



**COMMISSION
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**PROPOSAL FOR A
DEFINITION OF FISH AGGREGATING DEVICE**

**WCPFC15-2018-DP03
13 November 2018**

United States of America

DEFINITION OF FISH AGGREGATING DEVICE

Proposal by the United States of America to the Fifteenth Regular Session of the Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean

Explanatory Note

Under CMM 2009-02, the definition of a fish aggregating device (FAD) used by the Commission in its conservation and management measures for the tropical tuna stocks is as follows:

Any object or group of objects, of any size, that has or has not been deployed, that is living or non-living, including but not limited to buoys, floats, netting, webbing, plastics, bamboo, logs and whale sharks floating on or near the surface of the water that fish may associate with.

This definition includes natural untracked objects of any size. This definition is extremely broad and can be read to include small, naturally occurring, floating debris. The United States believes that it is time for the Commission to re-examine this definition. We support adoption of a Commission-wide definition of a FAD that is clear, specific, enforceable, and that can be utilized for all of the Commission's current FAD management measures.

CMM 2017-01 includes specific provisions for FADs with activated instrumented buoys, as well as provisions for the use of FADs that are less entangling or constructed from natural or biodegradable materials.

The FAD Management Options Intersessional Working Group (FAD WG) has been working on identifying non-entangling FAD designs, as well as biodegradable FAD materials. During its 3rd meeting, in October 2018, the FAD WG adopted recommendations and proposed minimum guidelines regarding non-entangling and biodegradable FADs. The FAD WG also reiterated recommendations from SC14 for tracking FADs and for FAD markings. The specific SC14 recommendations supported by the FAD WG are as follows:

SC14 reviewed information on analyses of the PNA's fish aggregating device (FAD) tracking program (SC14-MI-WP-09). SC14 expressed strong support for this type of research and its continuation, noting that the PNA FAD tracking program is providing information and insight that is adding substantial value to the scientific understanding of WCPO fisheries. However, SC14 noted the ongoing practice of fleets not providing full data (estimates indicate that 60–70% of buoy transmissions are not forwarded to the PNA via practices such as geo-fencing) which substantially undermines the scientific value of the information and prevents the SC from being able to provide comprehensive advice to the Commission on FAD dynamics, economics and management. SC14 also expressed concern about the estimated high rate (5%) of beaching events in tracked FADs, with the

vast majority of these being in PNA countries, together with the estimated high rate of 'lost' FADs (up to 27%).

SC14 recommends that WCPFC15 note the importance of FAD marking and monitoring programs to better identify and follow individual FADs. To address the marine pollution issue, reduce the risk to coastal communities, reefs, and fish stocks SC14 recommends the use of biodegradable FADs, non-entangling, non-entrapping, and environmentally-friendly FAD designs, better measures for FAD control and retrieval, and fewer FAD deployments. SC14 also recommends that the Secretariat ensure this working paper is made available to inform the deliberations of the FAD Management IWG meeting to be held in October 2018 and that WCPFC15 take note of the concerns expressed above and support appropriate measures.

The FAD WG and SC14 recommendations apply to a small subset of the objects currently defined as FADs. A more specific definition, which would be directly applicable to these recommendations and other WCPFC objectives for FAD management, was recently developed by IATTC. IATTC adopted a specific definition of a FAD to implement a FAD identification scheme and to implement provisions for non-entangling FADs and biodegradable FADs (see IATTC Resolution C-18-05). The definition used by IATTC in Resolution C-18-05 is as follows:

For the purposes of this Resolution, the term "Fish-Aggregating Device" (FAD) means anchored, drifting, floating or submerged objects deployed and/or tracked by vessels, including through the use of radio and/or satellite buoys, for the purpose of aggregating target tuna species for purse-seine fishing operations.

Based on the recent work of the Commission on FAD management, the United States proposes to revise the Commission's definition of a FAD to clarify the focus of the Commission's FAD management and to better align the definition with the types of objects that are of concern in terms of lost and beached FADs and marine debris. Additionally, the proposed definition would offer these benefits to all parties:

1. Greater harmonization with the definition used by IATTC, which could help in collaborative efforts for FAD management across the Pacific Ocean, as FADs are known to drift from the EPO to the WCPO.
2. The potential to reduce data collection discrepancies between observers and vessel operators, which in turn could reduce conflicts and result in safer and more productive working conditions on vessels.

CMM 2013-06 Criteria

a. Who is required to implement the proposal?

All CCMs would be required to implement this proposal to clarify the definition of FAD to better align with the Commission's current FAD management measures and the objectives of those measures.

b. Which CCMs would this proposal impact and in what way(s) and what proportion?

This proposal would impact all CCMs equally and would help to clarify the focus and application of the Commission's FAD management measures.

c. Are there linkages with other proposals or instruments in other regional fisheries management organizations or international organizations that reduce the burden of implementation?

Yes. The United States proposes a definition of a FAD that is similar to the one used by IATTC for similar management purposes and that would help to harmonize FAD management across the Pacific Ocean.

d. Does the proposal affect development opportunities for SIDS?

No. The purpose of the proposal is solely to align the Commission's definition of a FAD with current Commission FAD management progress and objectives.

e. Does the proposal affect SIDS domestic access to resources and development aspirations?

No. The purpose of the proposal is solely to align the Commission's definition of a FAD with current Commission FAD management progress objectives.

f. What resources, including financial and human capacity, are needed by SIDS to implement the proposal?

None.

g. What mitigation measures are included in the proposal?

None.

h. What assistance mechanisms and associated timeframe, including training and financial support, are included in the proposal to avoid a disproportionate burden on SIDS?

Not applicable.

Commission Decision

WCPFC15 agrees to adopt the following definition of a fish aggregating device (FAD) for the purpose of its conservation and management measures for the tropical tuna stocks and to incorporate such definition into those conservation and management measures:

Fish aggregating device, or FAD, means anchored, drifting, floating or submerged objects deployed and/or tracked by vessels, including through the use of radio and/or satellite buoys, for the purpose of aggregating target tuna species for purse-seine fishing operations.