

Non-Entangling and Biodegradable Fish Aggregating Devices Public Policy

WCPO Purse Seine Tuna FIP – October 2019

<https://fisheryprogress.org/fip-profile/western-central-pacific-ocean-tuna-purse-seine-thai-union>

This Thai Union led Fishery Improvement Project is made up of a fleet of 37 tuna purse seine vessels, flagged either to Taiwan, Korea, Korea (the Republic of), Nauru, Micronesia (Federated States of) or United States of America (the). The vessels fish in the WCPO for the three commercial tropical tuna species (with most of the catch being made up of skipjack). They deploy FADs, and fish on FADs and other floating objects, as well as setting on free schools.

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 2024.

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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