



# COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

## Thirty-sixth Session

8-12 July 2024

**Global overview of lost fishing gear reporting obligations implemented under regional fisheries management organizations and progress in the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear to reduce ALDFG and its impacts**

## Executive Summary

This document provides an overview of existing reporting obligations for lost fishing gear implemented by regional fisheries management organizations and an update on the work conducted by FAO to support implementation of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear, and the FAO Global ALDFG Surveys

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SUB-COMMITTEE ON POLLUTION  
PREVENTION AND RESPONSE  
11th session  
Agenda item 13

PPR 11/13/2  
15 December 2023  
Original: ENGLISH  
Pre-session public release:

## **FOLLOW-UP WORK EMANATING FROM THE ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS MARINE PLASTIC LITTER FROM SHIPS**

**Global overview of lost fishing gear reporting obligations implemented under regional fisheries management organizations and progress in the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear to reduce ALDFG and its impacts**

**Submitted by FAO**

### **SUMMARY**

*Executive summary:* This document provides an overview of existing reporting obligations for lost fishing gear implemented by regional fisheries management organizations and an update on the work conducted by FAO to support implementation of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear, and the FAO Global ALDFG Surveys.

*Strategic direction, if applicable:* 4

*Output:* 4.3

*Action to be taken:* Paragraph 17

*Related documents:* MEPC 74/18; MEPC 75/8/2 and PPR 10/18

### **Introduction**

1 The FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear (VGMFG) address the purpose and principles, the scope of application and the implementation of a gear marking system and its associated components, including reporting of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). The VGMFG were published in 2019 and are available in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese.<sup>1</sup> Two supplements were published in 2023 to facilitate the implementation of the VGMFG, provide a framework for risk assessment<sup>2</sup> and a technical manual for the marking of fishing gear.<sup>3</sup>

2 MEPC 74 invited FAO to provide information on reporting mechanisms, relevant information on existing reporting mechanisms of accidentally lost or discharged fishing gear,

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CA3546T/>

<sup>2</sup> Suppl. 1 A framework for conducting a risk assessment for a system on the marking of fishing gear. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc4084en>

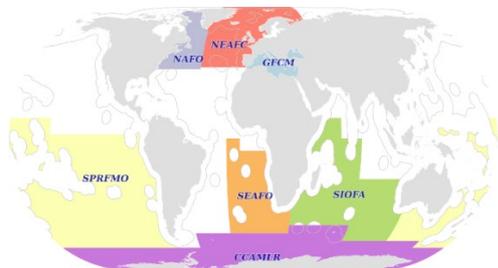
<sup>3</sup> Suppl. 2 Manual for the marking of fishing gear. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc4251en>

including the challenges and benefits of such systems, as well as information that could help clarify details on losses that should be reported (MEPC 74/18, paragraph 8.34). PPR 10, in re-establishing the Correspondence Group on Marine Plastic Litter from Ships, instructed the Group to further consider the draft amendments to MARPOL Annex V to provide for the reporting mechanisms, the modalities and the information to be reported to the Administrations and IMO to facilitate and enhance reporting of the accidental loss or discharge of fishing gear.

3 Consequently, an overview of reporting obligations for lost fishing gear implemented by regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) is provided in this document to serve as useful background for developing and enhancing reporting on the loss or discharge of fishing gear under MARPOL Annex V.

### **A global overview of existing lost fishing gear reporting obligations implemented by regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs)**

4 There are some 50 regional fisheries bodies worldwide,<sup>4</sup>; of these, approximately 22 are RFMOs with mandates to adopt legally binding conservation and management measures. Figures 1 and 2 show the geographical distribution of nine RFMOs that have adopted measures providing for the reporting of lost fishing gear. Table 1 provides a list of adopted measures for reporting of lost fishing gear collected from 11 RFMO secretariats that responded to a request for information. It should be noted that the list provided in table 1 may not be exhaustive; relevant measures may exist in RFMOs not listed.



**Figure 1.** Generic RFMOs<sup>5</sup> with adopted lost gear measures: CCAMLR; GFCM; NAFO; NEAFC; SEAFO; SIOFA; and SPRFMO. Source: FAO, 2023.



**Figure 2.** Tuna RFMOs<sup>6</sup> with adopted lost gear measures: ICCAT and IOTC. Source: FAO, 2023.

5 A summary of the key findings presented in table 1:

- .1 from the 11 RFMOs listed, 8 have adopted mandatory measures and one non-mandatory measure for reporting of lost fishing gear or fish aggregating devices (FADs) over the period from 2007 to 2023;
- .2 none of the RFMOs listed have applied thresholds to reporting requirements;
- .3 the total number of lost gear reports received range from zero to 130;

<sup>4</sup> Regional fisheries management organizations and advisory bodies  
<https://www.fao.org/3/ca7843en/CA7843EN.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Living Resources (CCAMLR); General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM); North-West Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO); North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC); South-East Atlantic Fisheries Organization (SEAFO); South Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA); and South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO).

<sup>6</sup> International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC).

- .4 where a mandatory obligation exists, all vessels report to their flag State who then report to the RFMO Secretariat, who then forward notification in accordance with the measure; and
- .5 publicly available anonymized data on lost gear is provided by four RFMOs.

**Table 1: A global overview of lost fishing gear reporting measures implemented by RFMOs**

RFMO	Relevant Management Measures	Mandatory reporting	Threshold Applied	Yr in force	No of reports	Vessel reports to	Publicly available	Notes and links
CCAMLR	Conservation Measures (CM) 23-04 and 23-06	Yes	No	2007 & 2008	Not known	Flag State*	Yes	Pot vessels (since 2007) <a href="https://www.ccamlr.org/en/node/74772">https://www.ccamlr.org/en/node/74772</a> Longline (since 2008) <a href="https://www.ccamlr.org/en/node/74776">https://www.ccamlr.org/en/node/74776</a> Observers report fishing gear lost at-sea by longline fishing vessels. Metadata summaries are published in some public forums <a href="https://documents.ats.aq/ATCM45/ip/ATCM45_ip006_e.docx">https://documents.ats.aq/ATCM45/ip/ATCM45_ip006_e.docx</a> Voluntary reporting of gear found <a href="https://www.ccamlr.org/en/node/121823">https://www.ccamlr.org/en/node/121823</a>
ICCAT	19-11 Recommendation by ICCAT on abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear	Yes	No	2020	0	Flag State*	No	Reporting forms have been developed and can be found on the ICCAT website under General on the page Submitting Information <a href="https://www.iccat.int/Documents/Recs/compendiopdf-e/2019-11-e.pdf">https://www.iccat.int/Documents/Recs/compendiopdf-e/2019-11-e.pdf</a> Reporting forms <a href="https://www.iccat.int/en/SubmitCOMP.html">https://www.iccat.int/en/SubmitCOMP.html</a> , see CP51-ALDFG and CP52-FLFG.
IOTC	Resolution 23-01 on management of Anchored Fish Aggregating Devices (AFADs).	**AFADs only	No	2023	None	IOTC Secretary - Annual Implementation Report	Yes	Para 10. The AFAD location data provided by the CPCs as required by paragraph 8 of this resolution shall only be used for the purposes of the Scientific Committee and relevant Working Parties and should not be publicly shared or circulated for any other purpose. Implementation reports are publicly available. Location data not shared. <a href="https://iotc.org/sites/default/files/documents/2023/09/IOTC_-_Compendium_of_ACTIVE_CMMs_16_September_2023.pdf">https://iotc.org/sites/default/files/documents/2023/09/IOTC_-_Compendium_of_ACTIVE_CMMs_16_September_2023.pdf</a>
NEAFC	NEAFC Scheme of Control and Enforcement - Article 7b – Garbage at Sea and Retrieval of Lost Gear	Yes	No	2008	None	Flag State*	No***	Note the text includes the following "shall"s: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fishing vessels shall have equipment on board to retrieve lost gear</li> <li>A vessel that has lost gear shall attempt to retrieve it as soon as possible.</li> <li>If the lost gear cannot be retrieved the master of the vessel shall notify the competent authorities of its flag State within 24 hours....</li> </ul> <a href="https://www.neafc.org/scheme/Chapter2/article7b">https://www.neafc.org/scheme/Chapter2/article7b</a>
NAFO	Lost or Abandoned Fishing Gears - Article 13.11 to Article 14 of the NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures.	Yes	No	2013	18	Flag State*	Yes	The detailed data/information is made available on the secure part of the NAFO website (NAFO Members Pages). An anonymized map is available on the public NAFO website displaying the locations of the lost gear occurrences. <a href="https://www.nafo.int/Portals/0/PDFs/COM/2023/comdoc23-01REV.pdf#page=36">https://www.nafo.int/Portals/0/PDFs/COM/2023/comdoc23-01REV.pdf#page=36</a> Lost gear public page <a href="https://www.nafo.int/Fisheries/Reporting-Requirements/Lost-gear">https://www.nafo.int/Fisheries/Reporting-Requirements/Lost-gear</a>

RFMO	Relevant Management Measures	Mandatory reporting	Threshold Applied	Yr in force	No of reports	Vessel reports to	Publicly available	Notes and links
SEAFO	System of Observation, Inspection, Compliance and enforcement (Art 8.f)	Yes	No	2013	10	Flag State*	Yes	SEAFO System Article 8 (f) The flag State shall without delay notify Executive Secretary information referred in paragraphs (d) and (e). The Executive Secretary shall without delay put this information on the SEAFO website. <a href="http://www.seafo.org/About">http://www.seafo.org/About</a> select SEAFO System 2022 (Article 8.f)  Lost gear public page <a href="http://www.seafo.org/Management/Lost-Gear">http://www.seafo.org/Management/Lost-Gear</a>
SIOFA	CMM 09 (2022) for Control of fishing activities in the Agreement Area (para 7)	Yes	No	2017	4	Flag State*	No	Lost line and hooks are also observed and reported within the annual SIOFA data submission, ref CMM 02 (2023) for data standards  <a href="https://siofa.org/sites/default/files/documents/cmm/CMM-09%282022%29-Control.pdf">https://siofa.org/sites/default/files/documents/cmm/CMM-09%282022%29-Control.pdf</a>  <a href="https://siofa.org/management/CMM/02%282023%29">https://siofa.org/management/CMM/02%282023%29</a>
SPRFMO	CMM 17-2022 Conservation and Management Measure on Fishing Gear and Marine Plastic Pollution in the SPRFMO Convention Area	Yes	No	2019	130	Flag State*	No	37 reports submitted in 2020, 17 in 2021, 61 in 2022, and 15 in 2023. Reporting template "REPORT: Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (or Retrieval) version July 2019" can be found under DATA SUBMISSION TEMPLATES section of website.  <a href="https://www.sprfmo.int/assets/Fisheries/Conservation-and-Management-Measures/2022-CMMs/CMM-17-2022-Marine-Pollution-7Mar22.pdf">https://www.sprfmo.int/assets/Fisheries/Conservation-and-Management-Measures/2022-CMMs/CMM-17-2022-Marine-Pollution-7Mar22.pdf</a>  Templates <a href="https://www.sprfmo.int/fisheries/data-2/data-submission/">https://www.sprfmo.int/fisheries/data-2/data-submission/</a>
GFCM	Resolution GFCM/44/2021/14 on abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear	No	No	2022	None	Flag State*	No	Resolution is not obligatory. Standardized GFCM monitoring programmes for discards and scientific surveys at sea provide for the collection of information on marine litter, including fishing gear.  <a href="https://www.fao.org/gfcm/decisions/en/">https://www.fao.org/gfcm/decisions/en/</a>
NPFC	CMM 2023-15 On the Prevention, Reduction, and Elimination of Marine Pollution	N/A	N/A	2023	N/A	N/A	N/A	Although no reporting requirements, there is a prohibition (paragraph 4) on discarding or abandoning fishing gear at sea  <a href="https://www.npfc.int/cmm-2023-15-prevention-reduction-and-elimination-marine-pollution-effective-date-26-july-2023">https://www.npfc.int/cmm-2023-15-prevention-reduction-and-elimination-marine-pollution-effective-date-26-july-2023</a>
WCPFC	CMM 2017-04 - Conservation and Management Measure on Marine Pollution	N/A	N/A	2017	N/A	N/A	N/A	Although no reporting requirements, retrieving and reporting of ALDFG, and to become party to the annexes of MARPOL., is encouraged.  <a href="https://cmm.wcpfc.int/measure/cmm-2017-04">https://cmm.wcpfc.int/measure/cmm-2017-04</a>

**Footnotes:**

- \* Vessel reports to their flag State who then reports to the Secretariat who then forwards notification in accordance with the measure.
- \*\* Anchored Fish Aggregating Devices (aFADs).
- \*\*\* Web page for reports of lost gear exists, only accessible to heads of delegation, delegations, operational contacts and fisheries inspectors who have access.

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## An update on relevant FAO activities

6 FAO is also supporting gear marking efforts through activities under the IMO/FAO GloLitter Partnerships Project (GloLitter).<sup>7</sup> GloLitter is funded by the Government of Norway through NORAD and supports developing countries around the world to prevent and reduce sea-based sources of marine plastic litter (SBMPL) from the shipping and fisheries sectors. Activities under GloLitter support the IMO Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships, as well as interventions to address SBMPL under MARPOL Annex V, the London Convention/London Protocol, the VGMFG and other complementary instruments.

7 Recent FAO-led activities to support gear marking efforts under GloLitter include:

- .1 **The development of an e-learning course on the VGMFG.** The course provides an introduction regarding how the VGMFG can be effectively integrated into national fisheries regulatory frameworks, designed for general audiences as well as policymakers and lawyers. Estimated publication date June 2024;
- .2 **A guidance document, developed in collaboration with IMO, around how to integrate the VGMFG, MARPOL Annex V and the London Convention/London Protocol into national fisheries regulatory frameworks.** The specific guidance around the VGMFG will benefit from the experience of four GloLitter countries that are working to incorporate the provisions of the VGMFG in their national fisheries regulatory frameworks with support from the FAO legal office. Estimated publication date: last quarter of 2024; and
- .3 Inclusion of a dedicated **Terms of Reference (TOR) for gear marking** for the recently developed (February 2022) "ALDFG Topic Group" under the ICES-FAO Working Group on Fishing Technology and Fish Behaviour (WGFTFB).<sup>8</sup> The TOR tasks the Topic Group to Investigate and summarize gear marking technologies. The Topic Group will be run for three years, with the next meeting in June 2024. The output of this TOR will be a written summary of the key gear marking technologies identified.

## FAO Global ALDFG Surveys and Database

8 The FAO Global Survey on ALDFG has been designed in response to the thirty-third session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI 33) which specified recommendations<sup>9</sup> to better understand and quantify ALDFG trends and impacts.

9 The aim of this Survey is to generate evidence-based global quantitative estimates of ALDFG. Data is collected through surveys and is stored in the FAO Global ALDFG Database for further analysis.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.imo.org/en/ourwork/partnershipsprojects/pages/glolitter-partnerships-project-.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> <https://wgftfb.org/>

<sup>9</sup> Paragraph 104 of the Report of the Thirty-third Session of the Committee on Fisheries, Rome, Italy 9-13 July 2018: *"The Committee commended the work of FAO in relation to abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). It encouraged FAO to conduct further work on quantifying the impacts of ALDFG and developing and documenting best practices for addressing ALDFG, including the recovery and recycling of gear, the use of biodegradable gear to minimize its contribution to marine plastic pollution, as well as the reduction of ghost fishing."* <https://www.fao.org/3/ca5184en/CA5184EN.pdf>

10 The reporting of the loss or discharge of fishing gear, even if mandatory, may only provide a limited overview of this issue. The FAO Global ALDFG Survey can be a complementary tool for IMO members to better understand the scale of, and reasons for, ALDFG in their fisheries.

11 Results generated by the FAO ALDFG surveys may be used to contribute to meeting the objectives of the IMO lost gear database being developed. Results generated from the FAO ALDFG survey database could be used to facilitate the development of mitigation measures for preventing and reducing lost fishing gear and provide a database to measure trends and monitor the loss of fishing gear.

12 There are two possibilities for IMO Member States to take advantage of this tool:

- .1 FAO could provide summary reports to IMO either on a regular basis or as requested, noting that the geographical scope included in such reports is limited to the data included in the FAO Global ALDFG Database and, therefore, cannot ensure full global coverage of all fishing gear types at all scales; and
- .2 IMO Member States can implement the FAO Global ALDFG Survey in domestic and distant fleet fisheries by contacting FAO at [responsible-fishing@fao.org](mailto:responsible-fishing@fao.org). FAO will provide training on how to use the Survey as well as technical assistance for its implementation, data analysis and reporting. This option will also contribute to further populate the FAO Global ALDFG Database and contribute to long-term analysis and monitoring.

### **Recommendations**

13 The FAO VGMFG, measures adopted by RFMOs, and all other activities presented in this document are considered as tools to facilitate the development and implementation of systems for the marking of fishing gear, including the reporting of lost gear.

14 Details regarding the formats, data collection requirements and established reporting forms adopted by RFMOs for reporting lost fishing gear may be particularly useful in guiding the development of requirements for the reporting of lost gear under MAPROL Annex V.

15 Members are encouraged to evaluate current reporting requirements and mechanisms for lost fishing gear imposed by RFMOs upon vessels flying their flag, consider how to avoid duplication of this task, and identify where data collection gaps exist.

16 Members are encouraged to discuss with their fisheries counterparts working with RFMOs, the existing lost gear reporting obligations imposed upon their vessels (including any challenges experienced), and consider how they may correspond to potential requirements to be developed under MARPOL Annex V.

### **Action requested of the Sub-Committee**

17 The Sub-Committee is invited to consider this document in the context of discussions on the development and enhancement of the reporting of lost fishing gear under MARPOL Annex V.