



Food and Agriculture Organization  
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# Mark it to Manage It: Tracking Fishing Gear for a Cleaner Ocean

WORKSHOP:

## IMPROVING WASTE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON BOARD FISHING VESSELS IN THE ARCTIC

27-28 January 2026

*Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, Hafnarfjordur, Iceland*





# Outline

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# Background info, timeline, and main references

Since the 1970s, international organisations have championed the marking of fishing gear with traceable tags for comprehensive ownership verification

## IMO Timeline for MARPOL ANNEX V Amendment



## Why Mark Fishing Gear

- **Traceability:** Identifies owners of lost gear and enables return
- **Environmental protection:** Discourages abandonment and supports loss reporting
- **Regulatory compliance:** Supports licensing requirements and helps deter IUU fishing



# Background info, timeline, and main references

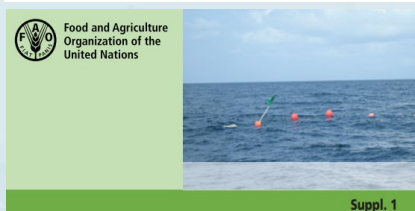


## FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear (2019) - VGMFG



<https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/ca3546t>

- Explain why and how fishing gear should be marked
- Supports ALDFG reduction, environmental protection, safety at sea, and IUU fishing control



## Supplement 1: A framework for conducting a risk assessment for a system on the marking of fishing gear (2023)



<https://doi.org/10.4060/cc4084en>

- A practical framework to assess the need for gear marking
- Helps design appropriate marking systems, building on the Guidelines



## Supplement 2: Manual for the marking of fishing gear (2023)



<https://doi.org/10.4060/cc4251en>

- Practical instructions for marking major fishing gear types
- Provide examples, placements of marking, and a suggestion of a method of testing gear mark





# How to Mark Fishing Gear

Date      Gear code

ESP → 2022 → FPO

3-BI-7-1234

#4321

Unique sequential number

NOR M-07-AV	AUS Lucky	PRT Lic:123456
ISL IMO: 9192404	ZAF John Hook Cape Town	KOR ☎ +82 1234 1234
NOR MMSI: 259215000	ISL fishcompany@fish.is	
NOR M-07-AV 	ITA 2020 GNS Lucky 	

## Country code !

The ISO3 alphabetic code is strongly recommended as a standard for labelling

## Ownership ID !

If available, the IMO, MMSI, or IRCS can be used. Where these are not available, registration or vessel license numbers can be used. In some cases, a company name or a fishing licence code may be used

## Date (useful)

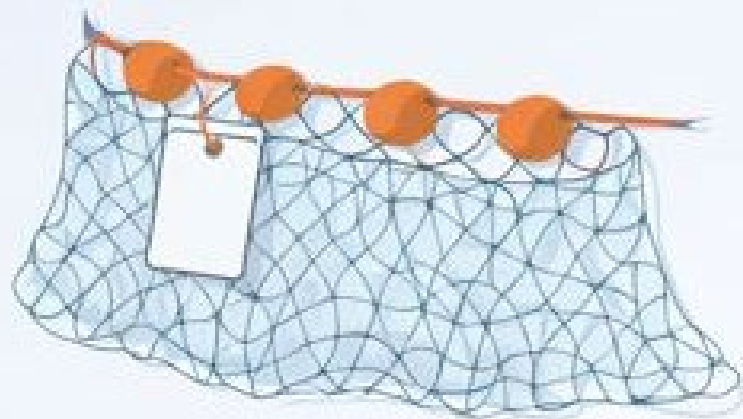
The year of first use should be used in most cases, with some variations dependent upon gear type

## Gear code (useful)

Use ISSCFG gear codes to confirm legality and fishing authorisation, and to help identify gear



## Passive Regulations



Traceable marking is required without detailed guidance on marker or tag content, and there is no registration requirement.



## Guiding Regulations



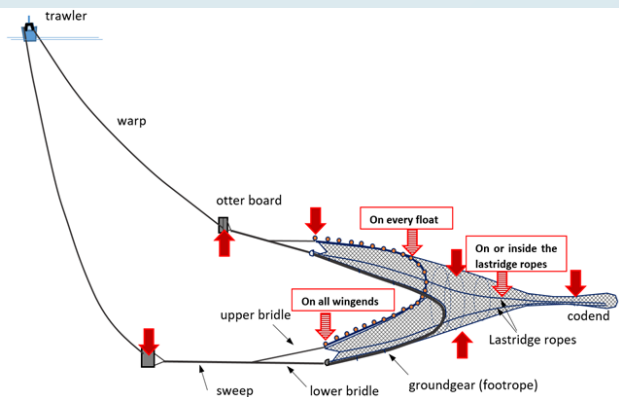
Establish basic standards for marker or tag design and labelling, and a requirement for fishing gear registration

## Comprehensive Registration System



Maintains a full inventory of all fishing gear and its materials, supporting end-of-life recycling and fostering a circular approach to fishing gear management.

# What about bottom trawls?



Physical marking alone is not practical for large fishing gear like trawl

**Focus on lifecycle management:**

- **Register** trawl gear when taken onboard
- **Log** repairs and modifications over time
- **Record** materials at end-of-life (for recycling)



**Why this matters:**

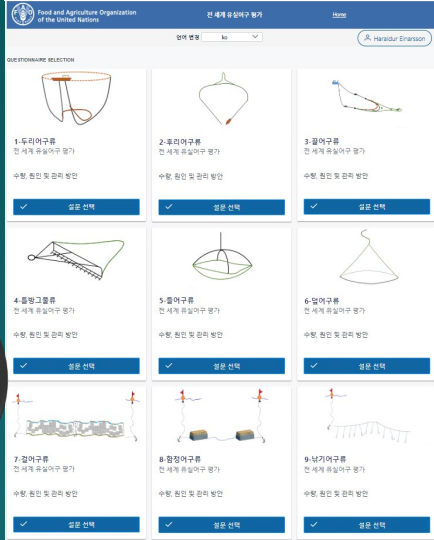
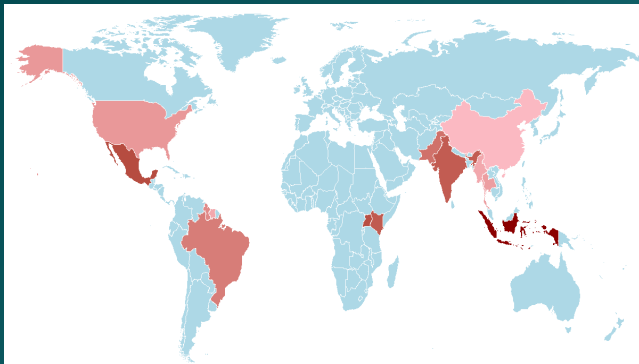
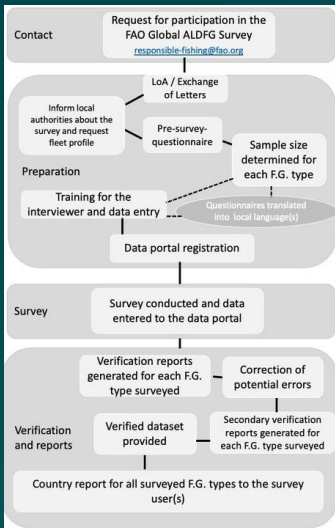
- Better understanding of **loss & damage**
- Smarter **gear design & decisions**



# The FAO Global ALDFG Survey – about the marking

A survey already conducted in 20 countries, and several are in the pipeline  
55 surveys were done with 5293 fishers who answered the questionnaire

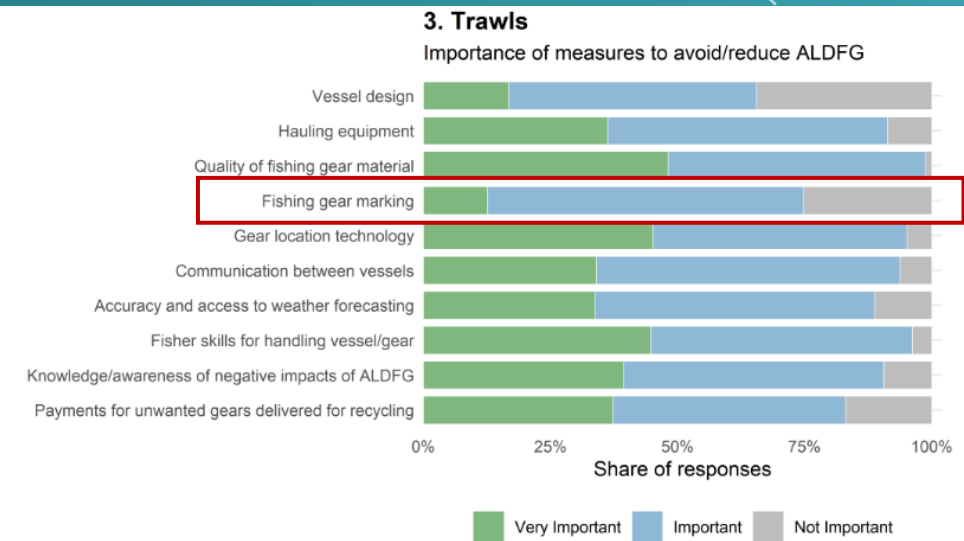
## The questions about marking!



Is the fishing gear in use marked in any way?

About **25%** of trawlers say the trawls are marked

How important is marking fishing gear to avoiding ALDFG?

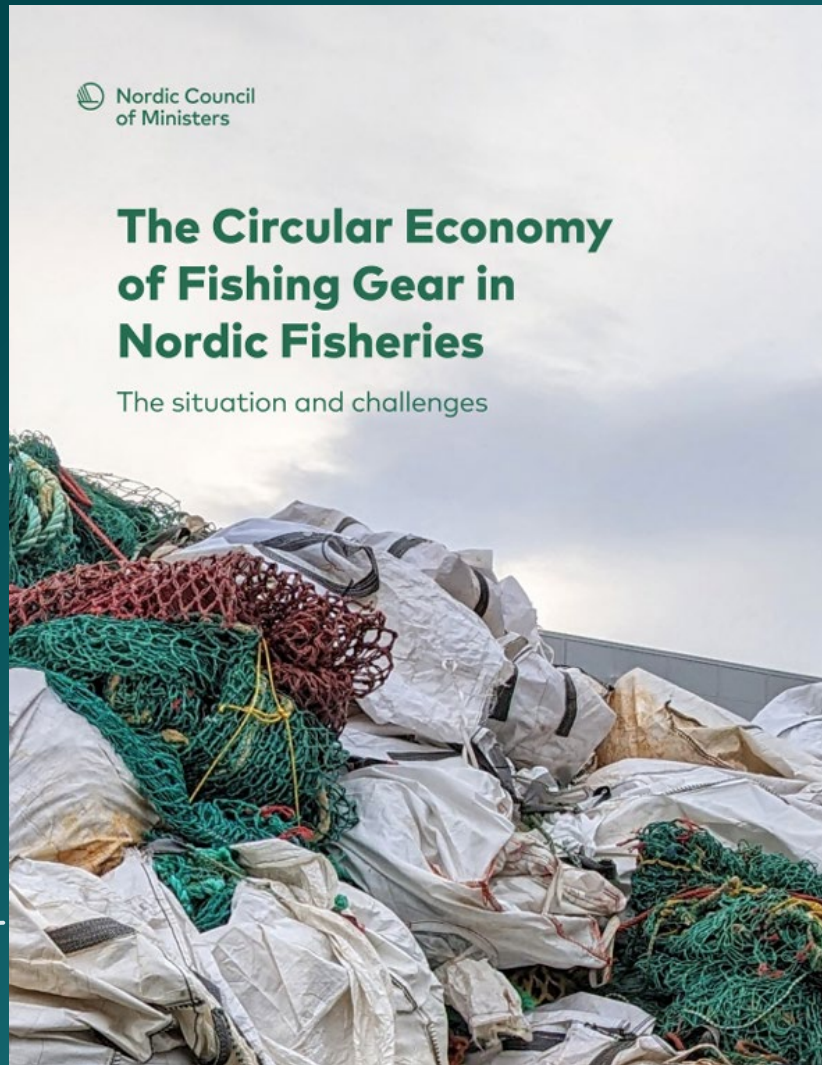




# The Circular Economy of Fishing Gear in Nordic Fisheries

**Published in April 2025**

Apart from the main text, which may be useful, the section “Recommendations and ideas” is particularly valuable for clarifying the key priorities that should be aimed for.



<http://dx.doi.org/10.6027/temanord2025-544>

- Gear marking and owner identification
- Registration system for fishing gear
- Lost gear reporting and retrieval
- Enhance regional collaboration
- Address fragment loss
- Increase recycling capacity
- Support and incentivise fisher participation
- Expand retrieval efforts
- Promote a circular economy
- Enhance data collection and research





THANKS

