FAD Management

What Are FADS?

Fish Aggregating Devices or FADs are man-made floating objects deployed to attract fish. FADs can be anchored in certain waters, but the majority are left to drift freely around the ocean. Most drifting FADs are equipped with a satellite buoy to aid in locating them. When fishers find other large floating objects (logs or marine debris), they can also equip them in the same manner.

Thousands of drifting FADs are utilized by purse-seine fishing vessels at sea each year. Such floating objects – both man-made and naturally occurring – aggregate a number of fish species, including tunas, and therefore make commercial purse-seine tuna fishing more efficient, improving catch volume and often lowering vessel fuel usage.

FAD usage varies by ocean and the fish species targeted. Worldwide, sets on fish aggregating devices (FADs) account for nearly 40% of tuna catches, including 50% of skipjack catches.

Why Is FAD Management Needed?

While FADs certainly have their benefits for purse-seine tuna fishing, their impact on tuna stocks and the broader marine ecosystem has increasingly come into question — specifically regarding the bycatch of non-target species like sharks and other marine life as well as impacts on sensitive areas due to stranded FADs. All types of fishing gears require active management, and FADs are no exception. Concerted global effort in every ocean is needed to:

- **Collect and report data on fishery statistics by set type (**including FAD sets**)**, through FAD logbooks and observers, and reporting by fleets to appropriate RFMOs and science bodies.
- **Enhance monitoring** of FAD use and associated bycatch, including the provision of FAD tracking and echosounder data.
- **Adopt science-based FAD management measures,** such as limits on the overall number of FADs used and/or FAD set made.
- **Use only non-entangling FADs** that reduce entanglement and minimize bycatch and ghost fishing debris (see ISSF's Guide to Non-Entangling FADs) and implement FAD recovery policies.
- **Mitigate other environmental impacts due to FAD loss by** promoting the use of biodegradable FADs and implementing FAD recovery policies.
- **Adopt effective bycatch mitigation measures** for primary bycatch species, such as silky sharks.

These elements are also important for purse-seine tuna fisheries in Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs), including those seeking Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification, as well as MSC-certified purse-seine tuna fisheries with conditions that make sets on FADs (for more details see ISSF Technical Report 2019-11).

FAD Management by RFMO

Recommended Best Practices

The following table shows the **level of progress in each tuna RFMO** in implementing the recommended best practices.

RFMO	*Sustainable Fish Stocks and Effective Management*				*Minimizing Environmental Impact*						
	FAD data reporting by set type required and flag State compliance assessed	*Providing data on FAD use to RFMO science bodies (e.g., buoy tracks, echosounder estimates of biomass, etc.) even if not required*	*Science-based limits on FAD deployments and/or FAD sets*	*Time/Area FAD Closure*	*Require the use of NE FAD designs*	*Promote the use of biodegrad-able FADs*	*Established FAD marking scheme consistent with FAO Guidelines*	*Established FAD recovery policy, including mechanisms to alert coastal States of derelict FADs that may impact sensitive habitats*	*Require mitigation measures for silky sharks (main bycatch species in FAD sets)*	*Adopt safe handling and release practices for sharks, rays and sea turtles*	*Prohibit intentional setting on whale sharks and cetaceans*
IOTC	*Data required, but IOTC compliance assessment weak*	*Paragraph 24 of Res. 19/02 requests data of tracks of all buoys be provided to the IOTC Secretariat for compliance purposes starting 1 Jan 2020.*	*Active FAD Limit = 300; Maximum buoy acquired annually = 500. Not science-based / No FAD set limit*	✗	✓	✓	*FAD buoy must contain a unique reference ID and IOTC vessel registraton number. New FAD marking scheme to be considered by Commission in 2020.*	✗ *FAD tracking and recovery policy to be developed in 2021.*	✗	✓	✓
IATTC	*Data required, but IATTC compliance assessment weak*	*Provided voluntarily*	*Active FAD Limits — vary by vessel size[1] / Not science-based / No FAD set limit*	✓ *Closure for all purse seine fishing (FADs or free school)*	✓	*Res. C-18-05 includes provisions for consi-dering recommen-dations on the use of biodegradable materials*	*FADs (buoy or raft) to be marked with unique identifier code*	*Res. C-17-02 includes some provisions for FAD recovery (para 13(b))*	*Retention prohibition*	✓	*No prohibition on intentional cetacean setting*

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Color Coding Key

	Element(s) are consistent with recommended best practices.
	Some element(s) are present, but amendments or a change in procedure is needed to be consistent with best practices.
	Element (s) are missing or inconsistent with best practices.

[1] Class 6 (1,200 m3 and greater): 450 FADs / Class 6 (< 1,200 m3): 300 FADs. / Class 4-5: 120 FADs / Class 1-3: 70 FADs

RFMO	Sustainable Fish Stocks and Effective Management				Minimizing Environmental Impact						
	FAD data reporting by set type required and flag State compliance assessed	*Providing data on FAD use to RFMO science bodies (e.g., buoy tracks, echosounder estimates of biomass, etc.) even if not required*	*Science-based limits on FAD deployments and/or FAD sets*	*Time/Area FAD Closure*	*Require the use of NE FAD designs*	*Promote the use of biodegradable FADs*	*Established FAD marking scheme*	*Established FAD recovery policy, including mechanisms to alert coastal States of derelict FADs that may impact sensitive habitats*	*Require mitigation measures for silky sharks (main bycatch species in FAD sets)*	*Adopt safe handling and release practices for sharks, rays and sea turtles*	*Prohibit intentional setting on whale sharks and cetaceans*
ICCAT	*Data required, but flag state compliance weak*	✗	*Active FAD Limit = 350 (2020) and 300 (2021) / Not science based / No FAD set limit*	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	*Retention prohibition*	*For sea turtles*	✗
WCPFC	*Data required, but WCPFC compliance assess-ment is not transparent*	*PNA members voluntarily provide to the SPC available buoy track data for vessels operating under the PNA VDS*	*Active FAD Limit = 350 / Not science based / No FAD set limit*	✓	✓ *Required lower entangling designs as of 1 Jan 2020. At the 2020 annual session, the Commission will consider the adoption of measures for non-entangling and/or biodegradable material on FADs.*	✓	✗	✓	*Retention prohibition*	✓	✓

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