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**MONITORING PLAN FOR LONGLINE LOOPS/TRAPS FOR THE SPANISH FLEET IN THE AREA OF
TUNA RFMOS**

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1. Description of the gear

The first to describe this new fishing gear, modification of the pelagic longline, were Garibaldi and collaborators. in 2024, presenting a work in the ICCAT Scientific Committee (Garibaldi et al., 2024). That description refers to what those authors were able to observe in the Mediterranean swordfish (Liguria Sea) fisheries in the Italian fleet.

We now know that this fishing gear is used throughout the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea and that it may have originated in Asian fleets operating in the Pacific Ocean some 10 years ago. In addition to the Italian fleet, we have found it in the Spanish fleet operating in the Central Atlantic (Cape Verde) and South (Uruguay), as well as in the Mediterranean Sea, we also know from communication of fishing patterns that the Portuguese fleet uses it and we have strong indications that the Asian fleets operating in the Atlantic have adopted it.

The trap/loop consists of nylon or polyamide monofilament, 2,0 to 2.5 mm in diameter, which is mostly used for secondary branch lines. It is made up of handbags of different sizes, usually seven secondary lines, although it may vary between 4-8 of. The diameters of the bolts are variable (30 cm to about 50/70 cm maximum diameter) in each trap/loop. The thickness of the line may vary depending on the availability of the material on each vessel.

The bait is always artificial, squid or mackerel or similar. There are many variables in relation to the bait and its additions, considering what we have been able to record with observers on board the Spanish Mediterranean Sea fleet and interviews we have conducted with fishing boats operating on tuna vessels in Cabo Verde and Montevideo. In some cases, artificial bait is used alone, battery or chemical lights are also placed inside the bait, some fishermen place a hook inside the bait and in some cases also put natural bait inside the artificial bait. Similar observations are recorded in the publication by Garibaldi and collaborators who also state that there are already suppliers of these traps/loops, which, in addition to being made on board vessels, are sold at around EUR 6-7 plus bait (Garibaldi et al., 2024).

Garibaldi and collaborators (2024) did not find vessels fully equipped with traps/loops, arguing that some vessels will use this gear, particularly in Sicily, replacing hooks. Some of the skippers we interviewed told us that some vessels in the Atlantic use many traps/loops, in some cases exceeding the number of hooks.

The benefits of using the ribbon according to the interviewed patterns lie in reducing bait and maximising the catch of swordfish. The trap/loop acts when the fish tries to access the artificial bait, having a sliding knot and various loops of different sizes, the fish becomes entangled in the head, fins and gills, making it impossible for the fish to escape, except for a

break between the trap/loop and the branch line. In this case, the fish that would most probably remain entangled in the trap/loop would be lost. One of the difficulties is when large individuals turn around, since the trap/loop does not allow the animal to be brought to the boat from the head, the latter must be raised across the board, causing more operational delays and risks of secondary lines breaking.

There are different versions on the effectiveness of this new longline component (trap/loop), some masters say it is more effective for peak fish, particularly for swordfish and link it to the behaviour of these animals. However, the records, which have not yet been quantified, show that the traps/loops catch a wide variety of target and fortuitous species (SWO, BIL, TRO, BFT, BSH, Wahoo, turtles, moon fish, etc.).

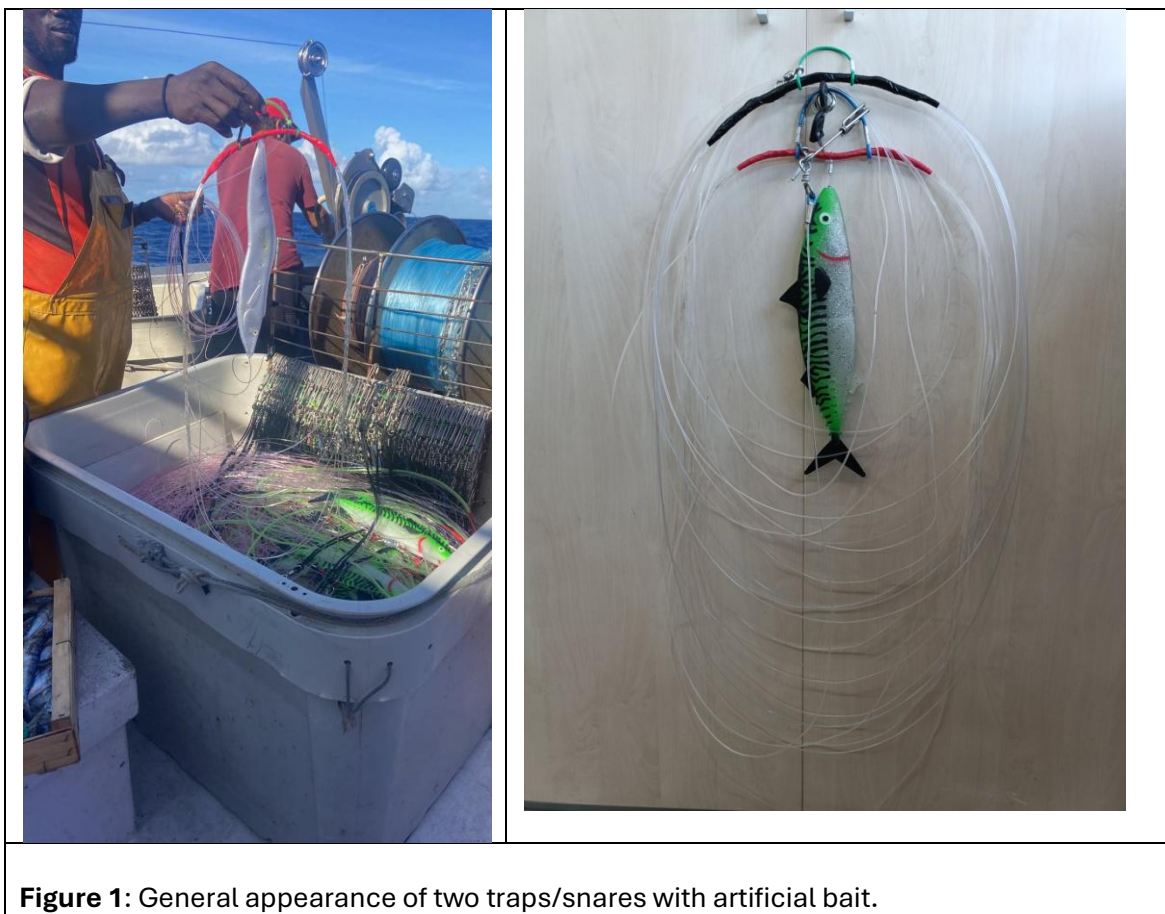


Figure 1: General appearance of two traps/snares with artificial bait.

2. Objectives of the Plan

The main objectives of the monitoring plan are:

- (1) description of the different traps/loops used to propose a standardised and homogeneous definition

(2) determine the catchability of swordfish by traps/loops, with a comparative description of catches by size and target species.

(3) determine the accompanying catches associated with the trap/loops, with description of the associated sizes

(4) determine the best ratio between the number of traps and hooks, to improve the efficiency of catches and their sustainability.

3. Methodology and resources

The fishing vessels operators operating in the Pacific Ocean area will be asked if they want to participate in the plan using traps/loops. The list of vessels shall be notified to the inspection and control services.

All participating voluntary vessels shall undertake to carry an observer, who shall be trained remotely specifically for the experimental action.

4. Duration

The pilot action will start from 1 July 2026 until 31 december 2027, which may be extended.

5. References

Garibaldi F., Di Natale A., Zava B. (2024). A new challenge for assessing the swordfish fishery: the use of an innovative fishing gear. ICCAT Collective Volume Scientific Paper, 1 (7): 1-9.

Macías, D, Moreno De La Rosa, J., Garcías-Barcelona, S., Alegría, A., Rueda, L., & Báez, J.C. (2025). Spatiotemporal distribution and bycatch associated with surface longlines using traplines in the western Mediterranean. ICCAT Collective Volume Scientific Paper, 82 (6): 1-16.