

Thai Union and the Global Ghost Gear Initiative

Overview of the Work Plan 2018-2020

Partnership Purpose

In March 2018, Thai Union joined the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) with the aim to help address one of our most materially significant issues—tackling marine plastic debris. With ghost gear making up to 70 percent by weight of macro plastics in the ocean, working with the GGGI to reduce the growing problem of abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) is a priority. Since joining the GGGI, the two organizations have worked together to identify suitable projects that will achieve the aim of this collaboration. This document provides an overview of the intended work plan of the collaboration between 2018-2020.

GGGI has published its [Best Practice Framework](#) (BPF) on ALDFG. The purpose of the BPF is to provide guidance to fishing industry and related stakeholders to prevent lost fishing gear and its impacts, as well as mitigate those impacts when gear is accidentally lost. The work plan will span key areas identified by the GGGI to tackle ALDFG, particularly:

1. End of life fishing gear
2. Habitat destruction
3. Non-entangling FADs
4. Removal of fishing gear from the oceans

Work Streams

1: Promote and raise global awareness of the issue through new initiatives

An important part of the commitments to the GGGI is to “promote [it] to external stakeholders and encourage participation and new membership”. Thai Union is committed to supporting the GGGI with its wide geographic scope and its extensive network. Thai Union is actively seeking for and capitalizing upon opportunities to engage with businesses, NGOs and the general public, and is working to raise awareness of the issues of ALDFG in the sector and wider stakeholder audiences.

2: Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) for purse seine tuna in the eastern Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean are in line with the GGGI Best Practice Framework and the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear¹

Thai Union’s ‘Tuna Commitment’ outlines a full program to invest in sustainably sourced tuna globally, as part of this FIPs have been established for two purse seine tuna fisheries in the [eastern Atlantic Ocean](#) and [Indian Ocean](#)². These projects have published action plans that set out the work streams to achieve the Marine Stewardship Council standard. The activities in the FIP action plans include improved management of [Fish Aggregation Devices](#) (FADs), the use of non-entangling FADs and understanding the impact of FADs on the ecosystem. FADs were identified by the GGGI in its [review](#) of global fishing gear as third in its list of fishing gears most likely to be abandoned, lost or discarded and evaluated to have a high potential

¹ Adopted in July 2018. Aims to coordinate efforts globally to mitigate problems associated with ALDFG.

² Worth noting is that there are approximately 50 purse seine tuna vessels in the two FIPs, with a total volume of 403,000t metric tonnes of fish.

to contribute to ghost fishing³. FADs are frequently used in the tuna industry, commonly either fixed in the pole-and-line tuna industry and drifting in the purse seine industry.

From April 2018, members of International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF)—of which Thai Union is a founding member—are committed to a resolution to only transact with vessels that are deploying non-entangling FADs. The vessels that are involved in both of the FIPs are subject to this resolution. It is envisaged that by the end of 2019, using information about the replacement rate, these fleets will only be using non-entangling FADs. The ISSF have been extensively involved in research and work to improve the design and utilization of FADs by the purse seine tuna fleets.

A third-party consultant has evaluated the FIP action plans against the BPF and FAO voluntary guidelines and produced an assessment outlining whether they meet the BPF mitigation and prevention advice and, where there were no actions to cover particular points, recommendations were made as to what actions could be taken to support them. This will now be used to create an advisory document to inform and advise the work in the FIPs.

3: The FAD Watch program in the Indian Ocean will have an increased number of vessels involved and increased capacity to remove lost FADs

Organizations⁴ came together with the Seychelles Government to establish the [FAD Watch](#) program in the Indian Ocean to remove lost FADs and stop devices from drifting into sensitive areas and beaching. Given the success of the program to date, there is interest for it to be expanded by increasing the number of vessels involved. Thai Union aims to promote that all of the purse seine vessels involved in the Indian Ocean FIP support this initiative.

4: Improved management practices for ALDFG in Thailand to reduce and prevent pollution into the marine environment

Thailand is in the top 10 of country sources of plastic pollution entering the ocean, and among the largest countries in terms of the amount of annual metric tons of [plastic](#) waste. Thailand is also the world's largest exporter of seafood and has a large fishing industry. This work stream will aim to improve understanding and the management of ALDFG at identified sites in the Gulf of Thailand. The goal is to develop best practices for the fishing industry in Thailand to prevent fishing gear from becoming ALDFG by applying best practice from the BPF. This work will identify the best partners and define improvement projects, with possible topics including improvement in the use and design of FADs by the Thai fleet, collection points for end of life and recovered fishing gear at ports and how to design a circular economy to collect and recycle gear that can become another source of income for fishers.

CONTACT

For more information, please contact the program manager, Tracy Cambridge via email at: tracy.cambridge@thaiunion.com.

³ For definitions and FAQs on 'ghost fishing' and 'ghost gear' please refer to the following website: <https://www.ghostgear.org/faq/>

⁴ OPAGAC (Organización de Productores de Atún Congelado), the Seychelles Government and the Island Conservation Society (ICS).