

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

RESOLUTION ON FISH-AGGREGATING DEVICES

JULY 1999

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), having responsibility for the tunas and tuna-like fishes of the eastern Pacific Ocean (which for the purposes of this resolution is the area bounded by the coastline of the Americas, the 40°N parallel, the 150°W meridian, and the 40°S parallel) and having maintained since 1950 a continuing scientific program directed toward the study of these resources:

Considering the information presented by the scientific staff of the IATTC in the documents on “Estimated Effects of Various Restrictions on the Fishery for Tunas in the Eastern Pacific Ocean” and on “Assessment of Bigeye Tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean” and the Report of the Bycatch Working Group;

Noting that the fishery on fish-aggregating devices (FADs) has grown substantially in the last five years, increasing catches of juvenile tunas, in particular yellowfin and bigeye, in the purse-seine fishery in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO);

Concerned about the reduction in the average size of bigeye tuna caught by the purse-seine fishery in the EPO;

Reiterating the need to reduce incidental catches of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna in the purse-seine fishery in the EPO;

Reaffirming its commitment to the application of the precautionary approach, which establishes that lack of scientific evidence should not be used as a reason for not taking management measures for fisheries resources;

Recalling that Resolutions adopted by the IATTC at its 61st and 62nd Meetings contained recommendations that the Parties prohibit the transshipment of tuna at sea, and prohibit the use of tender vessels whose role it is to deploy, repair, pick up, or maintain FADs at sea;

Recommends to the Parties and non-parties under whose jurisdiction vessels operate in the EPO that they:

1. Reaffirm their commitment to prohibit the transshipment of tuna by purse-seine vessels fishing for tuna in the EPO, unless such transshipment takes place in port;
2. Prohibit the use of tender vessels operating in support of vessels fishing on FADs in the EPO, without prejudice to similar activities in other parts of the world;
3. Establish a scientific working group to carry out comprehensive research, in conjunction with the IATTC staff, to include, but not be limited to:
 - (a) The relationship between catches of bigeye and yellowfin tuna and the maximum depth of FADs;
 - (b) The effect of the use of baited FADs on catch rates and size composition of the catch of tunas;
 - (c) Estimates of the natural mortality of the various populations of tunas;

- (d) The establishment of a maximum number of sets on floating objects which the tuna fishery in the EPO can support;
- (e) The catches of tunas and associated and dependent species in the fishery on floating objects between 130°W and 150°W;
- (f) The impact of permanent or temporary closure of areas to the use of FADs, especially in combination with other regulatory measures being considered by the Commission;
- (g) The feasibility of a program to place observers on purse-seine vessels of less than 400 short tons carrying capacity and the appropriate level of observer coverage necessary to obtain reliable scientific information.

Requests that the Director continue research into the use of fishing gear and/or techniques to reduce the catch of small tunas and the bycatch of non-target species and continue to report to the Commission on the results of this research.