

SFA starts study on fish movements

Get the fish closer to shore, away from pirates

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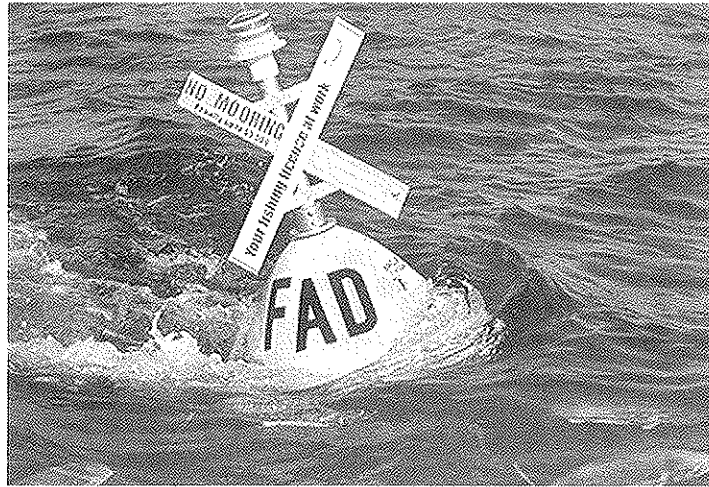
The Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA) has announced that during 2012, it will undertake a colonization study and tagging experiment on Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) to better understand the movement and residence time of the fish species associated with FADs.

According to the SFA, with the offshore threat of piracy, FADs are expected to collect pelagic species closer inshore making it safer for fishermen to access them. This means that fishermen would not need to go too far out to sea to catch the fish and run the danger of falling prey to pirates.

Fish aggregating devices are floating objects specifically designed to locate, attract and bring together pelagic fish, making it easier for fishermen to find them. All of the FADs deployed by the SFA are moored using a large anchor with one metre concrete blocks.

The SFA had embarked on the FAD deployment operation in late 2011 with a total of six FADs being deployed on the Mahé Plateau between 29 November and 3 December. Before this, the SFA hosted a meeting with fishermen and other stakeholders in early November, to determine the most appropriate locations to set up the FADs.

The FADs have been anchored between one to three kilometres from the shore in waters of about 50 metres and are expected to aggregate medium sized pelagic fishes such as skipjack and yellow fin tuna, dolphin-fish (dorad),



New FAD study to better understand movement of fish

rainbow-runner (galate), wahoos (kingfish) and other smaller pelagic fishes such as scads and mackerels. The cost for one of the FADs is approximately \$4000 (estimated SR72,000), excluding additional cost for deployment and maintenance.

It should be noted that FADs do not increase the biomass or population size of fish but rather serve to bring them together in one spot, making it easier to catch them.

The FADs being deployed are of two types; the rosary type which consists of a series of 30 to 50 small orange buoys at the surface and marked by a flag and a radar reflector, and the single buoy type which consist of a single large buoy (approximately 50 litres) distinguished by a solar powered flashing light.

The deployment of FADs in Seychelles is one of the components of the Assessment and Sustainable Utilization of Pelagic Fishes

programme being financed under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) of the World Bank and the South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Project (SWIOFP).

The use of FADs is very well established in Comoros and Mauritius, and with the assistance of the SWIOFP other countries have been offered the opportunity to develop this type of fishery. Seychelles has just completed a crucial stage in this development.

It may be noted that FADs fishery is not new to Seychelles given that the SFA have conducted various trials in the past. However commercial FADs fishery has never been initiated until now.

Although commercial FADs fishery may be relatively new to the Seychelles fishermen, local fishing boats are already equipped with the necessary equipment and facilities (motorized vessels, suitable gear) for successful adaptation. Drop-lining, vertical long-lining

and trolling are common fishing techniques used around FADs. Another four artisanal type FADs (made of bamboo and coconut leaves) were also deployed as part of a bait fishery development project being implemented by the SFA with support from the Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation of Japan (OFCF).

Those artisanal FADs are expected to bring together small pelagic fishes (scads, decapterus, mackerels), that will be targeted by a small purse seiner.

The SFA says the success of the fishery in Seychelles will depend on a strong collaboration between the SFA, fishermen and other users.

"Past trials have revealed high levels of vandalism on FADs, particularly theft of buoys and ropes, which lead to the sinking and loss of those FADs. The SFA is calling on all fishermen and other users to refrain from such practices," the organization has said.

The SFA is also calling on fishermen to report their fishing activities around FADs to SFA officials at fish landing sites on Mahé, Praslin and La Digue. Information of the FADs visited, duration of the fishing operations at the FADs and catch details, including species and volumes, the SFA said will help it assess the project's success. Fishermen are also being encouraged to inform the SFA of any malfunctions or damage they may notice with the FADs.

The SFA has said it believes that FADs fishery has a great potential in Seychelles and that it expects a second phase of the project to be implemented in the near future.