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# The Maltese FADs fishery

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## Résumé

The beginning of the Maltese FADs fishery is not known but the main species targeted by this fishery, Dolphinfish, was already consumed locally from the 18th century. Pilot fish (*Naucrates ductor*), *Seriola dumerili*, *Polyprion americanus* and *Thunnus thynnus* are the main bycatch species of this fishery. Up to the 1960's, two large tubular masses of cork slabs several layers thick were used as floats for the construction of these moored FADs. The two float masses were also eventually replaced by one single float composed of expanded polystyrene slabs. Palm fronds are also tied to the "kannizzati" as it was discovered that algae and other growths encrusted on palm fronds floating in the sea had very good fish aggregating potential. The net used for the FAD fishery is a modified purse seine, in view of the absence of pursing rings. The size of the net depends on the size of the operating boat. Fishermen fish these anchored FADs either during the day or the night. The FAD fishery in Malta is allowed to operate only between 15th August to 31st December of each year and the number of vessels participating in the dolphinfish FAD fishery around the Maltese archipelago is not to exceed 130. Each boat is allotted a single rimja. A minimum number of 30 FADs needs to be deployed however, there is no imposition on the maximum number of FADs deployed. The maximum number of FADs deployed ranged from 300 – 400 during the fishing seasons of 2005 – 2009 where the maximum number of licensed fishing vessels was of 110. Sizes of the fishing vessels ranging from a minimum length overall of 3.63 m to a maximum of 21.95m.

**Mots-Clés:** Mediterranean Sea, Malta, Moored FADs, Dolphinfish

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