

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION
AD HOC PERMANENT WORKING GROUP ON FADS
9TH MEETING
La Jolla, California (USA)
28-29 May 2025

CHAIR’S SUMMARY REPORT

AGENDA

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opening of the meeting 2. Adoption of the agenda 3. Review of recommendations from the 8th meeting of the FAD Working Group 4. FAD data reporting established in Resolutions C-19-01 and C-21-04 5. FAD fishery indicators 6. Advances on biodegradable FADs in the EPO 7. FAD Register: potential benefits and modalities 8. Initiatives to reduce impacts of FADs fishing 9. Conclusions and recommendations 10. Other business 11. Adjournment the 	<p>FAD-09-01</p> <p>FAD-09-02</p>
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The 9th meeting of the IATTC’s *ad hoc* Permanent Working on FADs was held in La Jolla, California (USA) on May 28 and 29, 2025. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Josu Santiago, in his capacity as Chair of the Working Group.

The list of participants is included in **Annex 1**.

The list of documents presented and discussed during the meeting is included below and can be found on the website of the 9th meeting of the Working Group, along with the corresponding presentations.

Meeting documents:

- [FAD-09-01 - Floating object fishery indicators a 2024 report](#)
- [FAD-09-02 - Dynamics of Biodegradable and Conventional FADs in the EPO](#)
- [FAD-09-03 - Options for a FAD register](#)

Informational documents:

- [INF-A. Analyses of the regional database of stranded Drifting Fish Aggregating Device \(dFADs\) in the Pacific Ocean – 2024 update](#)

Presentations:

- [9th Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on FADs](#)
- [A novel deposit-refund system to reduce lost fishing gear impacts in the world's BioFAD impacts](#)
- [Characterizing drifting fish aggregating device design in the Hawaiian Archipelago from 2009-2025](#)
- [CIAT- ECOFADS TUNACONS Avances 2024 y 2025 ES](#)
- [FAD-09-01 Floating object fishery indicators - 2024 report](#)
- [FAD-09-02 Dynamics of Biodegradable and Conventional FADs in the EPO](#)
- [FAD-09-03 Options for a FAD register](#)
- [IATTC Naming System](#)
- [INF-A Stranded FADs](#)
- [Options to mitigate dFAD loss and abandonments](#)
- [RD-C Initiatives for the recovery of plantations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean-TUNACONS](#)
- [RD-E Programa Recogida Plantados ES](#)
- [RD-F Data Collection for Assessing Impacts of FAD Stranding Events](#)
- [Regional data collection program on FAD strandings an update](#)

Under **item 8 of the agenda on initiatives to reduce the impact of fishing on FADs**, Mr. Gibbons Fly, Executive Director of the American Tuna Vessel Association (ATA), made a statement (see **Annex 3**) in which he proposed that FADs should not be deactivated when drifting south of 10 degrees south, considered the southern limit of the fishing zones, since deactivation prevents them from being tracked and monitored to see if they are heading for ecologically sensitive areas; and that these FADs should not be counted as active for the purposes of implementing the limits established, provided that no sets are made on them.

This statement was welcomed by the Group and the proposal was supported by several participants who took the floor.

On the issue of FAD recovery, the option of considering financial incentives (e.g., payment of a fee per FAD deployed) was also mentioned, but with the need to avoid a race to recover FADs even when they are not at risk of stranding.

Under **item 9 of its agenda**, the Working Group adopted several **conclusions and recommendations** for consideration by the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), the text of which is reproduced in the table in **Annex 2** of this summary report.

With no other matters to consider, the Working Group noted that its next meeting would be held in the days immediately preceding the 17th meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee in May-June 2026.

Annex 1

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Annex 2

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 9TH MEETING OF THE AD HOC PERMANENT WORKING ON FADS

<p>Consistent with its terms of reference established in Resolution C-19-01, Annex III, the Ad Hoc Permanent Working Group on FADs, in reporting to the Scientific Advisory Committee on the results of its 9th meeting, and in the framework of the process of coordination with that Committee and with the scientific staff in the identification and review of feasible FAD management measures, as a preliminary step prior to the presentation of recommendations to the Commission, wishes to recommend that:</p>
1. On FAD data reporting
<p>1.1. The IATTC scientific staff develop and propose improvements to the characterization of the causes for remote deactivation and reactivation established in Resolution C-24-01.</p> <p>1.2. The IATTC scientific staff analyze in greater detail the data from observers and satellite buoys to propose methods to help adequately evaluate the uses/record of the causes for remote deactivation and reactivation to identify possible opportunities for improvement or updates.</p>
2. On FAD fishery indicators
<p>2.1. The IATTC scientific staff continue to refine the indicators, including additional indicators of interest (e.g., last buoy positions, quantification of strandings and collections) and prepare a guide with a description of each indicator that facilitate the interpretation and assessment of the implications of each indicator.</p> <p>2.2. The Commission consider urging flag CPCs to ensure that fishing companies and buoy suppliers provide the IATTC with available historical information on vessel acoustic buoys received from the original users, including trajectory and biomass information, to prevent losing this data of enormous value to science, and particularly to stock assessments. The processing of this data will be subject to the Commission's rules on confidentiality</p>
3. On biodegradable FADs
<p>3.1. The SAC recommend that the Commission consider adopting measures to obtain the necessary data and resources, including by exploring strategic partnerships and alternative sources of funding, to enable analysis to be carried out to determine more accurately the final destination of unrecovered FADs.</p> <p>3.2. Progress be made in analyzing the useful life of biodegradable FADs ("BioFAD"), or that, in addition to the information provided by observers in the EPO, the IATTC scientific staff provide the Group with a more in-depth analysis, taking into account the information on the positions of buoys associated with FADs as well as relevant information from WCPFC observers.</p> <p>3.3. The IATTC scientific staff continue to deepen their analysis of the useful life of BioFADs in collaboration with the industry.</p> <p>3.4. (a) Interested parties be encouraged to continue pursuing technical studies on biodegradable, natural, or bio-based materials, useful for the construction of FADs, (b) The exchange of experiences be promoted through participatory workshops.</p> <p>3.5. The IATTC scientific staff present to the Working Group an analysis derived from the compilation and evaluation of the certification options for bio-based materials which are used in FADs, and which will ensure that the new material and the final product do not contribute to the pollution of the marine environment.</p> <p>3.6. CPCs and other entities be encouraged to engage in BioFADs trials provide more BioFAD data from broader regions of the EPO in a random fashion more adequate to making scientific comparisons.</p>

3. On the FAD register

(a) Considering the review of the suitability of a FAD Registry in the IATTC area, no need has been identified by the Working Group to implement such a registry in the region

(b) The pros and cons of the implementation of different methods for marking FADs be explored.

3. On FAD retrieval

5.1. (a) The SAC consider the relevance of recommending to the Commission that it assess the value of adopting the form and database for collecting data on stranded FADs to be developed by the scientific staff, as harmonized as appropriate with the form developed by the SPC-WCPF, including the identification of possible adjustments.

(b) if a form is adopted for this purpose, its use be preceded by some type of workshop or practical training

5.2. The SAC consider the relevance of recommending to the Commission to evaluate or assess the adoption of the creation of stranding data collection programs as well as the analysis of the convenience and operability of a network of these programs in the EPO.

5.3. The IATTC scientific staff, with the support of the FAD Working Group, work on the development of indicators to enable monitoring of the performance of FAD retrieval programs over time, to recommend improvements.

5.4. For the purpose of assisting in the retrieval of FADs and without prejudice to the active buoy limits established by the Commission, the scientific staff analyze ways to manage deactivations, such as consider expanding the areas for requiring buoy activations (i.e., par. 23 of C-24-01) to assist with FAD recoveries, with the understanding that FADs south of 10° S and west of 100°W would not count towards active FAD limits.

5.5. The Commission consider assessing the value of establishing an incentive system for CPCs to establish funds to support projects and entities dedicated to the tracking, recovery, and retrieval of drifting FADs, in particular those with the highest risk of drifting into ecologically sensitive areas such as coral reefs and related shoreline habitats.

5.6. The Commission consider amending Resolution C-24-01, as appropriate, so that, to assist FAD recovery efforts, FAD satellite buoys that are deactivated pursuant to paragraph 23 of Resolution C-24-01 and drifting south of 10°S Latitude and west of 100°W maintain their signal active exclusively to transmit their position to FAD recovery programs, and remain excluded from buoy limits.

Anexo 3

Declaración del Sr. Gibbons-Fly

Director de la Asociación de Buques Atuneros Americanos (ATA)

INICIATIVA PARA LA RECUPERACIÓN DE LOS FAD DEL SECTOR DE LA PESCA DE CERCO

Representantes del sector de la pesca de cerco han estado trabajando para establecer un fondo que apoye proyectos dedicados al seguimiento, la recuperación y retiro de plantados a la deriva, en particular aquellos con mayor riesgo de deriva hacia zonas ecológicamente sensibles, como los arrecifes de coral y los hábitats costeros relacionados.

Esta iniciativa ha contado con la participación de asociaciones de la industria cerquera de Estados Unidos, Ecuador, la UE, en particular España, y otros países. Puedo asegurarles que la industria cerquera está comprometida en abordar seriamente el problema de los plantados a la deriva. Pero para ello, necesitamos la ayuda de la Comisión. En ese sentido, solicitamos específicamente una recomendación de este Grupo de Trabajo a la Comisión en su conjunto.

La medida actual para el atún tropical permite la desactivación de los plantados cuando derivan al sur de los 10 grados, considerado el límite sur de las zonas de pesca. Sin embargo, la desactivación no permitiría rastrear dichos plantados para saber si se dirigen a zonas ecológicamente sensibles, y cuándo, por ejemplo, en la Polinesia Francesa, las Islas Cook y otros lugares. La capacidad de monitorear los plantados al sur de los 10 grados sur es un componente necesario de cualquier esfuerzo para rastrearlos y recuperarlos.

En la reunión anual del año pasado, Estados Unidos presentó una propuesta que habría permitido, o incluso exigido, que los plantados permanecieran activos al sur de los 10 grados, con la disposición adicional de que dichos plantados no se computarían en el límite de plantados activos de un buque individual. En aquel momento, escuchamos que la propuesta estadounidense se describía como una "excepción" o una "laguna". Pero esto no es así, dado que, según las normas actuales, esos plantados pueden simplemente desactivarse. Si estos plantados continúan contando para el límite de plantados activos una vez que se desvíen hacia el sur de los 10 grados para fines de seguimiento, esta Comisión está creando un desincentivo para que los buques participen en cualquier esfuerzo de recuperación de plantados.

El sector de la pesca de cerco no debería sufrir consecuencias negativas por intentar actuar correctamente. Por lo tanto, solicitamos que este grupo de trabajo incluya una recomendación para que la Comisión apoye que los plantados permanezcan activos con fines de seguimiento únicamente al sur de los 10 grados, siempre que no se contabilicen para el límite. Estamos dispuestos a considerar salvaguardias para garantizar que no se realice ningún lance de pesca sobre dichos plantados.

Gracias por considerar esta solicitud. Con gusto responderé cualquier pregunta.

Executive Director of the American Tunaboat Association (ATA)

PURSE SEINE SECTOR FAD RECOVERY INITIATIVE

Representatives of the purse seine sector have been working to establish a fund to support projects dedicated to the tracking, recovery, and retrieval of drifting FADs, in particular those with the highest risk of drifting into ecologically sensitive areas such as coral reefs and related shoreline habitats.

This initiative has included purse seine industry associations from the United States, Ecuador, the EU, particularly Spain, and others. I can assure you that the purse seine industry is committed to addressing the issue of drifting FADs in a serious way. But to do so, we need the Commission's help. And in that regard, we have a specific request for a recommendation from this Working Group to the broader Commission.

The current tropical tuna measure allows deactivation of FADs when they drift south of 10 degrees, which is considered the southern limit of viable fishing grounds. However, deactivation would not allow those FADs to be tracked for the purpose of knowing if and when they head into ecologically sensitive areas, for example in French Polynesia, Cook Islands, and elsewhere. The ability to monitor FADs south of 10 degrees south is a necessary component of any effort to track and recover these FADs.

At last year's annual meeting, the United States submitted a proposal that would have allowed, or perhaps even required, FADs to remain active south of 10 degrees, with the added provision that such FADs would not count against an individual vessel's active FAD limit. At the time, we heard the U.S. proposal described as an "exception" or a "loophole". But this is not the case given that, under the current rules, those FADs can simply be deactivated. If these FAD will continue to count against the active FAD limit once they drift south of 10 degrees for tracking purpose, this Commission is creating a disincentive for vessels to participate in any FAD recovery efforts.

The purse seine sector should not suffer adverse consequences for trying to do the right thing. Therefore, we are requesting that this working group include a recommendation that the Commission support allowing FADs to remain active for tracking purposes only south of 10 degrees, provided that such FADs would not count against the limit. We are prepared to consider safeguards to ensure no fishing set takes place on any such FAD.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I am happy to answer any questions.