



The Director-General

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Mr. Ivan López
Chairman Long Distance Advisory
Council
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SPAIN

Subject: LDAC opinion on Best Practices for Tropical Purse Seine Fisheries with special consideration to FAD management

Your Ref.: R-02-19/WG1

Dear Mr. López,

I would like to thank you for your letter dated 27 May 2019 by which you have shared the LDAC opinion for best practices in purse seine fisheries.

Let me reassure you that my services and I completely share your concern that it is important to promote a purse fishery that ensures the sustainability of tropical tuna stocks and mitigates its impact on the ecosystem. We are constantly promoting these principles in all tuna-RFMOs (tRFMOs).

In your letter, you refer to many important issues and suggest a number of good practices and actions; without entering into the details of all of them, I would like to briefly touch upon some of the elements you mention.

First, I would like to stress that the EU is at the forefront in promoting good governance and science-based management of fisheries, particularly with the implementation of Harvest Control Rules, evaluated through Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE). The EU has financed dedicated research and meetings to promote this approach in all tRFMOs. The EU has also put forward proposals to ensure that stocks are managed in a sustainable way, in line with the principles of the CFP, and proposed rebuilding plans for overfished stocks (the latest example being a rebuilding plan for yellowfin tuna in the IOTC that unfortunately was not supported by other members).

The EU also attaches the utmost importance to the respect of management measures adopted by tRFMOs and has presented countless proposals to strengthen Compliance and Monitoring Schemes in all tRFMOs.

The EU also promotes management measures to minimize bycatch and implement best practices to safely release unwanted catches. As you well know, the EU is the champion of promoting a strict fins naturally attached policy in all RFMOs to which it is a member, and it has proposed retention bans for Endangered, Threatened and Protected species, such as silky sharks and mobulid rays. The EU also finances research to constantly improve scientific knowledge to inform the adoption of sound management measures and identify best practices to mitigate the impacts of fisheries on these species.

As in your document you have placed a specific emphasis on FADs management, let me turn to this subject. We all concur that while the use of FADs is a highly effective fishing method, their impact on target and non-target species, on the ecosystem and their contribution to marine debris are of concern and call for their adequate management, both in terms of use and impacts, across all oceans.

It is important to improve the collection of data and their harmonisation and comparability across all tRFMOs so to have a solid scientific base for the adoption of meaningful management measures. In particular, the data collected could serve as a basis to develop science-based limits for deployment and use of FADs to minimize catches of vulnerable species and reduce the catches of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna. For the time being, in the absence of specific scientific recommendations in respect, the EU is proposing to reduce the number of FADs used in Purse Seine fisheries to the strictly necessary to reduce their possible negative impacts while ensuring the viability of the fishery.

Equally, tRFMOs should establish comprehensive systems to accurately quantify, track and monitor FADs use, for compliance purposes but also for improving tuna stock assessments and the understanding of FADs contribution to marine debris.

The EU currently supports many research projects aimed at improving knowledge of FADs and mitigate their potential effects on target and non-target species, as well as on the ecosystem.

In relation to potential negative impact on by-catch and the ecosystem, the EU has proposed the use of completely non-entangling FADs as well as the transition towards biodegradable FADs in all t-RFMOs.

The EU is also in the forefront to encourage cooperation between FADs working groups in all tRFMOs with the ultimate purpose of defining best practices and benchmarks, and the establishment of common approaches and standards across tRFMOs. DG MARE has financed the organisation of the two joint t-RFMOS FADs working groups that took place in Madrid in April 2017 and in San Diego in May 2019.

I believe that in the longer term, we should aim to establish science-based regional management strategies for FADs in the different oceans, integrating measures such as limits on number of FADs deployed, uses of specific materials, closures, restrictions on FADs sets, etc., as appropriate, in conjunction with other management measures (e.g. fleet capacity) to adjust the fishing effort to the sustainable use of the resources

Let me conclude by thanking you once again for the useful document you have sent me on behalf of the LDAC, and for reassuring you of our relentless efforts to promote best practices for tuna purse fisheries across all oceans.

I invite you to take contact with Ms Pascale Colson, coordinator of the Advisory Councils (pascale.colson@ec.europa.eu; +32 2 29 56273) should you have any question on this reply.

Yours sincerely,


João AGUIAR MACHADO