

ABSTRACT

The role of drifting objects in pelagic fisheries in the southeastern Caribbean

Charmaine Gomes

The role of naturally-occurring drifting objects in fisheries for oceanic pelagic fish in the southeastern Caribbean was investigated by conducting a questionnaire survey of two hundred and fifty-three fishers, fifty from each of St. Lucia, Barbados, Grenada and Tobago, and fifty-three from St. Vincent. The study documented that drifting objects play an important role in pelagic fisheries in the southeastern Caribbean by attracting fish and thereby increasing their catchability. The association of fish with drifting objects is seasonal, being greatest between January and March in all islands when drifting objects are most abundant, but having a more extended seasonal duration in Grenada and Tobago. The association is most evident in green or brown water since drifting objects are most common in water of these colours. Fish associate with both natural and anthropogenic drifting objects, with no apparent preference within or between these groups. Fishers actively seek and fish around drifting objects. Fishers from St. Lucia, Barbados, Grenada and Tobago attract flyingfish by deploying drifting objects (FADs) which they construct of naturally-occurring material; where a FAD is defined as any object deliberately deployed to attract fish. However, very few fishers use either drifting objects or anchored FADs to target the larger pelagic species. The information acquired in this study indicates that

the deployment of drifting and anchored FADs should succeed in increasing catch rates of large pelagic fish, and suggests that the potential for developing fisheries for large pelagics by deploying these FADs should be explored.