

Collective Best Practices for Well-Managed FAD Fisheries



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Over 40% of the global tuna catch is caught using floating objects, including Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs). While FADs have benefits for purse seine vessels harvesting tuna, they have large impact on tuna stocks and the broader marine ecosystem – including the bycatch of non-target species like sharks, sea turtles and other marine life.



Leading NGOs focused on global tuna stock sustainability – and convened through the NGO Tuna Forum – agree that fishing on FADs requires improved management, monitoring, compliance and transparency. Improvements that must be addressed by tuna RFMOs, tuna fishery management agencies and commercial fishing concerns include the use of non-entangling FAD designs and biodegradable FADs; 100% observer coverage on large-scale fishing vessels (human and/or electronic) across all gear types; and more effective implementation of, and compliance with, existing RFMO bycatch requirements.

Further, the group agrees that market partners must ensure fishing vessels from which they source actively share FAD data with appropriate scientific bodies and adhere to all existing reporting and management requirements, as these data are critical to developing

science-based FAD management measures, as well as for transparency and compliance.

These and other best practices, outlined below, must be met to before FAD fishing can be considered to be well-managed and transparent, and that unnecessary risks are mitigated.

These best practices are designed to inform and guide tuna regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs), fishery improvement projects (FIPs), fisheries management authorities, Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified fisheries with conditions, and commercial processing and harvesting sectors across the supply chain in developing and/or reforming regulations, policies and procedures, and compliance regimes to ensure FAD fishing is effectively well-managed.

Collective Best Practices

The following best practices have been agreed on by leading NGOs engaged in global tuna sustainability. While not comprehensive, these best practices are critical to ensuring that at-sea FAD fishing is well-managed and transparent:

Data Reporting Best Practices

For Vessels Fishing on FADs

- Require near-real time reporting of electronic data on FAD use (tracks, echo sounders, estimates of biomass) to RFMO science bodies, and fishery authorities, with appropriate time lags to ensure confidentiality.
- Require data reporting by set type (free swimming school, natural log, drifting FAD, anchored FAD, dolphin association, whale shark, dead whale) & comply with all other flag state & RFMO reporting requirements.
- Ensure FAD tracking & deployment data can be independently verified.

For Vessels Engaged in Supply & Tender

- Require all FAD data mandated by RFMOs and/or national governments are reported.
- Require that RFMOs collect data on the number and use of supply vessels, including identifying which particular purse seine vessels each support, and the number of FADs being deployed and serviced by such vessels.

Bycatch Mitigation Best Practices

- Require the use of non-entangling FAD designs.
- Require biodegradable FADs to minimize use of synthetic/plastic materials in FAD construction, and urge vessels, including those in FIPs, to participate in pilot projects to test biodegradable FADs and to report the results to RFMO science bodies.
- Require safe handling and practices for marine turtles, sharks and rays (such as those contained in ISSF best practices and those adopted by certain RFMOs such as IATTC and WCPFC).
- Require additional mitigation measures for silky sharks (such as targeted FADs with large tuna aggregations and avoiding hotspots).
- Prohibit intentional setting on whale sharks & cetaceans.

Monitoring Best Practices

- Ensure 100% observer coverage (human or electronic), including for vessels engaged in supply and tender activities.



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Management Best Practices

- Require all FADs to be marked in accordance with the FAO Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear.
- Develop and implement science-based FAD set limits consistent with management objectives for the tropical tunas, and science-based limits on the overall number of FADs deployed.
- Require activation of operational buoys occur prior to deployment.
- Require development of a FAD recovery policy that reduces marine debris and stranding, including through the use of arrangements to alert coastal countries of derelict FADs.
- Ensure FAD management measures also apply to all vessels engaged in supply and tender activities.
- Identify on RFMO Records of Fishing Vessels what activities supply and tender vessels are engaged in, whether they are working as bait boats, services FADs, or engaging in fishing.