

Non-Entangling and Biodegradable Fish Aggregating Devices Public Policy – Version 2

WCPO tuna - purse seine (Kiribati Fish Limited) – September 2020, revised February 2023

<https://fisheryprogress.org/fip-profile/western-and-central-pacific-ocean-tuna-purse-seine-kiribati-fish-limited>

February 2023 Update: The Non-Entangling and Biodegradable Fish Aggregating Devices Public Policy was adopted in September, 2020. To the best available knowledge at this time, the vessels in the FIP were using bamboo leaves as FADs, which would meet the NEFAD terminology outlined in this policy (no-netting). From early 2020 until late 2022, Kiribati closed its borders due to the Covid-19 pandemic, so an in-person review of the NEFAD policy being implemented on the vessels could not take place. In February 2023, the FIP coordinator, Key Traceability travelled to Kiribati and visited 3 of the FIP vessels to conduct an ETP bycatch handling audit, which includes examining the FADs being deployed. It was identified that the vessels are using WCPFC compliant FAD designs, however they contained netting so do not meet this policy.

Now that a more comprehensive understanding of the FADs being deployed in the FIP indicate they do not meet these policy requirements, an implementation timeline is being implemented. This is to give the vessels a transition period to meet the requirements as set out here.

The timeline for vessels in the FIP to meet this policy is one year from the annual FIP update on 28.02.2023. This means all vessels in the FIP have until 28.02.2024 to meet the policy requirements set out below.

This Fishery Improvement Programme is the Kiribati purse seine tuna fishery (Kiribati Fish Ltd operated vessels). The fishery targets skipjack (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), yellowfin (*Thunnus albacares*) and bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*) through free-school and FAD-associated purse seine sets. The fleet of ten purse seine vessels are flagged to China and operate mainly in the Kiribati EEZ, other PNA countries' EEZs and potentially the high seas. The fishery is managed regionally by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

The fishery aims to improve its standard by working towards the objectives below:

- Achieve sustainable stock status' for tuna that is consistent with the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) and management systems strengthened to achieve this.
- To improve the availability of accurate data on catches, retained and especially bycatch by strengthening information systems and training.
- To collaborate with other institutions working on tuna fisheries issues in the country, including working together to improve the management and policy towards sustainable fisheries for example Harvest Control Rules.
- Strengthen ETP and retained species management strategies.
- To promote traceability to ensure that the origins and status of Tuna products purchased are well-known and all coming from legal fisheries by engaging the supply chains that support improvement through the implementation of e-monitoring.
- Improve governance and decision-making process.
- Achieve MSC certification and the objectives above by 2025.

To ensure the participating vessels meet the above objectives the fishery has made this commitment to using only Non-Entangling Fish Aggregating Devices (NEFADs). NEFADs, as defined by the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) are constructed with no netting material to minimise ghost fishing (entanglement of fauna, primarily sharks and turtles). For a FAD to be completely non-entangling, it must use no netting materials either in the surface structure (raft) or the submerged structure.

By not using netting in FADs, tuna-vessel owners and fishers can prevent the entanglement and "bycatch" of sharks, sea turtles, and other non-target marine species. In addition, by choosing vegetal instead of plastic-derived materials for FADs, fishers can avoid contributing to the ocean pollution caused by ghost gear. The

fishery intends to engage on minimizing habitat and ecosystem impacts by engaging on a number of related actions for Biodegradable FADs and recovery programs.

The fishery recognises this and adopts the following practices and commitments:

- To only deploy Non-Entangling FADs, effective immediately.
- For all skippers to attend training to understand the reason for these changes and agree best practices.
- Develop a FIP strategy for FAD recovery to retrieve and replace any own or foreign entangling FADs when possible and safe to do so and engage with other FIPs for a harmonized implementation.
- Continuously improve procedures in line with best practices.
- All vessels will comply with ISSF Best Practices for FAD management Plans, including the ISSF Guide for Non-Entangling FADs and be listed on the ISSF Proactive Vessel Register (PVR).
- For Biodegradable FADs, they must adopt the following recommendations:
 - Reduce the use of plastics in the FAD structure and document FAD configurations in use
 - Engage in trials for adoption of a FIP Biodegradable FAD configuration with the following guidelines based on ISSF's recommendations:
 - Biodegradable materials to be used in FADs should be made of 100% sustainably harvested vegetal fibres and be sourced from areas close to the fishing ground.
 - Biodegradable materials should allow a maximum lifetime of FADs of one year and then degrade as fast as possible.

Recommendations for Biodegradable FAD Configurations are as follows:

- **Raft:** Rafts should be constructed using bamboo, balsa wood or other natural materials that degrade without producing pollution on the marine environment. For FAD flotation, the use of plastic buoys and containers should be reduced as much as possible (e.g., reducing the weight and volume of the FAD structure would require less flotation).
- **Tail:** Only natural and/or biodegradable materials (cotton ropes and canvas, manila hemp, sisal, coconut fibre, etc.) should be used, so that they degrade without causing impact on the ecosystem.

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