

**Title:**

**Taking another step forward: system of verification of the code of good practices in the Spanish tropical tuna purse seiner fleet operating in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans**

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**Abstract:** (Your abstract must use **Normal style** and must fit in this box. Your abstract should be no longer than 300 words. The box will 'expand' over 2 pages as you add text/diagrams into it.)

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About half of the tropical tuna caught worldwide annually is fished by purse seiners mainly using fish aggregating devices (FADs). These devices, although being a very effective fishing tool, are also controversial due to their potential impacts on the ecosystem. In order to improve the sustainability of the fishery, the two Spanish tuna purse seiner associations, ANABAC and OPAGAC, established in 2012 a voluntary agreement for the application of good practices for responsible fishing activities. The aim of this agreement is to use best fishing practices by reducing mortality of incidental catch of sensitive species (sharks, rays, mantas, whale sharks, and sea turtles) and the use of environmentally-friendly FADs. The good practices defined in this agreement comprise: the use of non-entangling FADs, 100% observer coverage, training of fishing crew and overseas observers, best releasing practices for sensitive fauna, verification of the number of active buoys per day, and continuous monitoring by an independent scientific body.

In order to monitor and assess the level of compliance of these good practices, a system of verification has been implemented, and is continuously evaluated, in all the vessels of the ANABAC and OPAGAC fleet (64 purse seiners and 23 supply vessels), including both Spanish and other flags operating globally in 4 tuna RFMOs areas (ICCAT, IOTC, WCPFC and IATTC). The verification is based on specifically designed forms and in-situ data recorded by trained scientific observers, and more recently, also by electronic monitoring systems. Fishing practices are assessed for each vessel every semester and results are used to provide scientific advice and correction mechanisms where necessary. These results also serve as base for the steering committee, created specifically to take decisions and assure the viability of the program. Significant results, the code of conduct as well as the verification mechanisms are presented and discussed in this paper, as an example of responsible and self-regulated fishery.

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