INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON FADs (ALL)

25. The WGFAD **NOTED** paper [IOTC2026-WGFAD08-06](#), which presented preliminary assessment of the behavior of drifting FADs during stranding events and costs of a recovery vessel at sea, with the following abstract provided by the authors:

“Each year, drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (dFADs) used by purse-seine tuna fleets are lost or abandoned at sea, and some of them strand in coastal areas. We present, for the first time, experiments that simulate the stranding of different dFAD types characteristic of the Indian, Atlantic and Pacific Oceans in a non-sensitive coastal site, to better understand the mechanisms of interaction of their structures with the seabed. The submerged part of the dFADs, especially the ballast at the lower end, generated impacts on the bottom even when the materials were biodegradable. This information is important to improve dFAD designs if the goal is to minimize their physical impact on sensitive habitats such as coral reefs. We also examine the potential operating costs of an at sea FAD retrieval programme to reduce the number of dFADs reaching the coast, which could complement existing land-based FAD recovery efforts”

26. The WGFAD **NOTED** that the study provided a preliminary evaluation of the operational and economic aspects of recovering dFADs at sea before they strand, using dedicated recovery operations as a mitigation measure. The study examined the behaviour of dFADs during simulated stranding events, identified key aspects to improve dFAD designs and estimated the costs associated with deploying recovery vessels.
27. The WGFAD **NOTED** preventing dFADs from reaching sensitive coastal habitats through at-sea recovery may substantially reduce environmental impacts. However, the WGFAD **NOTED** that the analysis also demonstrated that such operations can be operationally challenging and expensive.
28. The WGFAD **NOTED** that current dFAD coastal recovery programmes achieve only limited recovery rates, with approximately 100 dFADs recovered annually in the Indian Ocean, highlighting the need to explore alternative options.
29. The WGFAD **NOTED** the high operational costs and environmental footprint associated with the dFAD recovery vessel and **QUESTIONED** whether this might justify the use of environmental offset schemes as an alternative mitigation strategy. As an example, fleets could contribute to programmes that support stranded dFAD recovery (e.g., the PS industry fund in the Pacific Ocean).
30. The WGFAD **NOTED**, however, that offset mechanisms should be considered as one element within a broader mitigation framework rather than as a standalone solution. It was **NOTED** that the environmental impacts associated with dFAD strandings, particularly abrasion and physical damage to coral reefs and other sensitive habitats, may occur before the devices can be recovered on land.

Consequently, the WGFAD **NOTED** that preventing strandings through avoidance measures or recovery at sea was considered preferable whenever operationally feasible.

31. The WGFAD **NOTED** that the study also investigated the impacts on coastal areas of stranded dFADs by simulating stranding events in a rocky shore in the Bay of Biscay. The study highlighted that hard parts of the dFAD structure as ballast can cause abrasion. The WGFAD **NOTED** that caution should be exercised when applying the findings of this study, conducted in temperate rocky-bottom habitats, to tropical reef ecosystems and that future studies should evaluate how ecological and habitat differences may affect results.
32. The discussion emphasized that mitigation actions could be viewed within a hierarchical framework, similar to the mitigation tiers commonly applied to bycatch management. The WGFAD **NOTED** that these approaches (the use of biodegradable dFADs, dFAD recovery at sea prior to stranding, FAD recovery after stranding, limits to the total number of dFADs, dFAD sharing systems, and offsets) are not mutually exclusive and that an effective management strategy would likely involve a combination of measures.
33. The WGFAD also **HIGHLIGHTED** that the transition towards fully biodegradable dFAD designs may significantly reduce the long-term environmental impacts of strandings because the materials would degrade more rapidly before reaching the coast. Nevertheless, it was **NOTED** that even biodegradable dFADs may still damage coral reefs through physical contact and abrasion before degradation occurs. The WGFAD, thus, **NOTED** the importance of combining biodegradable materials with improved bioFAD designs (e.g., for the ballast material) and reduced-size dFADs.
34. The WGFAD also **NOTED** the economic dimension of large-scale dFAD recovery programmes. It was **NOTED** that in order to offset the recovery expenses thousands of dFAD buoys need to be recovered each year, creating substantial logistical and financial challenges for industry. The WGFAD **NOTED** that analyses should also focus on maximizing the use of existing support vessels and/or use other fleets (e.g., longline) to recover FADs in addition to the recovery vessel project. It was also **NOTED** that support vessels are already recovering some dFADs as part of their normal operations.
35. The WGFAD further **NOTED** the dFADs are more difficult to locate and recover once their buoys are deactivated. In this context, it was **NOTED** that management approaches in other tuna RFMOs (i.e., IATTC) prohibit buoy deactivation when dFADs drifts out of the fishing ground, but excludes such buoys from active buoy limits, thereby facilitating subsequent monitoring and recovery efforts.
36. The WGFAD **SUGGESTED** that recovery efforts could be optimized by focusing on scientifically identified high-risk areas, dFAD corridors, or where dFAD strandings are most likely to occur, taking into account oceanographic conditions, dFAD density, bathymetry, and habitat vulnerability.
37. The WGFAD **NOTED** paper [IOTC2026-WGFAD08-07](#), which summarises the 2nd International Workshop on Biodegradable drifting Fish Aggregating Device, with the following abstract provided by the authors:

“The Second International Workshop on Biodegradable Fish Aggregating Devices (bio-FADs) was organized by the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) in San Sebastián, Spain, in December 2025 as a follow-up to the first workshop in 2024. This report summarizes the main workshop presentations, discussions, and conclusions, with the goal of informing ongoing research, supporting fisheries management processes, and facilitating the transition toward more environmentally sustainable drifting FADs (dFADs) in tropical tuna fisheries. The event

brought together the fishing industry, tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) representatives, and scientists from the three tropical oceans. Its primary objective was to review progress in biodegradable FAD development and adoption, and to assess fisher and manufacturer practical challenges in implementing these designs. Particular attention was given to lessons learned from recent at-sea trials, advances in biodegradable materials and biodegradable FAD design, and the operational performance of bio-FAD prototypes in different ocean regions. Participants also aimed to identify remaining technical and operational barriers that may slow the transition toward fully biodegradable FADs, including issues related to material performance, durability, bio-based material certification standards, and large-scale implementation by fishing fleets”

38. The WGFAD **NOTED** that the Second International Workshop on Biodegradable FADs, held in Spain in December 2025, reviewed progress in biodegradable dFAD development and implementation, including results from recent trials, advances in materials and designs, and remaining technical and operational challenges.
39. The WGFAD **NOTED** that current biodegradability certification schemes for biobased materials often focus on waste management and marine litter prioritizing high degradation rates, rather than integrating the adequate performance requirements and appropriate degradation requirements timelines for biobased and biodegradable fishing gear, and highlighted the need for appropriate standards to support the evaluation and recommendation of biobased fishing devices. The WGFAD **HIGHLIGHTED** the need for a revision of existing biodegradability standards to guide their implementation.
40. The WGFAD **NOTED** paper [IOTC2026-WGFAD08-08presentation](#), which summaries the outcomes of the last International workshop on mitigation of dFAD loss and abandonment in the Pacific.
41. The WGFAD **NOTED** the outcomes of the international workshop on mitigating dFAD loss and abandonment and their impacts, held in French Polynesia in early 2026. The workshop addressed the current status of dFAD loss and abandonment, data collection on dFAD strandings and environmental impacts, and pathways towards more sustainable dFAD fisheries with special focus on dFAD recovery programs (i.e. coastal FAD recovery initiatives and FAD Watch, buoy position-sharing schemes, incentive-based recovery systems, and dedicated recovery vessels).
42. The WGFAD **NOTED** the review by the workshop of definitions for lost, abandoned, stranded and discarded dFADs and the proposal of a series of indicators to address the performance of dFAD recovery programs (i.e. economic, ecological, social, governance and fishery monitoring).
43. The WGFAD **NOTED** discussions on the role of buoy manufacturers in supporting dFAD recovery programs, including commitments to cooperate across initiatives, continue monitoring deactivated buoys where feasible (without being accounted for within buoy limits), develop agreements for data sharing, and improve software compatibility among different buoy systems that can promote buoy reuse.
44. The WGFAD **NOTED** that while common platforms for visualising buoy positions across providers already exist and have been used under the FADwatch programme in the Indian Ocean, challenges remain regarding software access, integration of more complex data such as echosounder information, and the establishment of streamlined agreements with buoy providers.
45. The WGFAD **NOTED** that dedicated FAD recovery vessels remain under consideration in the Pacific Ocean where supply vessels are not allowed, with governance, operational arrangements, and feasibility yet to be determined. The WGFAD further **NOTED** that a combination of recovery

approaches, including industry-led, various vessel-based and coastal recovery initiatives, including the collection of FADs from identified FAD hotspots will likely be required.

46. The WGFAD **NOTED** that the workshop differentiated between "abandoned" and "discarded" dFADs. The WGFAD **NOTED** general agreement both in the Pacific and Indian Oceans that discarding implies deliberate deployment without the intention of recovery, such as leaving the dFAD without a buoy, whereas abandonment refers to a remote deactivation of a buoy generally due to impossibility of recovery (e.g. out of the fishing grounds), but that was deployed with the intention of being retrieved. The WGFAD **HIGHLIGHTED** that the distinction between abandonment and discarding may have important legal and management implications and that the IOTC's definitions are already included in the Resolution 24/02. The WGFAD **RECALLED** that extensive discussions on these definitions had already taken place in previous years, leading to their incorporation into IOTC Resolution 24/02.
47. The WPTT **NOTED** that the definition of a dFAD still differ among tuna RFMOs and that efforts are ongoing within the IOTC Secretariat, in coordination with other tuna RFMOs, to develop a harmonized glossary of IOTC fisheries related terminology, including plans to present updated definitions to the WPCMM. The IOTC Secretariat, will review available terminology for the update if required of the data form and standards for collecting and reporting the information of the recovery of abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear (i.e. form 3ALD) in Resolution 24/11. The WGFAD **RECALLED** that extensive discussions on dFAD-related terminology had already taken place in previous years, resulting in the development of definitions, including that of a dFAD, which were subsequently incorporated into IOTC Resolution 24/02.
48. The WGFAD **NOTED** ongoing Secretariat work to develop reporting forms and code lists for ALDFG and highlighted the importance of clear definitions and standardised methodologies to support consistent reporting of FAD-related gear.
49. The WGFAD **NOTED** stakeholder consultations on barriers and enablers to FAD recovery and **NOTED** that regulatory requirements were identified both as a driver of recovery and as a constraint. The WGFAD **NOTED** that proposed changes to regulations included mandatory FAD retrieval requirements as a percentage of the total number of FAD deployments. The WGFAD **NOTED** that licensing arrangements under the PNA Vessel Day Scheme in place in the Western Pacific can complicate FAD retrieval as under that agreement, FAD retrieval is thought to constitute a fishing activity meaning that additional fishing days would need to be paid for which is not considered to be cost effective for vessels. The WGFAD **NOTED** the need for greater regulatory clarity regarding retrieval activities, particularly during vessel transit within EEZs where fishing is not occurring.
50. The WGFAD **NOTED** the ongoing work of the Secretariat on developing a glossary of important terms in IOTC fisheries including the definition of a 'fishing event' which it intends to present to the WPDCS. The WGFAD **NOTED** that the final intention would be to discuss this glossary and any recommendations relating to it from the WPDCS further at FAO's Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics (CWP) in 2027 in an effort to standardise these definitions across all RFMOs as currently CWP's definitions are very limited. The importance of aligning terminology and definitions across RFMOs to improve consistency and comparability was emphasised. The WGFAD **RECALLED** its previous review of FAD definitions, which resulted in updated definitions being incorporated into Resolution 24/02, and supported efforts to advance agreed definitions through the CWP process.
51. The WGFAD **NOTED** different complementary options to mitigate FAD impacts such as FAD biodegradability, FAD recovery at sea and on land, among others. The WGFAD **AGREED** to develop a

cost-effective analysis including ecological indicators (such as the carbon footprint) for the different mitigation alternatives for both FAD recovery at sea and on land. This should also include the possibility to use supply vessels operating in the area and other fishing vessels (other gears). In addition, the WGFAD **AGREED** that this cost-effective and feasibility analysis should be expanded to other alternatives such as off-set mechanism.

52. The WGFAD **NOTED** paper [IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-09](#), which summaries the SEARCULAR Project: Developing New Bio-FAD Designs, with the following abstract provided by the authors:

“The widespread use of drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (dFADs) in tropical tuna fisheries has increased fishing efficiency but also generated significant marine litter due to persistent plastic materials used in dFAD construction. The SEARCULAR project aims to develop and validate biodegradable dFADs (bio-FADs) as a sustainable alternative to conventional dFADs, which are made primarily of plastic. This study combines the analysis of a global dataset build on scientific research and industry-based surveys (>1,800 deployments), and the identification of alternative materials to support the eco-design of bio-FADs. Three prototype models were co-developed by researchers, NGO and the industry stakeholders through participatory workshops and refined through semi-controlled trials, identifying key challenges related to material durability and structural performance. Large-scale field testing starting in June 2026, and involving 150 BIOFAD deployments, will provide a further assessment of their operational performance under real fishing conditions. These results support the transition towards bio-FADs while maintaining fishing efficiency”

53. The WGFAD **NOTED** the development of experimental dFAD designs that depart from some traditional design elements. The WGFAD **NOTED** that certain key components, such as the main rope, have been retained due to their perceived role as fish attractors, while other elements, including surface rafts, have been removed from submerged experimental dFAD designs to reduce stress on materials and increase dFAD longevity. The WGFAD **NOTED** that the designs draw on lessons from previous trials and incorporate both established and novel approaches, highlighting the importance of collaboration between industry and scientists in balancing operational needs with innovation.
54. The WGFAD **NOTED** the use of biodegradable floating materials in dFAD construction. The WGFAD **NOTED** that testing is underway using both organic materials such as bamboo and paulownia wood and bioplastic materials, although their operational performance remains under evaluation. The WGFAD **NOTED** that the bioplastic materials have been certified as biodegradable and meet the requirements of the highest category of biodegradable FADs.
55. The WGFAD **NOTED** concerns regarding the large-scale availability and supply of the alternative biodegradable materials. The WGFAD **NOTED** that biodegradable dFADs, due to their high degradation rate, can reduce associated impacts. However, if stranding still occurs in coral reefs, they could cause damage to corals. The WGFAD **NOTED** that dFAD designs could be further improved, for example by reducing their size and weight, which will reduce these impacts and be complemented with other mitigation measures, such as dFAD recovery initiatives.
56. The WGFAD **NOTED** that biodegradable dFAD designs reduce associated impacts due to their higher degradation rates. However, dFAD designs could be further improved, particularly to minimize impacts on coral reefs if stranded, facilitate dFAD recovery, and incorporate life cycle assessment (LCA) approaches. The WGFAD **NOTED** that the review of biodegradability standards for biobased materials should be conducted to guide the potential implementation of these materials.

57. The WGFAD **NOTED** that the operational lifespan of biodegradable components still remains to be assessed and will be evaluated during subsequent phases of the project.
58. The WGFAD **NOTED** that dFAD designs used in the Indian Ocean are generally less complex than those used in other oceans, which may facilitate the testing and implementation of innovative design solutions.
59. The WGFAD **NOTED** insights from the FAD-watch recovery programme being implemented in Seychelles. The WGFAD **NOTED** that many of the recovered dFADs contained lightweight galvanised metal frames, which facilitated retrieval compared to some alternative materials, including certain biodegradable components. However, the WGFAD **NOTED** that Resolution 24/02 requires all dFAD components, including frames, to be constructed from biodegradable materials by 2029, highlighting the need to identify suitable alternatives that also support efficient recovery operations.
60. The WGFAD **NOTED** that the ongoing trials aim to explore approaches to reduce the impacts of FADs when they drift into coastal areas. The WGFAD **NOTED** that the next phase of the project will involve the deployment of 150 biodegradable dFADs under commercial fishing conditions by industry partners, with individual alphanumeric identification codes assigned to each dFAD developed by the project to facilitate the tracking and monitoring of the experimental units. These project-specific codes are additional to, and distinct from, the official FAD identification numbers assigned by the IOTC Secretariat through the dFAD Register. The WGFAD further **NOTED** that all experimental bioFADs will also carry the official IOTC FAD Register identification number, in accordance with existing IOTC requirements. The additional project-specific marking system is intended solely to improve the monitoring and traceability of the experimental bioFADs throughout the project.
61. The WGFAD **NOTED** the importance of avoiding multiple, potentially conflicting labelling schemes and AGREED to review FAD marking guidelines. The WGFAD **NOTED** that future marking systems may need to serve multiple objectives, including unique identification, lifecycle tracking, and the provision of information on characteristics such as biodegradable category, and that general guidance on FAD marking could be developed as part of this work.

8. WRAP UP, SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

62. The WGFAD noted that the Chair provided a brief summary of the meeting discussions and agreed on the number of requests made by the group throughout the meeting.

9. REMARKS AND CLOSING OF THE 8TH SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP ON FADS

63. The report of the 8th Session of the Working Group on FADs (IOTC–2026–WGFAD08–R) was **ADOPTED** by correspondence.

APPENDIX I
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Chairpersons					
Title	First name	Last name	Affiliation	Contracting Parties & Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties (CPC)	E-mail
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Mr	Hussain	Sinan		-
Mr	Vincent	Lucas		-
Mr	Martin	Purves		-
Mr	Shiham			-
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APPENDIX II
AGENDA FOR THE 8TH WORKING GROUP ON FADS

Date: 8 - 9 June 2026

Location: Zoom

Venue: Virtual

Time: 12:00 – 16:00 (Seychelles time)

Chair: Dr. Maitane Grande (European Union)

- 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING** (Chair)
- 2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SESSION** (Chair)
- 3. THE IOTC PROCESS: OUTCOMES, UPDATES, AND PROGRESS**
- 4. REVIEW OF ANY ADDITIONAL DATA AVAILABLE AT THE SECRETARIAT ON FADS** (IOTC Secretariat)
- 5. COMMISSION REQUESTS TO THE SC ON FADS** (All)
 - 5.1. Resolution 24/02 On Management of Drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (DFADs) in the IOTC Area of Competence
 - 5.2. Resolution 23/01 on the management of anchored fish aggregating devices (AFADs)
- 6. REVIEW OF ANY NEW INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON FADS** (ALL)
- 7. WRAP UP, SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS** (Chair & IOTC Secretariat)
- 8. REMARKS AND CLOSING OF THE 8th SESSION OF THE AD-HOC WORKING GROUP ON FADS** (Chair)

APPENDIX III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Document	Title
IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-01a	Agenda of the 8 th Working Group on FADs Meeting
IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-01b	Annotated agenda of the 8 th Working Group on FADs Meeting
IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-02	List of documents of the 8 th Working Group on FADs Meeting
IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-03	Outcomes of the 28th Session of the Scientific Committee (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-04	Outcomes of the 30 th Session of the Commission (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-05	Preliminary evaluation of IOTC Form 3DA implementation and proposed improved dataflow (IOTC Secretariat)
IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-06	Preliminary assessment of the behaviour of drifting FADs during stranding events and costs of a recovery vessel at sea (Murua J)
IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-07	2nd International Workshop on Biodegradable drifting Fish Aggregating Device (Moreno G, Escalle L, Zudaire I, Roman M, Murua J, Morán G, Grande M, Chassot E, Ashigbui B, Arantzamendi L, Parreño D, Recio L, Restrepo V, Murua H)
IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-08Presentation	Report from the international workshop on mitigation of dFAD loss and abandonment in the Pacific Ocean (Escalle L)
IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-09	SEARCULAR Project: Developing New Bio-FAD Designs (Zudaire I, Moreno G, Grande M, Uranga J, Escalle L, Murua H, Cabeza O)
IOTC-2026-WGFAD08-10Presentation	eDFAD: State of play (IOTC Secretariat)

APPENDIX IV

SUMMARY OF COMPLIANCE WITH AND COLLECTION OF THE DRIFTING FAD MANAGEMENT PLANS

Summary of compliance with and collection of the drifting fish aggregating devices management plans Provide comprehensive review of the DFAD management plan											
Annex II Sections		EU-Spain	EU-France	EU-Italy	CPC						
					Kenya	Korea	Mauritius	Seychelles	Oman	Tanzania	
Objective		Y		Y	Did not submit	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Scope		Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Description of its application with respect to		Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	vessel-types and support and tender vessels	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	DFAD numbers and DFADs beacon numbers to be deployed	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	reporting procedures for DFAD deployment	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	incidental bycatch reduction and utilisation policy	N		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	consideration of interaction with other gear types			Y		N/A	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	plans for monitoring and retrieval of lost DFADs	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	statement or policy on “DFAD ownership”			Y		Y	Y	Y	Y		
Institutional arrangements for management of the DFAD Management Plans				Y							
	institutional responsibilities	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	application processes for DFAD and /or DFAD beacons deployment approval	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	obligations of vessel owners and masters in respect of DFAD and /or DFAD beacons deployment and use			Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	DFAD and/or DFADs beacons replacement policy	N		Y		Y	Y			Y	N
	reporting obligations	Y*		Y		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y
DFAD construction specifications and requirements											
	DFAD design characteristics (a description)	Y*		Y		Y*	Y	Y	Y*	Y	Y*
	DFAD markings and identifiers, including DFADs beacons			Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	lighting requirements	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	radar reflectors	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	visible distance	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	radio buoys (requirement for serial numbers)	Y		Y		Y			Y	Y	N
	satellite transceivers (requirement for serial numbers)	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	sonars (make and technical specifications)	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Applicable areas											
	Details of any closed areas or periods e.g. territorial waters, shipping lanes, proximity to artisanal fisheries, etc.	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Applicable period for the DFAD–MP.		Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Means for monitoring and reviewing implementation of the DFAD–MP.		Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
DFAD logbook template (data to be collected specified in Annex I		Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Data submission		YES	YES	YES	No data submitted	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	
Vessel information		YES	YES	YES		Using old version which excluded IDs and more detailed information	YES	YES	YES		
Date		YES	YES	YES			YES	YES			
Location of the floating object		YES	YES	YES			YES	YES			
Location of the vessel if different		YES	YES	YES			YES	YES			
Floating object		YES	YES	YES			YES	YES			
Emerged part		YES	No indication given	No indication given			YES	YES			
Submerged part			No indication given	No indication given				Indicating if plastic/metal, length, width, height			
Classification of Floating Objects		YES	YES	YES				YES	YES		
classification of activities with floating object		YES	YES	YES				YES	YES		
Classification of activities with instrumented buoys		YES	YES	YES				YES	YES		
classification of outcome of DFADs deployed											
Effort											
Catches		Yes	Yes	Yes			No	Yes	Yes		

APPENDIX V

SUMMARY OF COMPLIANCE WITH AND COLLECTION OF THE ANCHORED FAD MANAGEMENT PLANS

RESOLUTION 23/01 ON THE MANAGEMENT OF ANCHORED FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES (AFADS)

AFAD management

4. CPCs shall develop an AFAD Management Plan in accordance with the Guidelines in Annex I and shall submit this AFAD Management Plan to the IOTC Executive Secretary by 1 January 2024.

5. AFAD Management Plans **shall be reviewed against the Guidelines in Annex I**, by the IOTC Compliance Committee and by the IOTC Scientific Committee each in their respective role with the objective to provide advice to CPCs on areas of improvement.[Summary of compliance with and collection of the anchored fish aggregating devices management plans](#)[Provide comprehensive review of the AFAD management plan](#)

Annex I guidelines for management plan sections		CPC					Comments
		EU-MYT	EU-REU	IDN	MDV	MUS	
Objective		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Scope		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Description of its application with respect to:	Vessel types	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	AFAD numbers and/or AFAD beacon numbers to be deployed (per AFAD type)	Y	Y	Y	Y*	Y	
	reporting and/or recording procedures for AFAD deployments	Y	Y	Y	Y*	Y	
	plans for monitoring and retrieval of lost AFADs	Y	Y	Y	Y*	Y	
	statement or policy on "AFAD ownership"	Y	Y	Y		Y	
Institutional arrangements for management of the AFAD Management Plans	institutional responsibilities	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	regulations applicable to the setting and use of AFADs	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	At-sea AFAD repairs, maintenance rules and replacement policy	Y	Y	Y	Y*	Y	
	data collection system	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	reporting obligations	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
AFAD construction specifications and requirements	AFAD design characteristics (a description)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	AFAD markings and identifiers, including AFAD beacons, if any	N	Y	Y	Y*	Y	
	radar reflectors, if any	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	radio buoys, if any (requirement for serial numbers)	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	satellite transceivers, if any (requirement for serial numbers)	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	echo sounder, if any	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Applicable areas	details of any closed areas e.g., shipping lanes, Marine Protected Areas, reserves etc	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Means for monitoring and reviewing implementation of the AFAD–MP.		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Methodologies for recording and reporting data specified in Annex II				Y	Y	Y	
	Any fishing activity around an AFAD including catch and bycatch, whether retained or discarded dead or alive.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	Position for each fishing activity	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	Date	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	AFAD identifier		Y	Y	Y	Y	
General		EU-MYT provided a FAD management plan in 2026, all information management measures are included in eMARIS, however, system for reporting the data is in development	Resolution 23/01 implemented and transposed to the Management plan of artisanal fisheries; system for reporting the data is in development	regulation not compatible with the AFAD implementation, and preventing the implementation of collecting AFAD as required.		Data collected usually by Fishery Protection Services. However, due to internal issues, data were not collected in 2024	
Data submission		N	N	N	Y	N	
Month		x	x	x	Y	x	
day of month		x	x	x	Y	x	
fishery		x	x	x	Y	x	
latitude		x	x	x	Y	x	
longitude		x	x	x	Y	x	
aFOB							
	identifier	x	x	x	Y	x	
	Type	x	x	x	Y	x	
	Activity	x	x	x	Y	x	
Catches by							
	species	x	x	x	Y	x	
	type of fate	x	x	x	Y	x	
	raising	x	x	x	Y	x	

