

**RECOMMENDATION BY ICCAT TO ESTABLISH AN AD HOC
WORKING GROUP ON FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES (FADs)**

RECOGNIZING the increasing use of FADs in ICCAT fisheries, notably for tropical tunas, and the impact this may have on the fishing mortality of juveniles of tunas, especially bigeye and yellowfin;

RECALLING recommendations by the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) to improve data collection for fisheries carried out in association with FADs, including floating objects that could affect fish aggregation, and to improve the ways to use this information in the process of stock assessments;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the reporting and monitoring, control, and surveillance measures for fishing activities carried out in association with FADs contained in Recommendation 15-01;

NOTING the need to assess the consequences of technological developments of FADs for future FAD-related management options;

RECOGNIZING that in response to an SCRS recommendation the Commission created in 2014 an ad hoc Working Group on FADs, composed of scientists, fishery managers, fishing industry administrators and other stakeholders, which was established by Recommendation 14-03, amended by Recommendation 15-02 and which held two meetings in 2015 and 2016;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the recommendations issued in 2016 by the ICCAT ad hoc Working Group on FADs and which were endorsed by the SCRS at its 2016 meeting;

CONSIDERING the need to improve the knowledge on FAD fisheries and to pursue discussions between managers, scientists and stakeholders on this important issue;

ACKNOWLEDGING the benefits of collaboration among the ICCAT ad hoc Working Group on FADs and other tuna RFMOs' FAD Working Groups to harmonise progress in addressing FAD issues that are common to all tuna RFMOs;

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF
ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RECOMMENDS AS FOLLOWS:

1. An ad hoc Working Group is established with the following Terms of Reference:
 - a) Consider ways to reduce juvenile catches of bigeye and yellowfin tuna caught in FADs fishing;
 - b) Assess the use of FADs in tropical tuna fisheries in ICCAT, including by estimating the past and current number of and different types of buoys and FADs operating in ICCAT tropical tuna fisheries, and evaluate ways to improve the use of information related to FADs in the process of stock assessments, including to quantify the effort associated with this type of fishery;
 - c) In view of the identification of data gaps, review the information provided by CPCs pursuant to the FAD related provisions in the relevant ICCAT conservation and management measures;
 - d) Based on the best available information, examine:
 - i. the fishing capacity for all components of ICCAT tropical tuna fisheries, including the relative contribution of FAD fishing to overall fishing mortality by age or size category;
 - ii. assessed and projected changes, in bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack Biomass and MSY estimates, associated to different selectivity patterns and juveniles fishing mortality levels.

- e) Assess the developments in FAD-related technology, including with regard to:
 - Technological improvement in relation to fishing mortality.
 - FAD and buoys marking and identification as a tool for monitoring, tracking and control of FADs.
 - Reducing FADs' ecological impact through improved design, such as non-entangling FADs and biodegradable material.
 - f) Identify management options and common standards for FAD management, including the regulation of: 1) FAD sets; 2) deployment limits of FADs and buoys (by distinguishing total number of deployed buoys and the number of active ones); 3) characteristics of FADs, such as marking; 4) activities of purse seiners, baitboats and support vessels, in particular the link established in fishing operations between support vessels and individual fishing vessels, and evaluate their effect on ICCAT managed species and on the pelagic eco-systems, based on scientific advice and the precautionary approach. This should take into consideration all the fishing mortality components, the methods by which FAD fishing has increased a vessel's ability to catch fish, as well as socio-economic elements with the view to provide effective recommendations to the Commission for FAD management in tropical tuna fisheries.
 - g) Identify and assess options for and timing of recovery of FADs and/or mitigating FAD losses in order to ensure a proper management of their potential impact on different coastal and high-sea components of the marine environment.
 - h) Evaluate progress made based on the recommendations issued by the Working Group in 2016 and thereafter as appropriate.
2. The third meeting of this ad hoc Working Group shall take place in 2017 and thereafter as appropriate.
 3. The ad hoc Working Group shall report on its work with a view to recommend the adoption of appropriate measures at the relevant ICCAT Commission meeting.
 4. The ICCAT Commission, at its annual meetings, will review the progress and outcomes of the ad hoc Working Group, identify priority tasks, and assess future needs.
 5. The ad hoc Working Group will be chaired by the Chair of Panel 1 and the Chair of the SCRS. The Chairs of the ad hoc Working Group should coordinate to establish procedures to ensure a full and open exchange among all participants.
 6. The structure of the meetings will include an open forum/dialogue among scientists, fisheries managers, industry representatives and other interested stakeholders. Recommendations to the Commission shall be developed through sessions of the ad hoc Working Group, which should ensure a balanced presence and active participation of scientists and managers.
 7. The ICCAT Secretariat will work with the Secretariats of other tuna RFMOs in which FAD Working Groups have been established to promote the cooperation between these groups, including through the organization of a joint session in 2017 with the interested tuna RFMOs.
 8. This Recommendation repeals and replaces [Rec. 15-02].