



# Fishing Industry Association of Papua New Guinea (FIA PNG)

## FIA PNG Long Term Strategic Plan for Mitigating Bycatch

### 1. Background

FIA PNG office (FIAO) has developed a Long Term Strategic Plan for mitigating bycatch, where milestones have been set up by year.

This Strategic Plan is aligned with the MSC tuna fishery certification conditions of Principle # 2 and aims to address it. For that reason, FIAO focuses on the following areas:

#### 1.1 Setting nets on unassociated tuna sets and target tuna free schools:

FIA shark strategy plan is to primarily make free school sets, which have a substantially lower shark catch rate (number per set) than drifting FAD (dFADs) and other associated fisheries for example in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

Since 2021 the tuna sets and catches have a ratio of unassociated sets (free school) 90 – 97% vs associated sets 3 – 10%

#### 1.2 Setting up a Management System including Shark Policies and its implementation:

- Develop and implement comprehensive shark policies, procedures, and audit tools that prioritize the conservation and sustainable management of shark populations.
- Ensure compliance with WCPFC Conservation Management Measures (CMM), international regulations, and agreements regarding the protection of sharks.

Our FIA PNG Responsible Sourcing Policy V7.0 developed in 2018 committed and requested to minimize incidental mortality of non-target species and impacts on marine ecosystems.

Later in July 2022, the FIAO and FIA PNG tuna fleet members launched the Shark Finning Policy 2022 aligned with the WCPFC CMM addressing the effectiveness and implementation of the CMM2010-07, in the exceptional case that Sharks are landed, the FIA PNG policy requires the landing of all sharks with fins naturally attached (FNA) is obligatory to ensure that shark finning is not occurring aligned with MSC fishery standard V3.0 requirement of shark finning does not take place on MSC certified fishing trips by requiring sharks to be landed with their fins naturally attached (FNA). This new policy follows an extensive review of the best practices already in place within fisheries to prevent shark finning.

In the same year, FIAO and FIA PNG tuna fleet members adopted the Tuna fleet best handling practices for the safe release of Sharks (other whale sharks and Mantas/Mobulids), Sea Turtles, Cetaceans, and Whale Sharks V1.0, which is fully based on the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission WCPFC Best Practices for Handling Sharks and ETP. Having in place these initial policies and procedures, FIAO contacted and requested The Secretariat of Pacific Countries SPC a tailored training on Best Practices for Handling ETP to develop our training



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program for both our tuna fleet skippers and the National Fisheries Authority NFA observers refreshment training.

Providing training to crew members on proper handling and release techniques for ETP species, and implementing protocols for reporting and documenting interactions with ETP species to improve data collection and monitoring efforts with [videos during the release of these species](#) is part of our continuous efforts to be accountable about it.

Our strategic plan also includes maintaining and enhancing monitoring and compliance of our fishing operation in the Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ) of Papua New Guinea and complying with the WCPFC CMM, which is described in our [FAD Standard Operating Procedure FIA members V2.0](#). The regulatory agency in PNG, the NFA, has a requirement that there is 100% observer coverage and that a qualified fisheries observer is placed onboard our vessels to collect and collate data and information on the species catch composition and other requirements outlined in the NFA fishery management policy.

An observer is also required to report in near real-time data and information on the operations for the FAD deployment setting, including endangered, threatened, and protected species (ETP).

In 2022, FIAO developed a comprehensive plan for mitigating the Silky Shark bycatch as a first step to developing the current ETP Long-Term Strategic Plan. The Silky Shark bycatch Plan was shared with SPC, International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF), and NFA for feedback and involvement of stakeholders. As a remark, our tuna fleet is part of the [ISSF PVR vessel's list](#) and audits and complies with the ISSF [Transactions and Conservation Measures Management Requirements](#) to promote responsible fishing practices and sustainable fisheries management, as a PVR fleet we continuously update our public commitment and our tuna fleet also update it on their website and at Sea.

*“This comprehensive shark conservation strategy, aim to work towards safeguarding shark populations, promoting sustainable fishing practices, and raising awareness about the importance of shark conservation for healthy marine ecosystem.*

*By implementing this strategic plan, the PNG fishing industry can work towards reducing bycatch, protecting endangered species, and promoting sustainable fishing practices in alignment with international conservation goals.*

*Let's collaborate and take proactive steps to protect these vulnerable species for future generations”*

*Marcelo Hidalgo, FIA PNG Sustainability and CSR Director*



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Following the mitigating Silky Shark bycatch Plan, an audit protocol that includes procedure and checklist was created and updated in March 2024. FIAO shared it and trained NFA observers on it, and our FIA PNG tuna fleet representatives also received training and the documents. The aim of this [FIA PNG Shark Survival Assessment Onboard Fishing Vessel's Procedure V2.0](#) is to assess the Shark Survival rate and ask 3 parties (NFA observers, FIA PNG Skipper onboard, and FIAO auditors) to monitor the releasing of the Shark from the deck after handling it onboard.

### Summary of our efforts – Shark and ETP Strategic Plan

#### 1. Monitoring:

- 100% observer coverage for data collection onboard
- Implementing regular programs to track shark populations, and habitat
- Collaborate with research institutions and conservation organizations to share and analyse monitoring data effectively
- Utilize satellite tagging to gather data on shark survival movement patterns and population dynamics.

#### 2. Survival Assessment:

- Conduct assessment of Shark populations to determine hot spots, incidental fishing areas, and identify potential fishing strategies to mitigate or minimise the bycatch.
- Promote sustainable fishing practices that prioritize shark conservation and ensure the long-term survival of sharks populations (Best practices for handle ETP).

#### 3. Awareness of Observers Onboard:

- Provide training to Observers onboard fishing vessels to accurately identify shark species, record catch data, and report any illegal or unsustainable practices.
- Raise awareness among fishermen about the importance of sharks in marine ecosystems and the benefits of sustainable shark conservation.
- Encourage collaboration between observers, fishermen, and conservationists to promote responsible fishing practices and protect shark populations

#### 4. Training of Skippers:

- Develop training programs for skippers and boat captains to educate them about shark conservation, regulations, FADs design, and best practices (e.i FIAO trainings, ISSF trainings)
- Emphasize the importance of proper handling and release techniques for shark caught accidentally to improve of proper handling and release techniques for sharks caught accidentally to improve their chances of survival.
- Encourage skippers to lead by example and promote a culture of sustainable fishing practices within their crew and local fishing communities

#### 5. Scientific Data Analysis:

- Compile and analyze scientific data collected from monitoring programs, survival assessment and observers reports to assess them, understand them, and advise improvement in the fishing practices within our tuna fleet members.
- Share research findings and analysis results with policy makers, stakeholders, and the public to advocate for stronger protection measures for sharks.

#### 6. Tagging Program For 2025:

- Identify and engage with a research or academia to develop a Shark tagging project.
- Launch a tagging program to track the movement and behavior of key species, including sharks, to improve understanding of their ecological role and inform management decisions.
- Collaborate with research institutions and experts to design and implement the tagging program effectively.



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### 2. Science-based approach and collaboration

In 2023, we engaged with two (2) scientific centers to carry out several research aiming at having scientific information to mitigate and reduce our impact in the fishery when it comes to ETP.

Collaborating with the [Safina Center research was the first step to improve our strategic plan](#) where we learned where the Silky Shark hot spots are located and assessed the effectiveness of mitigation measures.

The study found two tuna catch warmspots overlapped with warmspots for whale sharks in the northwestern zone of the PNG EEZ, and for silky sharks, rays and whale sharks in the Coral Sea in the southeastern PNG EEZ. The results are a tool to inform our fishing company members where we should reduce and avoid set nets to consequently reduce the bycatch of these mentioned species, also findings inform the design of a [bycatch management strategy that incorporates area-based management to avoid catch rate hotspots of at-risk species without compromising the catch of principal market species](#).

We shared and informed the results with the NFA to be considered as part of the tuna fishery management plan.

Later a multi-species bycatch assessment per species, per vessel, per fleet including a comparison analysis started at the end of 2023 with the [University of Queensland](#) and will be updated as soon as the study ends assessing 46 tuna purse seiners from our FIA PNG RSP initiative.

Our [FIA PNG Shark Survival Assessment Onboard Fishing Vessel's Procedure V2.0](#), to assess the Shark Survival rate and ask 3 parties (NFA observers, FIA PNG Skipper onboard, and FIAO auditors) to monitor the release of the Shark from the deck after handling it onboard will be supported for a shark tagging program.

FIAO in their efforts to ensure our Skippers are handling and applying properly the Best Practices for Handling Sharks and ETP onboard, is embarking on a tagging program with a scientific center to tag, and track Silky Sharks after releasing them from the fishing vessels. We are supporting and engaging more and more scientific research and sharing the results publicly knowing that we can help other fisheries with our model.



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### 3. Responsibility of FIA Office

The FIAO will ensure the full implementation of this FIA PNG Long Term Strategic Plan for Mitigating Bycatch by the participants in the FIA PNG MSC scheme in accordance with the FIA policy & procedures, and WCPFC recommendations.

An NFA shark survival report and FIA PNG fleet or F/V reports are pre-requirements for the annual audit of the modern. The FIAO will audit on an annual basis FIA fishing company members and fishing vessels. The fishing vessel will be randomly audited (desktop) against the FIA PNG Long Term Strategic Plan for Mitigating Bycatch, The FIA PNG Sustainability and MSC Coordinator will assess these documents per fleet. The outcomes will be shared with the FIA fishing company and the FIAO management. FIA PNG members shall provide access to documented evidence for traceability and reporting onboard.

#### 3.1 Failure to comply

*Request for explanation or remedial action*

3.1.1 If the FIA PNG office (FIAO) is found and verifies that a fishing vessel or a fishing company member has failed to comply with a requirement under this FIA PNG Long Term Strategic Plan for Mitigating Bycatch, the FIAO may give a written request to the fishing company to do either or both of the following:

- a. Provide an explanation for the failure to comply within a specified period of 28 days or longer after the request is given;
- b. Undertake specified remedial action in relation to that requirement in accordance with the request within a specified period of 28 days or longer after the request is given.
- c. FIAO shall be satisfied with the remediation proposed and monitor the compliance of the fishing company or fishing vessel
- d. The Sustainability and CSR director is full responsible for assessing the answer, a recommendation shall be given to the FIA PNG Chairman & President for final decision.

3.1.2 If an FIA PNG fleet member ***fails to comply*** with a request if, and only if:

- a. No explanation is given in response to the request within the period specified in the request under 3.1.1.a, or
- b. No remedial action is undertaken in response to the request within the period specified in the request under paragraph 3.1.1.b

3.1.3 If an FIA PNG fleet member follows the 3.1.2, FIAO will extend a suspension notice and will remove the fleet or fishing vessel from the FIA PNG RSP and FIA PNG initiative within 5 working days of a written notice.



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### 4. History of Revision

<b>Revision #</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Reasons/Details</b>
0.1	February 2022	Creation Long Term Strategic Plan for Mitigating Bycatch (M.H)
2.0	March 2024	Tagging program and Scientific research. Tables and links (M.H and TWG)