

FACT SHEET ECHEBASTAR

Pesqueras Echebatar has achieved MSC certification as a sustainable and well-managed fishery following an assessment by independent certifier Acoura.



Fishing vessels

Pesqueras Echebatar is a Basque company based in Bermeo (Spain). Echebatar owns five purse seiners included in the Unit of Assessment (UoA) for MSC certification. **All five vessels are ocean-going purse seiners with an overall length greater than 75 metres.** The vessels are equipped to store their catch in dry fish tanks at temperatures down to -60°C and at temperatures to -16°C in brine for the canning industry. Vessels can stay at sea for up to 30 days. Fish is landed whole and frozen into Port Victoria, Seychelles.



Certified skipjack tuna

The certified target species (Principle 1) in the Echebatar fishery is **skipjack tuna** caught in the Indian Ocean (FAO areas 51 and 57). The UoA includes purse seine sets on drifting fish aggregating devices (dFADs) and free school (FSC). The 5 vessels catch around 15,000 tons of skipjack tuna per year. Echebatar also captures yellowfin and bigeye tuna. These species have been assessed under Principle 2 of the MSC Fisheries Standard.

15,000 tons per year



Stock status

The latest skipjack stock assessment was carried out by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) in 2016. **This assessment showed that skipjack is not overfished**, and the biomass is well above MSY (maximum sustainable level). Therefore, the skipjack stock is healthy and fished at sustainable levels. Stock assessments are conducted on a regular basis (every three years) and the status in the Echebatar assessment reflects the most recent updates.

“This certification is the culmination of many years of leadership and improvements by the fishery and the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission” said **Michel Kaiser, Science and Standards Director at the MSC.** “It reflects the positive changes that have been made to improve stock management, reduce bycatch and increase confidence in reporting. This has taken hard work to achieve. To maintain certification the fishery has committed to achieve further challenging improvements which, if successful, will continue to safeguard ecosystems and habitats in the Indian Ocean. MSC certification is a long-term journey. We wish Echebatar every success in maintaining their laudable progress.”

ECHEBASTAR COMMITMENT

On top of fulfilling IOTC requirements Echebatar has introduced a number of additional conservation and assurance measures including:

- 100% observer coverage from 2014 onwards**, which provides far greater assurance of compliance in this fishery and will improve the quality of data generated.
- FAD design has been modified** to ensure that all dFADs are non-entangling minimising the likelihood of silky shark and turtle bycatch.
- Three of the five vessels have introduced second conveyer belts** for processing catch, making it possible to rapidly release any unwanted catch directly back to the sea and ensure higher survival rates.
- Entering a research programme** to develop a biodegradable FAD that would reduce the risk of damage by derelict FADs to corals.
- Working on the definition and implementation** of a Good Practices Manual for the use of drifting FADs.

Good management

The IOTC has established a set of management measures to guarantee the sustainability of the tuna exploitation. A **Harvest Control Rule for Skipjack has been designed and is already in place.** The number of FADs deployed by each vessel has been greatly reduced since 2015 from more than 1,000 to a limit of 350 active FADs per vessel¹. There is a plan approved by the IOTC² for rebuilding the yellowfin stock including reduction of catch for all fishing gear.

¹ IOTC Resolutions 15/07, 15/08 and 15/09
² IOTC Resolutions 16/01 and 18/01

Highly selective fishery

The **bycatch of non-tuna species is relatively low**, comprising only 3% of total catch weight. There is low bycatch of ETP species representing only 0,38% of the total weight catch.

Actions for improvement

In order to improve scoring to some of the performance indicators (PIs) and therefore to keep its MSC certification, Echebatar has committed to 8 conditions of certification. In these 8 areas Echebatar has already met minimum requirements, and therefore scored higher than 60, but is now obliged to improve to best practice levels in order to achieve a score of more than 80 before the reassessment in 5 years' time.

- 1. PI 2.3.3 ETP SPECIES INFORMATION:** demonstrate that information is adequate to measure trends and support a strategy to manage impacts on ETP species.
- 2. PI 2.4.1 HABITAT OUTCOME:** quantify the impact of derelict FADs on coral reefs and demonstrate that they don't cause irreversible harm.
- 3. PI 2.4.2 HABITATS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY:** demonstrate that a strategy is in place to prevent derelict FADs causing serious harm to coral reefs.
- 4. PI 2.4.3 HABITATS INFORMATION:** provide evidence that information is adequate to determine the main impacts of derelict FADs on coral reefs – this includes information on spatial extent, timing and location of the impact.
- 5. PI 2.5.3 ECOSYSTEM INFORMATION:** gather scientific information and promote scientific investigation on impacts of the fishery on the ecosystem including impacts on tuna and sharks. This must lead to identifying the main impacts and the main consequences for the ecosystem.
- 6. PI 3.1.2 CONSULTATION, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:** the management system in the Seychelles must include consultation processes that regularly seek and accept relevant information, including local knowledge.
- 7. PI 3.2.1 FISHERY-SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:** short and long-term objectives, which are consistent with achieving the outcomes expressed by MSC's Principles 1 and 2, are explicit within the fishery-specific management system.
- 8. PI 3.2.2 DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES:** the fishery's performance and management actions relevant to the Seychelles fishery and private agreements must become available on request, and the decision-making process concerning recommendations emerging from research, monitoring and evaluation is properly explained.

FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES (FADs) are man-made, usually floating wooden structures with hanging nets to attract fish. The IOTC defines a dFAD as being equipped with instrumented buoys for the purpose of aggregating tuna target species, in the IOTC area of competence. An instrumented buoy is a buoy with a clearly marked reference number allowing its identification and equipped with a satellite tracking system to monitor its position.

anchored FAD

drifting FAD

WHAT ARE NON-ENTANGLING FADs?

FADs can be classified as entangling and non-entangling. Traditionally FADs were produced using nets or meshed materials. These nets could accidentally trap species such as sharks and turtles. Non-entangling FADs use ropes or nets rolled up to avoid entangling marine fauna. Some tuna fisheries also target natural structures or floating objects, including free-floating logs (tree trunks) and large marine animals, such as whale sharks, around which fish congregate. This is referred to as 'natural-associated' or 'object-associated' fishing.