



## PRESS STATEMENT

### **The Circulation of Invalid FAD Free and other Certifications**

It has come to our attention that in the global market place, that traders are making marketing claims, which infer that Papua New Guinea NFA fishery observers are providing validation of tuna catches as being “Free School” or “FAD Free”.

If, as claimed, there are incidences of ship’s records or catch logbooks being witnessed by our observers it is outside of their normal duties, and we wish to make it very clear to buyers of this fish or canned products, that such activity would be illegal and in no way can be deemed as any inference of any validation of set type, whether it be free school, or otherwise. Transfers of catch for CDS documentation purposes are however witnessed, but this only covers species and weights transferred, so without a valid and comprehensive chain of custody from net to factory, even fish from free school sets cannot be tracked or any traceability claims validated.

The PNG NFA (National Fisheries Authority) wishes to point out that the region’s observer standards are based on independent monitoring of the operations and reporting without prejudice. Compliance issues observed on board are noted and reviewed by independent de-briefers, who review these reports and initiate follow up actions by national and regional compliance bodies when required. At no point do the observers themselves certify anything personally or professionally. They only report on their observations to the NFA de briefers. Trip data is analyzed and only published in aggregate forms, such as by flag for example, not on a boat by boat, trip by trip or as claimed set by set basis, this is often a year or more after the event.

The policies of the NFA are aimed at avoiding any conflicts of interest, ensuring the highest professional conduct of observers and to protect the integrity of the observer’s work at all times. Observers will identify target, non-target, and protected species that they may be encounter, measure and weight of fish, as well as accurately estimate catch, by catch, and discards by species. The code of conduct for observers prevents them certifying anything, including FAD free catches, as this would compromise their independence and potentially their safety on board vessels, based on potential significant economic impacts of such.

Also public claims, presentations, statements or certifications issued by FOS or other FAD Free programs about any cooperation with, or the sharing of observers on board vessels carrying PNG NFA or regional observers are absolutely not correct.

The PNA region, which PNG is part of, uses national programme observers and other tools to monitor MSC COC compliance right through to MSC certification at the factory. However the PNG NFA observers trained to cooperate with this program, at no point certify anything personally at any stage; they only report their observations to the NFA via the FIMS system.

The PNA operated MSC Free school certification provides a rigid Chain of Custody (CoC) protocol that requires absolute monitoring by observers from net to well, avoids any mixing in wells, further observes absolute segregation from a purse seiner well to its the freezer hold, and observes transhipment to the carrier vessel’s hold, including discharge from that carrier hold. It also requires absolute monitoring from observers in sorting and in making various checks and verifications before the free school skipjack can be qualified as MSC certified tuna and is then stored separately in the cold store. From here the segregation is continuous under the processing plant’s own MSC COC.

The MSC free school certification is issued by the PNA Office not national programmes..

Outside the MSC COC scheme, there is currently no other valid chain of custody scheme in place on board purse seiners or carriers operating within PNG or the broader PNA waters.

Therefore any “FAD Free” or “Free School” certification or claims other than “MSC certified “ must be considered only as a self-certification and totally without any validation.

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