

INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM

**WORKING GROUP TO PROMOTE AND PUBLICIZE THE AIDCP  
DOLPHIN SAFE TUNA CERTIFICATION SYSTEM**

**21<sup>st</sup> MEETING**

La Jolla, California (USA)

26 October 2014

**DOCUMENT DSP-21-04**

**ACTIONS TO PROMOTE AIDCP DOLPHIN-SAFE TUNA**

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the working group in October 2013, preliminary versions of three informational materials regarding the AIDCP and its dolphin-safe label have been presented: a promotional video to highlight the conservation achievements of the AIDCP and the benefits of the AIDCP dolphin-safe label, an educational module to be shared through other appropriate organizations, and a promotional pamphlet. These materials are part of the plan for promoting AIDCP dolphin-safe tuna approved by the Parties in October 2009 (Document [DSP-14-04](#)).

Regarding the promotional video, a version was presented at the 20<sup>th</sup> meeting in July 2014 that incorporated all the comments made at meetings and received in writing. Further changes were requested by the working group, and although the contract with the company that made the video had expired, these changes have been made. The result, which should be considered definitive, is available (with password) on the [IATTC website](#), and once approved by this meeting will be published and made available to any Party that wishes to use it.

As regards the promotional leaflet, attached (Appendix 1) is the version that reflects the comments made at the meeting in July 2014. As with the video, the plan is to make it available on the IATTC website.

Regarding the education module on the AIDCP and its achievements, to be disseminated as appropriate by the IATTC, AIDCP Parties, other relevant international fisheries bodies and participating non-governmental organizations, the version attached (Appendix 2) reflects the comments received from the Parties in July 2014.

## Appendix 1

### AIDCP protects



Established in 1950, the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) is one of the most successful regional fisheries management organizations. The IATTC carries out research on the tuna stocks targeted by the fisheries in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO), and establishes management rules to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of those stocks. The IATTC staff serves as the Secretariat for the AIDCP.









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**APICD  
Dolphin  
Safe  
Label**

## The AIDCP dolphin safe label signifies:


-  Tuna caught in fishing operations monitored by an observer on board.
-  A guarantee to the consumer that tuna was caught in sets in which no dolphins killed or seriously injured were observed.
-  Tuna caught consistent with a conservation and management program supported by the best scientific information available.
-  A labeling standard supported by a binding international agreement that incorporates strict operational fishing measures, close supervision, and sanctions for violations all under a transparent, participative, and verifiable scheme.
-  A system for tracking and verification of tuna's dolphin safe status, from the sea to the consumer.
-  Compliance with certification standards and guidelines adopted under an awarded multinational agreement which received the Margarita Lizarraaga medal presented by the UN FAO in 2005 for the AIDCP's contributions to responsible fisheries.




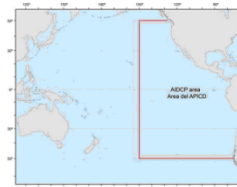
## The AIDCP dolphin safe label


-  The AIDCP dolphin safe label was created by the Parties to the AIDCP, which is administered by the IATTC

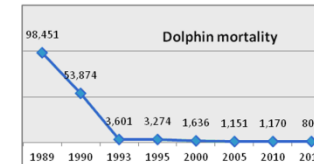



-  The Parties to the AIDCP are Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, European Union, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, United States, and Venezuela. Bolivia and Vanuatu apply it provisionally.


-  This program was developed for application in the Eastern Pacific Ocean. Among its objectives are reducing the incidental mortality of dolphins in the tuna fishery, capturing large yellowfin tunas and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the tuna stocks and other living marine resources related with the fishery




-  This program has achieved great success in reducing the observed incidental mortality of dolphins. A reduction around of 94.5% has been achieved since its operation.



-  AIDCP also promotes the conservation of other marine species, such as turtles, seabirds and sharks-, some of which are threatened.

-  The AIDCP includes unique aspects such as training and qualification of fishing captains, strict operating requirements for vessels such as performance of a backdown maneuver and the use of divers to ensure the safe release of all dolphins, 100% coverage by independent on-board observers, full transparency, and enforcement.



-  Another critically important aspect unique to EPO fisheries, is the AIDCP and IATTC system for reporting and dealing with non-compliance. In other regions, it is a rare event when such violations come to light.

## Appendix 2.

### INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM

## WORKING GROUP TO PROMOTE AND PUBLICIZE THE AIDCP DOLPHIN SAFE TUNA CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

This document reflects all the comments and suggested edits received since it was last reviewed at the 29<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties in July 2014.

### THE AGREEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM (AIDCP) AND THE AIDCP DOLPHIN SAFE LABEL: LEADERSHIP THROUGH RESPONSIBLE FISHING PRACTICES



#### WHAT IS THE AIDCP?

The Agreement for the International Dolphin Conservation Program ([AIDCP](#)) is a multilateral agreement for the protection of dolphins in the tuna fisheries in the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO). Adopted in 1998, the Agreement was the culmination of years of work to address concerns regarding dolphin mortality in the purse-seine fisheries for tunas in the EPO.

The objectives of the AIDCP are:

1. To progressively reduce incidental dolphin mortalities in the tuna purse-seine fishery in the Agreement Area to levels approaching zero, through the setting of annual limits;
2. With the goal of eliminating dolphin mortality in this fishery, to seek ecologically sound means of capturing large yellowfin tunas not in association with dolphins; and
3. To ensure the long-term sustainability of the tuna stocks in the Agreement Area, as well as that of the marine resources related to this fishery, taking into consideration the interrelationship among species in the ecosystem, with special emphasis on, inter alia, avoiding, reducing and minimizing bycatch and discards of juvenile tunas and non-target species.

The AIDCP represents the culmination of decades of work and cooperation among governments, scientists and fishermen, who worked tirelessly to develop the gear, procedures, and technical knowledge utilized in today's fishery. The annual mortality in the fishery in the 1960s exceeded 150,000 dolphins. By the time the first international program, the La Jolla Agreement, was implemented in 1993, it had been reduced to about 15,000. The La Jolla Agreement was succeeded by the AIDCP in 1999, and the observed annual mortality of dolphins in the fishery is now routinely below 1,000, a decrease of over 99% from the historic highs.

#### WHO PARTICIPATES IN THE AIDCP?

Currently, the Parties to the Agreement are Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salva-

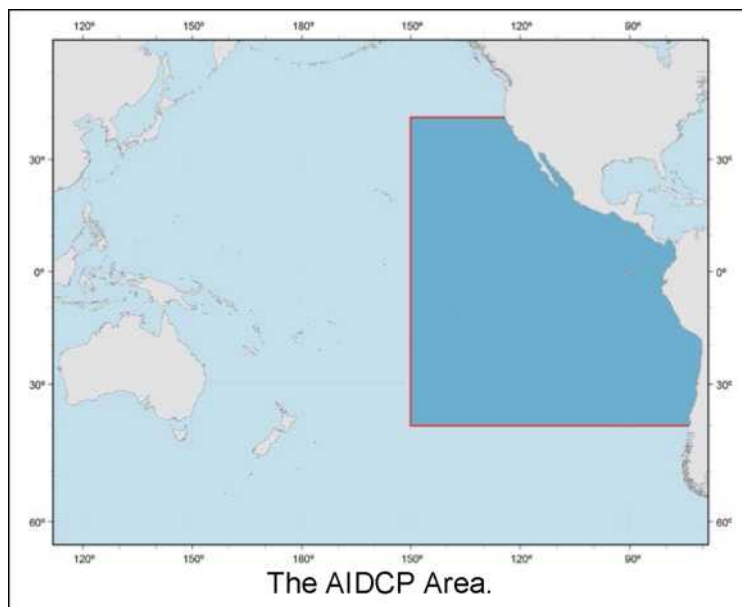
dor, European Union, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, United States, Vanuatu, and Venezuela. Also, Bolivia applies the AIDCP, although it is not a Party.

The work of the AIDCP is transparent, and the participation of interested stakeholders is encouraged.

Accordingly, the Agreement provides for the participation of representatives from environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the tuna industry in the work of the AIDCP's compliance body, the International Review Panel (IRP).

#### WHY WAS THE AIDCP CREATED?

In the 1950s, purse-seine fishermen discovered a unique association, found almost exclusively in the tropical eastern Pacific Ocean, between dolphins and yellowfin tuna. Often, schools of large adult yellowfin tuna are found swimming under herds of dolphins on the surface. Since that time, the predominant method for catching adult yellowfin tuna in the region has been to locate dolphin herds at the surface and, using this valuable visual cue, encircle the schools of



tuna under the dolphins with purse-seine fishing nets. Frequently, in the course of this operation, dolphins are also encircled in the net. In the early years of the fishery, little effort was made to release encircled dolphins, which became entangled in the nets and drowned. No exact figures are available, but it is estimated that the resulting mortality at times exceeded 150,000 dolphins per year, which led to dramatic declines in some of the dolphin stocks. The international community recognized that this was not desirable or sustainable, and fishermen and researchers began developing equipment and practices that allowed encircled dolphins to be released from the nets unharmed,

while retaining the valuable tuna catches below.

Decades of cooperative work produced gear and techniques that reduced dolphin mortality in fishing operations substantially, and in 1992 the countries involved in the fishery signed the La Jolla Agreement, which established a groundbreaking voluntary program to strictly limit the allowable mortality and regulate fishing for tunas associated with dolphins. Many of the hallmarks of that agreement were incorporated in the binding AIDCP, which entered into force in 1999..

#### HOW DOES AIDCP ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVES?

The functioning of the AIDCP is guided by the Agreement and its annexes, as well as by the [decisions taken by the Parties, which are reflected in the resolutions, procedures and guidelines](#) that have been adopted. The five most important elements of the AIDCP are:



**Top:** a purse-seine net is deployed on a school of yellowfin tuna, also encircling a herd of dolphins. **Bottom:** dolphins swim unharmed over the float line of the purse- seine net during the backdown maneuver.

**Dolphin mortality limits:** The Agreement imposes strict dolphin mortality limits for the purse- seine fishery in the Agreement Area. It restricts the total incidental observed dolphin mortality to no more than five thousand individuals annually. This global limit is then divided among the vessels that are authorized to fish for tunas associated with dolphins. If the limit is reached, then all fishing for tunas associated with dolphins must cease for the rest of the year. However, in practice, the total annual dolphin mortality recorded by observers in the fishery has never exceeded 1,600 individuals since the AIDCP entered into force, and in 2013 was 801 individuals. Similarly, any vessel that reaches its individual annual Dolphin Mortality Limit (DML) must stop fishing for tunas associated with dolphins for the rest of the year. Finally, annual mortality limits, based on the best available science, are set for the various individual dolphin stocks impacted by the fishery. If any one of these limits is reached, fishing for tunas associated with that stock by the entire fleet must cease for the remainder of the year. Again, in practice, none of these limits has ever been reached. The individual dolphin stock limits should be revised in the near future

in order to take account of possible changes in the related dolphin populations.

**On-Board Observer Program:** Only purse- seine vessels with a carrying capacity greater than 363 metric tons are permitted to apply for a DML and fish for tunas associated with dolphins, and the Agreement mandates that all such vessels must carry an independent observer aboard at all times, whether or not they fish for tunas associated with dolphins. The observers, who have received extensive training in order to ensure that they can perform all the necessary duties and functions, record the vessels' activities in detail, and send regular reports on observed dolphin mortality; in this way, compliance with the DML system and other operational requirements of the AIDCP is closely monitored and strictly enforced through reports to, and action by, the IRP. Among their other duties, the observers also record bycatches of non-target species taken during fishing operations.

**Operating requirements:** The AIDCP also requires the use of specific fishing gear, equipment, techniques and procedures that have proven effective in minimizing harm to dolphins. All vessels with a DML must have a dolphin safety panel installed in their nets, and are required to perform a maneuver known as "backdown" (illustrated in the photo) whenever dolphins are encircled in the net. Used in combination, these two factors allow encircled dolphins to escape safely over a portion of the purse-seine net float line that becomes submerged. The vessel must also

carry speedboats, a raft, snorkeling gear, and other equipment that allow the vessel crew to make sure that all dolphins are released before the net is retrieved and the tuna catches brought on board. Also, divers are used to release dolphins from the net.

**Training and qualification of fishing captains:** Under the AIDCP, fishing captains must be trained and authorized before they can direct fishing operations on vessels with DMLs. Authorized captains must be familiar with the requirements of the AIDCP, and trained in how to apply them in order to avoid all possible harm to dolphins. The performance of individual captains is monitored through the on-board observer program and reviewed by the IRP: captains with poor performance records, or who repeatedly commit infractions, are removed from the list of authorized captains and can no longer work on vessels with DMLs.

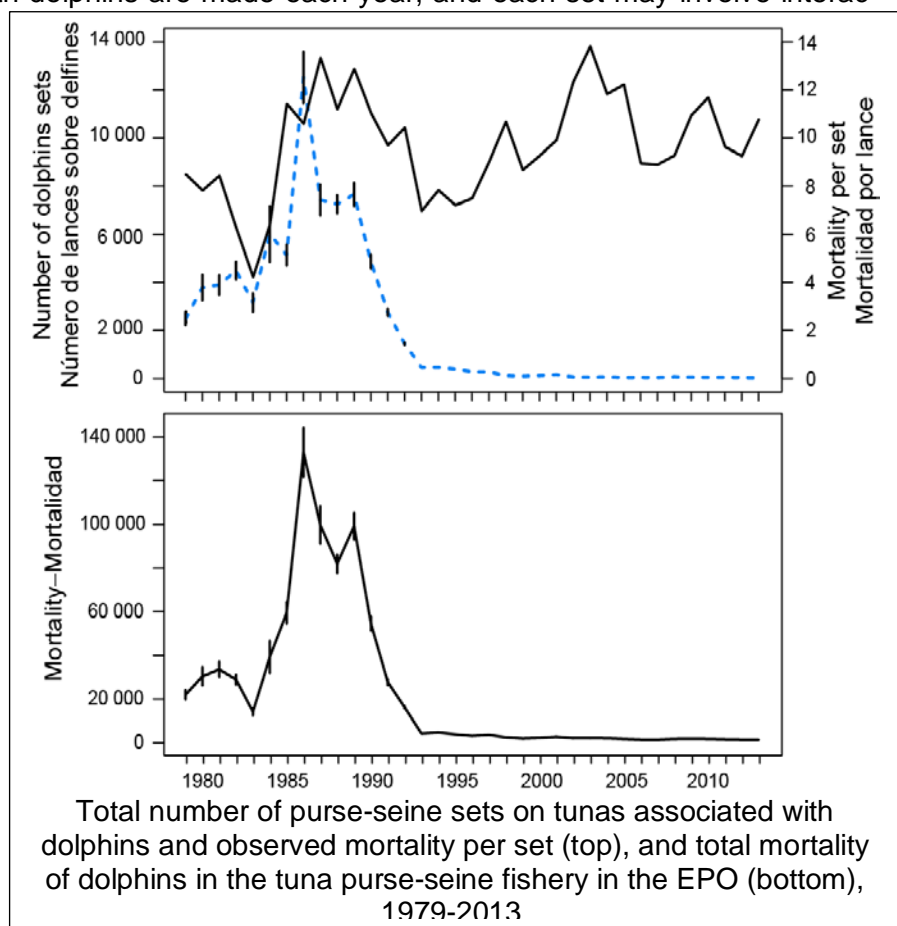
**Compliance monitoring and transparency:** Cases of potential infractions recorded by observers are reviewed by the IRP and, if an infraction is identified, the vessel's flag Party is notified. The Party is required to investigate such cases and, if appropriate, apply meaningful sanctions, and then report back to the IRP on the outcomes and disposition of all investigations.

### HAS THE AIDCP BEEN A SUCCESS?

The results of the AIDCP have been significant. During the last 20 years, since the operational methods now enshrined in the AIDCP began to be commonly used, dolphin mortality in the Agreement Area has declined by over 99% from the levels estimated for the early years of the dolphin fishery. This achievement has to be seen in the context of a fishery in which over 10,000 sets on tunas associated with dolphins are made each year, and each set may involve interactions with tens or even hundreds of dolphins. Of course, such success is not possible without the cooperation of the fishermen. In 2011, only 16 possible infractions were presented to the IRP for review, from a total of 11,870 dolphin sets made that year, an average of only 1.4 possible infractions for every 1,000 sets made. .

The graphs show the enormous strides that have been made under the AIDCP. Dolphin mortality been drastically reduced under the AIDCP. By catching predominantly large, mature yellowfin tuna, the fishery maximizes the sustainable yield from the tuna stocks.

### WHO SUPPORTS THE AIDCP?



The hard work and achievements realized under the AIDCP have been recognized by the inter-

national community and environmental NGOs. In recognition of its success, in 2005 the Agreement was awarded the prestigious Margarita Lizarraga Medal, awarded every two years by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for exemplary implementation of international rules for responsible fisheries and marine resource management. In presenting the award, Jacques Diouf, the Director-General of the FAO, commended the Agreement for having diligently applied the relevant principles set forth in the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and for the utilization of fishing gear and techniques which have produced the enormous reduction in dolphin mortalities in the fishery. According to the Director-General, the AIDCP was selected for the award *"in recognition of its comprehensive, sustainable and catalytic initiatives in support of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, in particular those aspects relating to the precautionary approach and to the utilization of fishing gear and techniques which minimize the catch of non-target species."*

Similarly, the AIDCP has been singled out for praise by a number of major environmental NGOs that have observed the AIDCP in action and, in some instances, participated directly in the work of the IRP:

"The AIDCP provides protection for each individual dolphin stock or species to ensure its continued growth and recovery; requires that measures be adopted to avoid and reduce the discard of other marine species caught by the fishery such as sea turtles, sharks and billfish; and mandates actions that will guarantee the sustained health of the tuna fishery and the marine ecosystem of the eastern tropical Pacific."

CENTER FOR MARINE CONSERVATION  
International Association for Aquatic Animal Medicine website, 2002

#### WHAT IS THE "AIDCP DOLPHIN SAFE" LABEL?

In June 2001, the Parties to the AIDCP created the voluntary "AIDCP Dolphin Safe" label for tuna products from the EPO. The label conveys to consumers that the tuna products were caught exclusively in purse-seine sets in which there were no observed mortalities or serious injuries of dolphins when the tuna was caught, a claim backed by 100% observer coverage of participating vessels. AIDCP Dolphin Safe tuna certification is supported by a transparent monitoring, tracking, and verification system established under the auspices of the binding international agreement that includes wide participation by coastal and fishing nations of the EPO.

The "AIDCP Dolphin Safe" status of tuna from the EPO is verified and tracked from the moment of capture all the way through to the point of retail sale. Tuna catches classified as AIDCP dolphin safe are kept separate aboard the fishing vessels from other catches, and are identified by means of unique tuna tracking forms (TTFs). TTF numbers accompany catches through unloading, storage, and processing, to ensure that tuna products receiving the AIDCP label are truly "dolphin safe".

In summary, the hallmarks of the "AIDCP Dolphin Safe" label are:

- Assurance that no dolphins were observed killed or seriously injured in process of catching the tuna that bears the label.
- It is supported by 100% observer coverage of all fishing trips made by purse-seine vessels of capacity greater than 363 metric tons, including those that fish for tunas associated with dolphins.
- It is based on a system that requires strict compliance with the mandatory requirements of the AIDCP.



- Compliance with these requirements is verified, and the tuna receiving the label are tracked continuously from capture to market.
- The work of the AIDCP and the AIDCP Dolphin Safe certification system are transparent and are monitored by the IRP, which includes governments and representatives from both the tuna industry and environmental NGOs.
- The tuna was harvested in compliance with all applicable conservation and management measures.
- It is fully consistent with the guidelines for the certification of fishery products approved by FAO.