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JOINT T-RFMO FAD WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY WCPFC16

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Explanatory note

This paper presents the recommendations of the Joint T-RFMO FAD Working Group that met for the second time in May 2019, in San Diego, USA. WCPFC and SPC were represented at this meeting; they are also part of the Joint T-RFMO Technical Working Group on FADs.

During the second meeting of the Joint T-RFMO FAD Working Group, it was highlighted and generally agreed by participants the common interest to all tuna RFMOs regarding the need to manage efficiently the use of FADs and share their experiences.

Following comprehensive discussions on the current management measures, progress of the key areas for action, definitions, standards, marking and tracking, FAD indicators, research activities, impacts and mitigation of the use of FADs, FAD fisheries sustainability and RFMOs collaboration, the Joint T-RFMO FAD Working Group made several recommendations.

The EU proposes that the WCPFC intersessional Working Group on FAD Management Options considers these recommendations, informs the Commission on its merits and relevance for WCPFC tropical tuna fisheries and continue collaborating with the joint T-RFMO FAD Working Group.

The recommendations of Joint T-RFMO FAD Working Group are the following (in brackets recommended follow-up competences):

GENERAL:

The Working Group recommends that:

1. The mandate and responsibilities of the Joint t-RFMO Working Group on FADs (JWG) be discussed within each t-RFMO, and that guidance on these matters be provided by the RFMOs (perhaps through the Kobe process steering committee) in order to clarify and define the respective roles of the JWG and the Joint Technical Working Group (JTWG). [COM]

2. The agendas of future meetings of the JWG should focus on a limited number of key issues, thus allowing more progress to be made on identified priority issues. The JTWG should identify the key issues to be discussed.

MANAGEMENT

3. t-RFMOs should prioritize scientific studies which provide advice on potential limits on FAD deployments /sets and/or the current active FAD/buoy limits, in relation to management objectives. [SC]

4. The t-RFMOs should explore opportunities for consistency and harmonization, if possible, across t-RFMOs in FAD management measures. [COM]

5. Each t-RMFO should develop, as a matter of priority, systematic monitoring and reporting procedures on the number of active FADs/buoys in its Convention Area. [TCC]

6. FAD management objectives should be defined, both within each t-RFMO and jointly, to guide research, data collection, and the development of effective conservation measures. [COM]

DEFINITIONS

7. Each t-RFMO should adopt definitions of priority terms related to the FAD fishery. [COM]

8. The JTWG should identify definitions whose harmonization is a priority.

9. Any definitions proposed by the JTWG should be reviewed by the Scientific Committee of each t-RFMO. [SC]

DATA COLLECTION

10. The minimum standards for data collection should be reviewed by the relevant technical or scientific working groups within each t-RFMO, and revised or adopted as appropriate. [SC]

11. Discussions on minimum data collection standards should be prioritized in the future work of the JTWG.

MARKING AND TRACKING

12. Given the possibility of buoys becoming separated from a FAD or being replaced, a system for marking both buoys and FADs should be explored. [FAD WG – SC - TCC]

13. High-resolution buoy position data should be made available for research purposes. [COM]

INDICATORS

14. The suite of indicators prepared by the JTWG and presented during the meeting should be reviewed, and used as appropriate, by each t-RFMO. [SC]

15. Those indicators should be extended to include research on overall biomass indicators, such as buoy derived indices and the status of stocks/species. [SC]

16. Time series should be developed by each t-RFMO for all the indicators, including buoy-related indicators, using historical data to capture fishery evolution and seasonality and ENSO-cycle variability. [SC]

17. The development of indicators should be consistent with data collection criteria and definitions. [SC]

RESEARCH

18. The JTWG should develop a five-year joint research plan on FADs, with input from the Scientific Committees of the t-RFMOs. [SC]

19. The joint FAD research plan should define priorities for each of the research actions, with higher priority for items that benefit all t-RFMOs or more than one t-RFMO, and organize *ad hoc* scientific meetings, as appropriate. [FAD WG-SC]

20. t-RFMOs should set aside and invest resources in medium- and long-term research on FADs, preferably research that is conducted jointly or transferable across t-RFMOs. [COM-SC]

21. The Scientific Committees of the t-RFMOs should consider the positive experience of the workshops for vessel captains, owners and crew, and develop a mechanism for regular exchange of scientific information and stakeholder knowledge across t-RFMOs. [SC]

22. The results of research conducted by different groups and/or with the support of different fleets should be promptly and widely shared with all fleets and researchers involved and other interested parties. [FAD WG]

23. t-RFMOs should facilitate cooperation/collaboration with t-RFMOs actively involved with acoustics, promote professional development in acoustics and, where necessary, hire scientists with expertise in acoustic data analysis, to work with the data related to acoustic buoys. [FAD WG -SC]

MITIGATION

24. t-RFMOs should accelerate progress to reduce contributions of FADs to marine litter and mitigate negative impacts on coastal habitats and marine ecosystems and endangered, threatened and protected species, such as use of FADs without netting and those made with biodegradable materials, as well as mechanisms and incentives for recovering FADs. [FAD WG]

25. At its next meeting, the JWG should consider the impact of FADs on juvenile tunas and review mitigation measures to reduce those impacts.

26. Continue to involve fishers in the process of finding solutions. [FAD WG]

27. Conduct region-specific research to test mitigation strategies, as solutions adapted to each ocean and region. [FAD WG- SC]

28. Consider incentives to promote implementation of technological solutions.

INITIATIVES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

29. Collaboration, mutual trust, and sharing of knowledge and data among t-RFMOs, scientists, industry and NGOs should be strengthened in order to tackle unresolved issues related to the sustainability of the FAD fishery. [FAD WG]

COLLABORATION ACROSS RFMOS

30. Hold a meeting to evaluate the information available to assess the effect of each t-RFMO's measures on FADs, with special focus on sharing information on challenges and successes.