



ATÚN SOSTENIBLE

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Best Practice Mitigation Guidelines for Special Species



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Best Practice on Board Policy | 1
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1. Introduction

Looking forward to improve methods toward long-term sustainability of Atun Sostenible fishery and the fisheries where Atun Sostenible tuna fleet operates, we are defining these guidelines of best practice to protect Special Species that can be accidentally caught in the tuna purse seine operations.

This document briefly outlines the best options that we are implementing to mitigate the capture of special species and ETP. These techniques have been compared with the Conservation and Management Measures that have been adopted by the IATTC and are in line with our policy.

But part of the best practice guides is for us as a group to disseminated them as widely as possible among the crew, and maintain a regular training program in the techniques recommended. Carry out responsible fishing, minimizing the impact on the marine ecosystem and managing it in a sustainable way is the present.

2. Coverage Area

The Atun Sostenible fleet and operating companies' fish in the Exclusive Economic Zones where a fishing permit has been requested and on the high seas of the FAO zones 77 and 87 of the Pacific Ocean.

With these good practices, the crew members of the fleet try to reduce the mortality of vulnerable species as a result of bycatch in the purse-seine tuna fishery.

These techniques were developed and implemented on a voluntary basis to minimize the impact on the marine ecosystem and to encourage new and experienced crew members to implement it.

3. Release Techniques

The single most important mitigation measure that can be adopted for any special specie is to avoid catching them in the first place. But improved techniques for releasing bycatch alive has been an important mitigation measure. The IATTC require to release them healthy and promptly.



We try as much as possible and for educational and sustainability purposes to record and register every interaction with these species. Among the main species that interact in the purse seine fishing process we can mention the following:

Sharks

If a shark that have been encircled by the purse seine net, its best survival rate is been release before the net is lifted. The least damaging method is to use a brailer to scoop shark straight out the bunt and release them into the ocean, as specified in IATTC Resolution C-2016-05. Sharks that are entangled in the walls of the bunt can be release as the net is being hauled, by reducing the haul rate to reduce tension, or use hooks and lines to fish the shark out of the bunt.

If the shark must be release from the deck it is found that the speed of release is essential to reduce mortality. For small sharks it must be handled with both hands, maintaining control of the body at all times and preventing it from shaking. For medium size, it must be handled by two people or use the dip net.

It should NOT be done:

- It is forbidden to lift a shark by its tail or head under any circumstances
- Forbidden to transport or drag inserting fingers in their gill slits.
- Forbidden to use rope to tow them.
- Forbidden to expose the animal to the sun
- Forbidden to suffer physical trauma (no pulling, pushing, squeezing, or any kind of mistreatment that can damage their organs).

In case the release is delayed and as a precaution, the following should be carried out:

- Put the shark in the shade, spray it with water frequently and place a hose in its mouth with a low flow of water.
- Cover the eyes with a soft, damp, dark cloth to calm it down.
- To prevent bites, place a dead fish or a fat stick between the jaws for safe handling.

Once released, the animal's behavior will be checked and the operation recorded. If there is unusual behavior, it will also be reported with observations.

Turtles

If a sea turtle is found, an attempt should be made to release it in a way that causes the least possible damage, without compromising the safety of the crew. Interactions are occasional, but most often occur when turtles associate with floating objects (mostly FADs).

IATTC defines a Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) as an anchored, drifting, floating or submerged object deployed and/or tracked by vessels, including through the use of radio



and/or satellite buoys, for the purpose of aggregating target tuna species for purse-seine fishing operations.

The presence of tuna and turtles in the same place can also be influenced by oceanographic characteristics, however, it is a fortuitous event since turtles cannot swim at the same speed as tuna or dolphins.

All captured turtles must be released, in the best possible scenario, unharmed. They can drown if they spend a long time underwater, since they need to go to the surface to breathe. In the event that it is detected that it is injured, it must be kept on board in a shady and humid place until it is completely healed before being released.

Turtles must be released by handling them by the shell with both hands, avoiding holding it just above the head, in order to protect the hands of the crew.

The use of satellite services that provide sea surface and subsoil temperatures can also contribute to reducing the capture of turtles

It should NOT be done:

- Forbidden to lift the turtle by the flippers, as it is a sensitive area and can be dislocated.
- Forbidden to expose the animal to the sun
- Forbidden to place the turtle with the shell down, as it prevents it from breathing.

In case the release is delayed and as a precaution, the following should be carried out:

- Put the animal in the shade, sprinkling it with water frequently, keeping its skin and eyes moist.
- Raise the back of the turtle about 20cm.

Once released, the animal's behavior will be checked and the operation recorded. If there is unusual behavior, it will also be reported with observations.

Mantas y Rays

In the event of encountering this animal, it must be removed from the fence before being brought on board. In those cases that must be released from the deck, the ideal is to use some equipment such as a net, grills or canvas for a simpler and safer handling of the crew. In the event that it must be released manually, it is recommended that it be handled by 2 to 3 people, keeping their arms extended so that it is far from the body, to avoid tail whipping.

It should NOT be done:

- Forbidden to carry it by the tail
- Forbidden to drag or transport holding the cephalic lobes.



- Forbidden to transport it by inserting fingers or any other object in its gill slits.
- Forbidden to insert pointed objects into the animal's body.
- Forbidden to expose the animal to the sun

Once released, the animal's behavior will be checked and the operation recorded. If there is unusual behavior, it will also be reported with observations.

Whale Shark or Cetaceans

These animals accidentally remain inside the fence net, and although the release maneuver is difficult, the crew will take all possible measures to avoid harming these animals.

Atun Sostenible prohibits its vessels from making a set if they detect a whale shark before doing so. These animals usually swim underwater and are not seen during the draft.

It should NOT be done:

- Forbidden to lift or tow it by the tail

The purse seine must be collected carefully in order to isolate the animal and whenever the behavior of the animal and the circumstances of the sea allow it, the following measures are taken:

- If it floats on the surface, the net is pulled from the tail to the head of the animal trying to make the animal slide towards the line of corks, or if it is small, it can be released with the dip net, or wait for the animal to swim out with the help of the crew by partially sinking the cork line.
- In the event that it is not seen on the surface, the catch begins to be shipped until it appears and the above guidelines are followed.

Once released, the animal's behavior will be checked and the operation recorded. If there is unusual behavior, it will also be reported with observations.

4. Observer Coverage

The fleet of Atun Sostenible vessels complies with IATTC requirements and maintains 100% observers on board on each of their trips, who collect all the information on the sets and report to the Authorities.

Our captains and crew collaborate with observers to collect biological samples from animals when necessary.

5. Trainings

We provide continuous and detailed workshops on points that are collected from these good practices, to increase the ability of crew members to avoid incidental capture, release maneuvers and species management.

In this same way we promote the training of scientific observers on board for the correct data collection.

During the training periods, we evaluate the correct follow-up of the program and share experiences on the possible difficulties that may arise.

6. Group Responsibilities

Our policies require that this living document be reviewed annually, by fleet representatives who are competent fishing professionals. In this way, we ensure that the best procedures are applied on board our vessels and our fishing process is kept up to date.

7. References

Our onboard bycatch maneuvering procedures align with the following sources:

- Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishery (FAO, 1995)
- Information document for the Kobe II Workshop on SHARKS bycatch.
- Information document for the Kobe II Workshop on Turtle bycatch.
- Hall, M., & M. Román. 2013. Bycatch and non-tuna catch in the tropical tuna purse seine fisheries of the world. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper. No. 568. Rome. FAO. 262 pp.
- Sacchi, J. 2021. Overview of mitigation measures to reduce the incidental catch of vulnerable species in fisheries. Studies and Reviews No. 100 (General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean). Rome, FAO.
- SAC-05-03c Safe release of turtles and manta rays. SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE - FIFTH MEETING. La Jolla, California (USA) May 12 -16, 2014.
- FAO International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks
- Good Practices for the Mitigation of the Environmental Impacts of the Fishing of High Purse Seine.
- Guidelines for reducing sea turtle mortality in fisheries operations FAO 2011
- Poisson F., Vernet A.L., Séret B., Dagorn L., 2012. Good practices to reduce the mortality of sharks and rays caught incidentally by the tropical tuna purse seiners
- Res C-04-05, Res C05-03, Res C11-10, Res C15-04, Res C16-01, Res C16-04, Res C16-05, Res C16-06, Res C-04-05, Res C-04-07, Res-C-07-03, Res C-16-01, C-19-04

