



RESOLUTION 18/04 ON BIOFAD EXPERIMENTAL PROJECT

Keywords: BIOFAD, Research project, biodegradability

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC),

MINDFUL of the call upon States, either individually, collectively or through regional fisheries management organisations 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;

RECALLING that the objective of the IOTC Agreement is to ensure, through appropriate management, the conservation and optimum utilisation of stocks under its competence and to encourage the sustainable development of fisheries based on such stocks while minimising the level of bycatch;

HAVING REGARD to Annex V of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL);

RECOGNISING that promoting the use of natural origin biodegradable materials in the construction of FADs could contribute to the reduction of marine litter;

NOTING that the IOTC Scientific Committee advised the Commission that only non-entangling FADs, both drifting and anchored, should be designed and deployed to prevent the entanglement of sharks, marine turtles and other species;

RECALLING that [Resolution 12/04](#) established that the Commission at its annual session in 2013 should consider the recommendations of the IOTC Scientific Committee as regards the development of improved FAD designs to reduce the incidence of entanglement of marine turtles, including the use of biodegradable materials, together with socio-economic considerations, with a view to adopting further measures to mitigate interactions with marine turtles in fisheries covered by the IOTC Agreement;

RECALLING that Resolution 17/08 [superseded by [Resolution 18/08](#)] established procedures on a fish aggregating device (FAD) management plan, including more detailed specifications of catch reporting from FAD sets, and the development of improved FAD designs and use of biodegradable materials to reduce the incidence of entanglement of non-target species as specified in Annex III of Resolution 17/08 [superseded by [Resolution 18/08](#)]; calling to reduce the amount of synthetic marine debris and promote the use of biodegradable materials (such as hessian canvas, hemp ropes, etc.);

Further RECALLING that the Scientific Committee noted the challenges in conducting studies on biodegradable FADs (BIOFADs), such as the limit on the number of active FADs per purse seine vessel in the Indian Ocean that may hinder the deployment of biodegradable FADs following experimental sampling designs, and also engagement with the fleet is necessary in order to incentivise them to deploy biodegradable FADs that may not be successful for fishing;

Furthermore, NOTING that IOTC, along with other tuna RFMOs, recommended and adopted resolutions to promote reduction of the amount of synthetic marine debris by the use of natural or biodegradable materials for drifting FADs;

RECALLING that SC20 ENDORSED (IOTC SC20 paras 157 to 165) a scientific research project (“the BIOFAD Research Project”, IOTC-2017-SC20-INF07) by a consortium ('the Project Consortium') led by the Technological Center for Food and Marine Innovation (AZTI), the Spanish Oceanographic Institute (IEO) and the Institut de recherche pour le développement (IRD) to test the use of biodegradable materials and designs for the construction of drifting FADs in natural environmental conditions and REQUESTED the project to present the outcomes of the at sea trials to the next WPEB, WPTT and SC meetings;

NOTING that, the Scientific Committee ENDORSED that the Project Consortium carries out a large-scale experiment with the deployment of 1000 biodegradable FADs with experimental sampling designs (BIOFADs) in 2018-2019 in order to obtain sufficient data by the BIOFAD Research Project to conduct reliable scientific research and to avoid the limitations identified in earlier small scale trials (250 in each quarter to analyse temporal effects). The SC equally noted that the project counts on the active collaboration of Seychelles, Mauritius and European Union purse seiners with a participation of 42 purse seine vessels operating in the Indian Ocean. The SC noted that in total, each vessel will deploy around 24 BIOFADs, 6 BIOFADs by trimester (2 BIOFADS per vessel/month for the duration of the project from April 2018 to April 2019).

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

1. To acknowledge and support the Biodegradable FAD (BIOFAD) project with the objective of reducing the impact and the amount of synthetic marine debris of the use of non-biodegradable FAD in the ecosystem as requested in Resolution 17/08 [superseded by Resolution 18/08]. The description of the project is contained in Annex 1.
2. BIOFADs used for the collection of scientific data on biodegradable FADs tested under the supervision of the BIOFAD Project Consortium and the Scientific Committee, and deployed by the Project Consortium, shall not be exempted from the application of FADs limit number established by Resolutions 17/01 [superseded by Resolution 18/01] and 17/08 [superseded by Resolution 18/08].
3. As part of the project referred to in paragraph 1, each BIOFAD deployed shall be marked in a clear manner by the Project Consortium to distinguish it from other FADs and to avoid that it becomes unreadable or disassociated with the BIOFAD Research project.
4. Vessels not participating in the Research Project fishing on FADs clearly identified as a BIOFAD shall specifically report to their national scientists the BIOFAD (and devices) status and activities on this BIOFAD (including catch data if applicable). Vessels not participating in the Research Project that encounter such FADS are encouraged to report to their national scientists the BIOFAD (and devices) status and activities on this BIOFAD.



5. The Project Consortium will make available to the IOTC Scientific Committee the results of the project at the latest two months in advance of its 2020 meeting. The Scientific Committee will analyse the outcomes of the project and provide scientific advice on possible additional FAD management options for consideration by the Commission in 2021.

Conservation and Management Measures linked to Resolution 18/04 or return to the Table of Contents			
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