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**TO WCPFC ISSUES**  
**IN 2008**



## **BIGEYE & YELLOWFIN TUNA MANAGEMENT MEASURE**

### ***WHAT IS THE ISSUE?***

Overfishing of Bigeye Tuna, a Japanese favourite for sashimi, is occurring and Yellowfin Tuna, sought after mainly for sashimi and canning, is fully exploited. These fish are getting harder to find and their numbers are declining.

These types of tuna are fished by two types of fishing vessels - longliners, fishing vessels that string many baited hooks hanging from a single line, used particularly for large fish and purse seiners, fishing vessels use a large fishing net (called a seine) that hangs in the water, with a cable around the bottom that can be drawn together closing the net like a purse, mainly used to catch fish for canneries.

Countries that sit at the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission have the collective responsibility to stop overfishing Western and Central Pacific Ocean. Article 5 of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention sets out this responsibility in principles such as using the best scientific advice available to make fishing rules and adopting a precautionary approach to managing fisheries (as set out in the UN Fish Stocks Agreement). Inability to make and enforce the rules has often been a weakness of other regional fisheries management organisations, notably in the case of the collapsed North Atlantic Bluefin Tuna stocks.

According to scientific studies, Bigeye Tuna is particularly under threat. To manage this, scientific advice from the WCPFC Scientific Committee recommends that fishing of Bigeye Tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean must be reduced by 30% so fishing can return to 2004 levels and sustainable levels over time (fishing needs to be below a level that would provide the maximum sustainable yield).

### ***WHY IT HAS COME UP NOW?***

The WCPFC Chair has drafted up a Conservation and Management Measure (CMM), a binding rule applying to fishing across the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, which aims to reduce fishing of Bigeye Tuna and stop fishing of Yellowfin Tuna from increasing.

The CMM includes many elements previously put forward by FFA Members in the Commission. Firstly, the Chair's draft proposes to reduce the catches of Bigeye Tuna by the larger longline fleets that target this tuna (including China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and the United States) by 30% over 3 years. These are the fishing vessels that the scientists say are having the biggest effect on the Bigeye Tuna stocks.

Secondly, the draft measure includes a number of actions aimed at reducing the amount of Bigeye Tuna taken as bycatch by purse seiners by prohibiting them from throwing juvenile fish back to sea, and, for three months of the year, both closing the high seas to purse seining and banning the use of fish aggregating devices (FADs) inside national 200-mile exclusive economic zones. These devices can be natural objects such as logs, or man made floating shelters put in the sea by fishing vessels to attract schools of fish to the one place. This reduces fuel costs for fishing vessels fishing for Skipjack Tuna and Yellowfin Tuna but can increase bycatch of Bigeye Tuna.

### ***HOW DOES IT AFFECT PACIFIC ISLANDS?***

Many of the actions proposed in the draft CMM are already being taken by Pacific Island Countries, especially those that are Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA countries which are Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu). Adoption of the draft CMM will apply the same standards to fishing across the region, particularly in the high seas.



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The proposals in the draft CMM and the measures already adopted by the PNA countries will reduce fishing by foreign vessels in Pacific Island Countries' waters, and in some cases make fishing more costly but this is also expected to contribute to increases in the price and value of Pacific tuna.

The draft CMM does not affect the rights of Pacific Island members to explore options for development such as charter ventures and domestic tuna development. Previous Bigeye Tuna and Yellowfin Tuna catch and effort limits in the Conservation and Management Measures have generally not restricted the rights to development of the small island developing states. The draft CMM for 2008 also features this exemption from the limits in Paragraph 8.

**HOW DO PACIFIC ISLANDS MANAGE THE ISSUE?**

Pacific Island countries have tuna management plans to manage tuna fishing in their waters and a number of other monitoring, control and surveillance measures taken at the regional and national level (see *2 Minute Brief – Monitoring, Control and Surveillance*).

The Parties to the Nauru Agreement (Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu) set the standard for fisheries management later reflected in the 2008 draft measure when they agreed, earlier this year, to take measures to conserve their tuna stocks, through adopting a 3rd Implementing Arrangement which included:

- fishing vessels are no longer be allowed to fish in high seas pockets adjacent to the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) as a condition of their licenses
- the use of Fishing Aggregating Devices (FADs) on purse seine fishing vessels, is banned in the PNA Members' EEZs for 3 months of each year (July-September)
- retention of all Bigeye, Skipjack & Yellowfin tuna catch on board purse seine fishing vessels (a measure to stop the catch and dumping of juvenile tuna at sea)
- 100% coverage of purse seine fishing vessels with observers. (Observers monitor fishing vessel practices to report back to the national governments and FFA in order to monitor and report on implementation of fishing measures).

**WHAT IS HAPPENING AT THIS YEAR'S WCPFC?**

Countries will seek to reach agreement on the Conservation and Management Measure (2008-01) at the December WCPFC 5 meeting in Busan, Korea

When: Agenda Item No 9, *Conservation and Management Measures*, is scheduled to be discussed in the afternoon of Saturday 6 December, in the afternoon of Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December & morning of Tuesday 9 December.

**WHERE DO I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION?**

**FFA**

The Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) website has a range of briefs and media releases available on [www.ffa.int/wcpfc](http://www.ffa.int/wcpfc) Members of FFA can access their internal meeting briefs here.

**SPC**

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) provides scientific information to the WCPFC like catch estimates, fishing catch and effort data and data on the size of fish stocks. <http://www.spc.int/oceanfish/>

**WCPFC**

The WCPFC posts all relevant documents in the 'Meetings' & 'Conservation and Management Measures & Resolutions' sections of its site <http://www.wcpfc.int/>