



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations



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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*

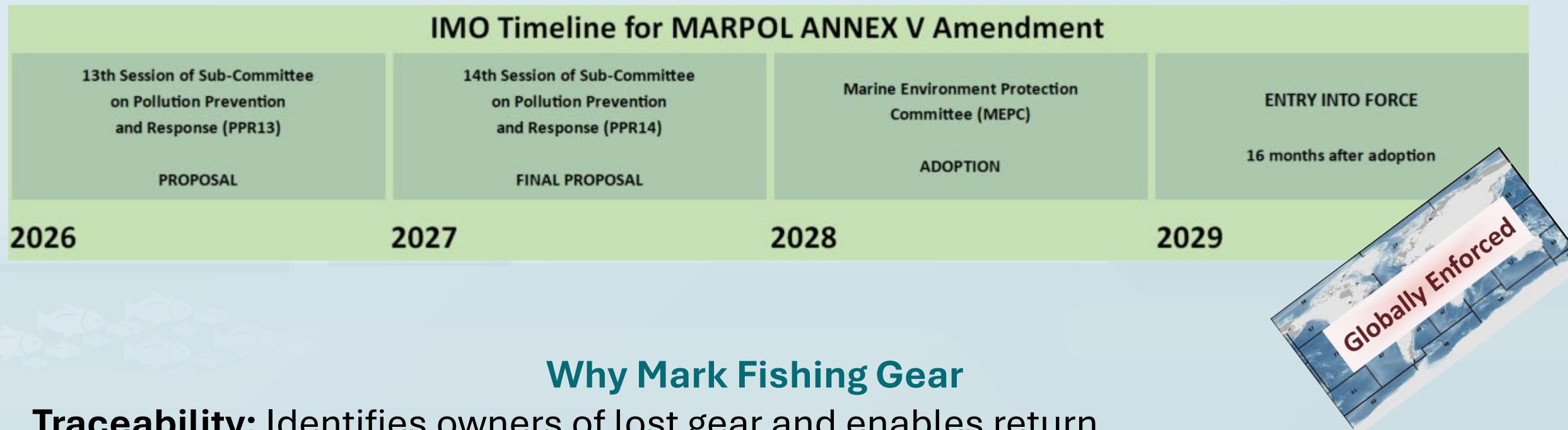
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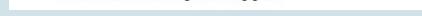
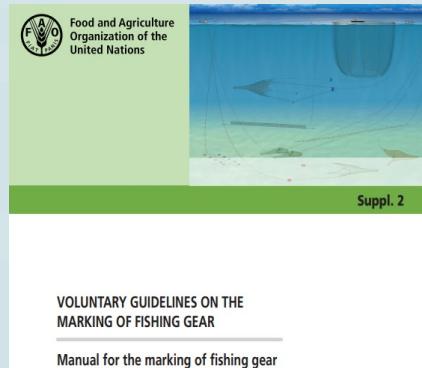
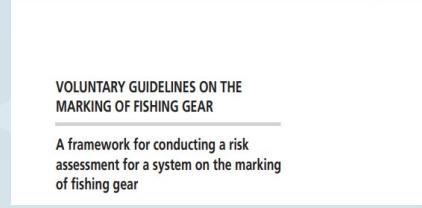
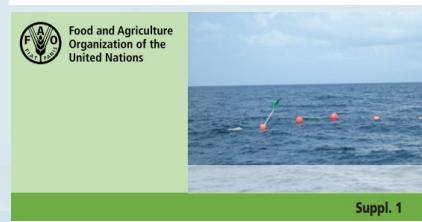
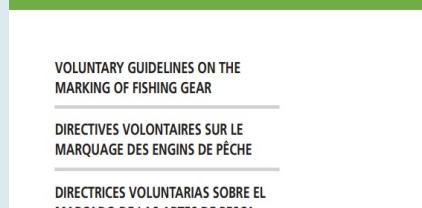
# Background info, timeline, and main references

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



## 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



## 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



## 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)

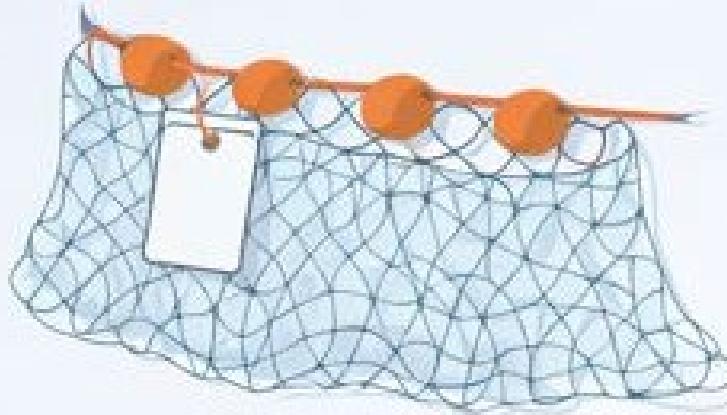
The year of first use should be used in most cases, with some variations dependent upon gear type

## Gear code (useful)

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

# Levels of Gear Making Regulation & Requirement

## Passive Regulations



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



## Guiding Regulations



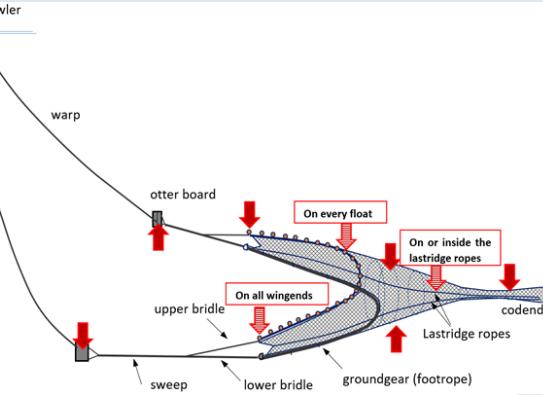
Establish basic standards for marker or tag design and labelling, and a requirement for fishing gear registration

## 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:

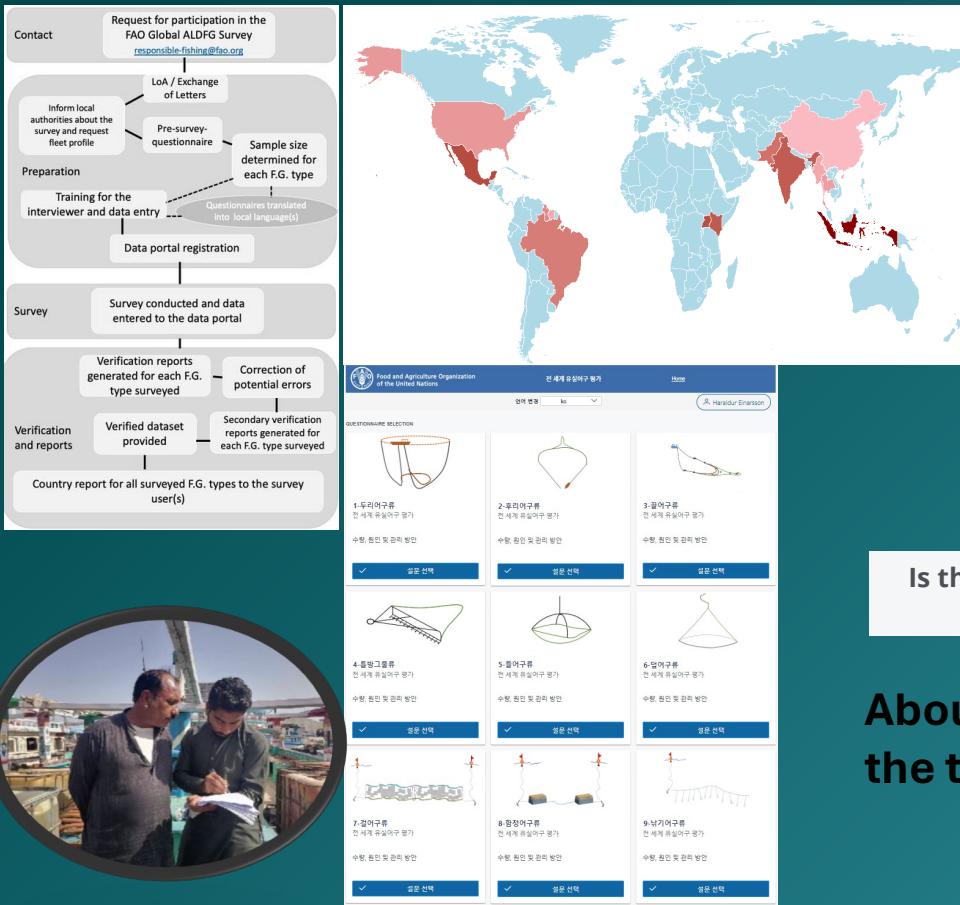
- **Register** trawl gear when taken onboard
- **Log** repairs and modifications over time
- **Record** materials at end-of-life (for recycling)



## 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!

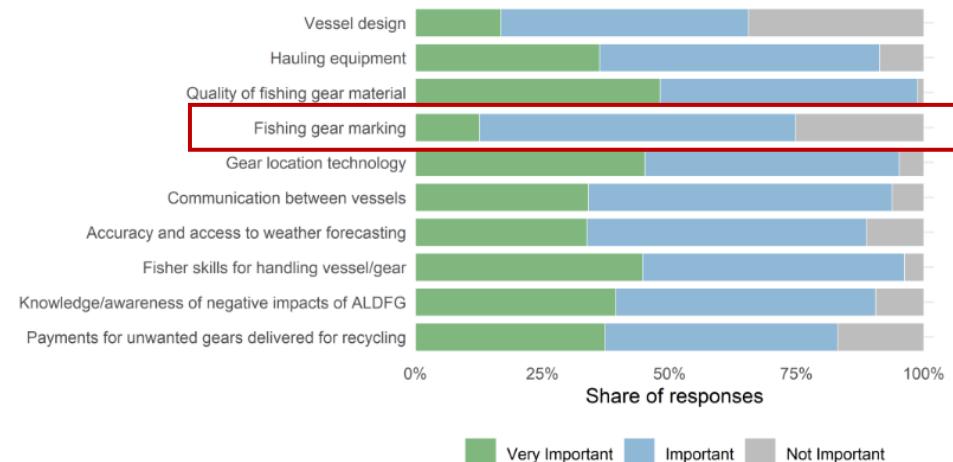
Is the fishing gear in use marked in any way?

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

How important is marking fishing gear to avoiding ALDFG?

### 3. Trawls

Importance of measures to avoid/reduce ALDFG



# The Circular Economy of Fishing Gear in Nordic Fisheries



## The Circular Economy of Fishing Gear in Nordic Fisheries

The situation and challenges



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

## 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.

- **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

