

Call with ISSF, Thai Union and Key Traceability

Participants

Gala Moreno (GM) – ISSF
Hilario Murua (HM) – ISSF
Juan Pedro Monteagudo (JPM) – ISSF
Tony Lazazzara (TL) – Thai Union
Francisco Leotte (FL) – Thai Union
Tom Evans (TE) – Key Traceability
Kat Collinson (KC) – Key Traceability

This call concerns the Ghana EASTI purse seine and Ghana pole and line FIP. A couple of the workplan tasks surround FADs. We are in the process of trying to address some of these:

- **Independent study to review global lessons in ‘eco-friendly’ FAD design with the aim of recommending a ‘Code of Practice’ for FAD design (a ‘FAD CoP’), deployment and tracking. Will include methods of reducing the negative environmental impacts of FADs (e.g. bycatch and target size compositions), improved instrumented tracking of FADs and approaches to ensure their safe retrieval and end of life disposal.**
- **Development of a FAD registration, monitoring and reporting system.**

Topics discussed

Information/background at this stage about the Ghana biodegradable FAD project.

Summary from GM – There are 32 vessels (PS and P&L) involved in the ISSF FAD project. Co-funded by FAO and the Ghanaian fleets. FAO funded the biodegradable material and Ghanaian fleets contributes with the buoys attached to bioFADs and the communication costs to transmit the data. FAO have now provided all the materials to begin FAD construction. Deployment will begin following the end of the 2020 FAD moratorium. Deployment will continue until July, and the FADs will be followed until the end of the year, or longer depending on their survivability. Two designs are being tested. The first is the design typically used by Korean fleets, but with biodegradable material. The second is a new design, which is a simplified FAD structure, with reduced volume and size. A note from GM is it is crucial to see how data collection will work. There is also an agreement in place with the European fleets (AGAC-OPAGAC, ANABAC have already signed and MoU and in the process with ORTHONGEL) that when they find biodegradable FADs from Ghana, that they will record/report the details and catch associated with them.

FL asked if there was anything that could be supplied by ISSF in way of evidence that the FIP could use. GM and ISSF have been documenting the workshops and the visits to Pole and Line and Purse Seine vessels in port, that have been occurring including photographs and these

can be used in the FIP with permission from ISSF, using the ISSF copyright and referencing the photographer.

TL asked ISSF whether there is a FAD schematic or have information on the FADs currently used in Ghana. GM stated that they are using more-or-less the same FADs. They are non-entangling and don't cover the raft with material, which is best practice. The design used in Ghana are the typical design used by Korean fleets, who don't like to change the design. The submerged 'tail' parts of the FADs run deep into the water column. These are more difficult to retrieve and have a greater impact when lost if they contain netting. The benefits of them however, is that they are slower and so don't move out of area as quickly, making them more difficult to lose.

KC then explained about the FAD questionnaires sent to all the fleets in the FIP and will send a copy to ISSF of the template. The idea is that the fleets will provide direct information regarding the FADs used in the fishery, which should be verified by the information collected from ISSF.

GM mentioned that the Ghanaian fleets have a strategy for retrieving their FADs, as they do not want to lose them and the idea is to recycle them. They will patrol the western limit of the fishing grounds and remove their FADs before they end up in Brazil or the Caribbean sea (there have been FAD stranding events in Caribbean Sea). This is not a written strategy/policy but something that should be explored for the FAD Code of Practice/best practice for the FIP. The idea is to benefit from the good practices they already conduct, exploring first what they do to retrieve FADs and then shape it as a best practice, adding any other action/protocol to the current practice if needed, related to the reduction of FAD loss and abandonment to decrease the impact on the habitat and ecosystem.

There is also an agreement as part of the biodegradable FAD project with the Ghanaian ship-owners to provide detailed information on the positions of the echosounder buoys and the biomass underneath them, through buoy manufacturers. These data will help to study the drift and tuna aggregation capability of biodegradable FADs. But the fact that ship-owners have already agreed to share these data, could help future sharing of this valuable information to RFMOs and scientists (AZTI, IRD, SCRS) in a regular bases, starting for instance, from a given percentage of the data shared (this action has been identified as a voluntary best practice by ISSF but it is not required by ICCAT). Again, this is taking advantage of the good practices they have committed to do for the project on biodegradable FADs and shape it like a best practice.

Direct FIP involvement.

The current project will follow and track the FADs, but analysis of the data will be needed and funds are required in order to complete this research. This is something for the FIP to look into. The same data could be used for other actions for the FIP, as FAD retrieval strategy. The FIP should also explore the current FAD protocols and formalise them, with agreement with the fleets.

Work on the differences in FAD use (number, tactics) by pole and line and purse seine fleets.

Encourage EU fleets participating in the FIP to share the data from individual initiatives (fishing companies/vessels) to test biodegradable FADs. These would allow increase the sample size of current FADs tested and improve the knowledge on FAD designs that are successful.

Opinion on what FAD management objectives should be set by the fishery and also by the RFMOs. JPM referred KT to the ISSF best practice and technical papers for FAD management at the fishery level. For example, for supporting research into science-based management and FAD design (potential impact of FADs on non-target and ETP species directly linked to number of FADs). Encourage sharing of information with regard to design, position, activity etc. with RFMOs and scientists to aid science-based FAD management.

Is there a Code of Practice for FAD design currently in use anywhere that the Ghana FIP could review (have downloaded ISSF FAD management – RFMO Best Practices Snapshot, 2020)? Is there an “ultimate” FAD design with respect to biodegradable, non-entangling attributes, which still functions efficiently for fishers?

GM - Not a Code of Practice currently, and no ‘ultimate’ design but non-entangling FADs are the best. The ‘small box’-design used in the Indian Ocean will not work in the Atlantic Ocean due to the currents, which push FADs to the west, meaning they’re easily lost, especially if small and light. JPM suggested with regard to FAD design that biodegradable materials should be used, which are to be sourced from as close to the fishery as possible. The use of plastics should be reduced as much as possible. KT to refer to ISSF best practice paper for FAD management.