INTERIM FISH AGGREGATION DEVICE (FAD) MANAGEMENT PLAN – NEW ZEALAND

(valid until December 2008)

Purpose

The purpose of this interim FAD management plan is to outline measures New Zealand vessels deploying FADs will take in order to minimise the bycatch of small tuna on floating objects.

This plan is to be read in conjunction with the catch retention plan New Zealand submitted to the Technical and Compliance Committee of the Western and Central Fisheries Commission in September 2008.

Introduction

Vessels operating within New Zealand fisheries waters fish on free schools of skipjack and as such do not use FADs. Bycatch is minimal in these fisheries. Further, catch limits are in place to ensure any bycatch remains within sustainable levels as part of the overall catch of the species in question.

Four New Zealand purse seine vessels fish in areas beyond New Zealand's national jurisdiction. These vessels fish for skipjack tuna, and operations involve the use of drifting FADs, in order to economically catch skipjack tuna with the lowest possible fuel consumption.

Fishing occurs on the high seas and by agreement within the zones of Pacific Island countries/territories.

Fishing using FADs may result in a bycatch of small tuna that aggregate around floating objects. Such bycatch may include juveniles of bigeye and yellowfin tuna, for which the Science Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission has recommended reductions in fishing effort.

New Zealand has developed this FAD management plan in line with provisions in Conservation and Management Measure 2006-01 (Conservation and Management Measures for bigeye and yellowfin tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean).

The plan is an interim plan until the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission agrees on comprehensive measures to minimise the bycatch of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna, at its meeting in December 2008.

Strategies to limit interaction with juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna

The following components are relevant to limiting interaction with juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna:

i) Collection and monitoring of fisheries data to determine catches of bigeye and yellowfin tuna;
ii) Collection and monitoring of spatial and temporal data to determine how catches of bigeye and yellowfin tuna vary with spatial and temporal changes in fishing activities;
iii) Where required, strategies in areas in which high catches of bigeye and yellowfin tuna are observed (for example, avoidance of such areas);
iv) Additional strategies, as required, to limit bycatch of bigeye and yellowfin tuna

FADs set by New Zealand flagged vessels are closely monitored by the companies that operate these vessels, who retain information on FAD distribution and use.

Sets made on FADs are recorded on the logsheets of New Zealand flagged vessels. This information is provided to SPC and the New Zealand government for analyses.

It is noted that New Zealand vessels tend to have relatively low catches of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna, due to the spatial fishing patterns of these vessels.

New Zealand will continue to analyse the use of FADs, the areas where they are used and species composition of catches taken around FADs until the Commission develops a new conservation and management measure in December 2008.