



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

Combating ALDFG and Ghost Fishing

Development of International Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear



Petri Suuronen

Fishing Operations and Technology Branch
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

G7 Workshop on Marine Litter, Rome, 20-21 April 2017

ALDFG – what it is?

- Abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (**ALDFG**) is a significant and dangerous component of marine litter:
 - **Impact on ecosystem and wildlife**
 - **Loss of potential catches**
 - **Cost for fishing sector**
 - **Navigation and safety hazard**
- Causes of ALDFG include:
 - **Bad weather**
 - **Gear conflicts**
 - **Snagging on living and inert structures**
 - **Operator error**
 - **Deliberate discarding / abandonment**
 - **IUU fishing**
- Disposal of fishing gear at sea is in contravention of **MARPOL Annex V**.
- Minimizing ALDFG at sea → **limited success**.



Scale and impact

- The scale of the problem likely under-estimated:
 - No global estimates for plastic litter originating from fishing vessels or natural disasters.
 - Extrapolated figures suggest Abandoned, Lost or Discarded Gear (ALDFG) may account for **10%** of all marine litter.
- High capacity of ALDFG to entangle marine life and become a navigational hazard:
 - It should be addressed as an issue of significant concern.



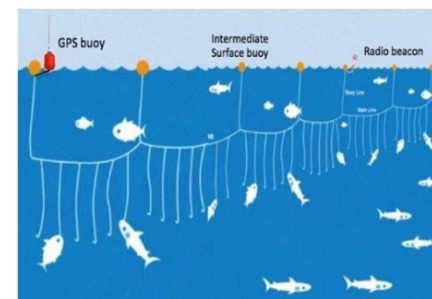
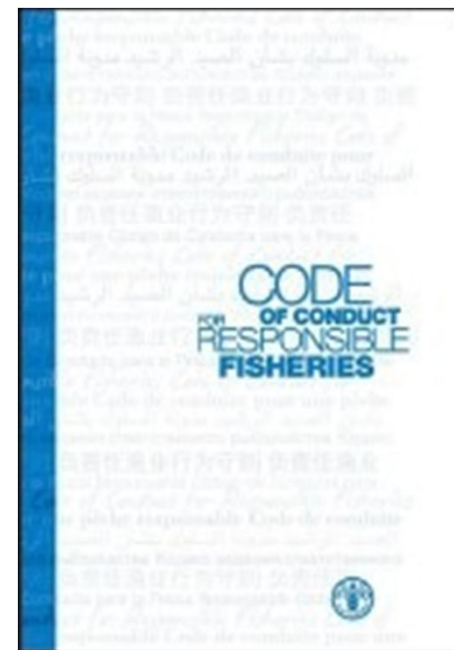
Several international instruments recognize the need to address ALDFG and to mark fishing gear

- UNGA Resolution A/Res/60/31
- United Nations Agreement on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks
- MARPOL Annex V
- International Guidelines on Bycatch Management and Reduction of Discards (FAO 2011)
- Agreement of Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (FAO 2009)
- Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance (FAO 2015)
- Committee on Fisheries (FAO)

Increased global concern: Sustainable Development Goal target 14.1 requests action on marine litter and marine pollution of all kinds **which includes ALDFG.**

Marking of Fishing Gear

- **The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (FAO 1995) states:**
 - *Fishing gear should be marked in accordance with national legislation in order that the **owner** of the gear can be identified.*
 - *Gear marking requirements should take into account uniform and international recognizable gear marking systems.*
- **Only few governments or RFMOs have properly implemented this requirement:**
 - *Accordingly, ALDFG is often impossible to identify to fishery of origin.*



FAO Progress

- **Expert Consultation** on the Marking of Fishing Gear took place in April 2016 at FAO.
- The main outcome was **Draft Guidelines on Marking of Fishing Gear** for consideration for COFI 32.
- COFI 32 (2016) endorsed the work and mandated further development of the Draft Guidelines via **Technical Consultation**.
- COFI 32 also encouraged FAO **to conduct pilot projects** to facilitate the implementation of these guidelines.
- FAO has started the **implementation of pilot projects** and preparations for the Technical Consultation.



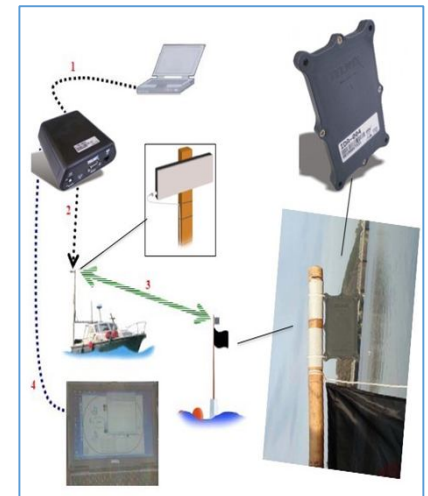
Draft Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear

- **Simple and affordable system:**

- permits easy identification of ownership of gear, fishery of origin, and position of gear
- marks easily attached or embedded to fishing gear
- marks not interfering with the performance of the gear
- marks easily recognized and identified

- **System that is flexible:**

- dependent on risk assessment
- flexible to different fisheries
- implementation feasible and at acceptable cost
- adopting emerging technologies



Benefits of marking fishing gear

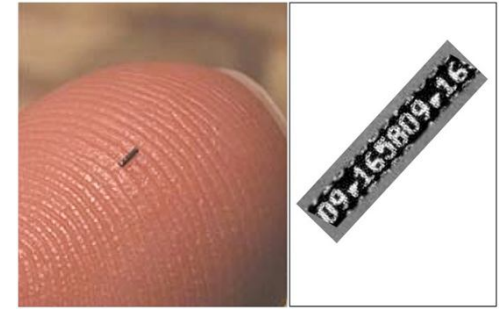
Marking fishing gear supports responsible and efficient management of fisheries:

- Assists in the prevention of ALDFG and ghost fishing.
- Reduces the time and resources spent trying to recover lost gear.
- Supports the recovery of lost gear.
- Enhances the ability to apply fisheries regulatory measures, including those for the prevention of IUU.



Next Steps for FAO

- Pilot projects **testing the feasibility and benefits of various gear marking technologies** (2017-2018):
 - **Gillnet fisheries (Indonesia)**
 - **Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)**
- Technical Consultation in February 2018 to **elaborate and finalize the Guidelines.**
- **Adoption of the International Guidelines** by the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI 33) in July 2018.
- Collaborate with relevant organizations to **develop capacity for gear marking systems and recycling, and to quantify the extent of ALDFG.**



Discussion points to G7 Action Plan

1. G7 Action plan in relation to sea-based sources focusses heavily on MARPOL which is a critical component but **additional measures are necessary** to effectively address the complexity of the ALDFG problem.
2. ALDFG mitigation requires measures that **prevent** the occurrence, **mitigate** impact, and **remove** existing ALDFG.
3. The importance of addressing ALDFG **must be recognized in the context of the SDGs**, particularly in relation to **sustainable fisheries, biodiversity and food security**.
4. FAO **guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear** should be **promoted** by the Regional Seas Programmes, RFMOs and RFBs, and **incorporated into action plans** and **implemented** by governments.
5. Consideration must also be given to implementing a **holistic framework approach** which addresses the **entire life-cycle** of fishing gear as currently being developed by FAO partners and being tested within FAO pilot projects.

