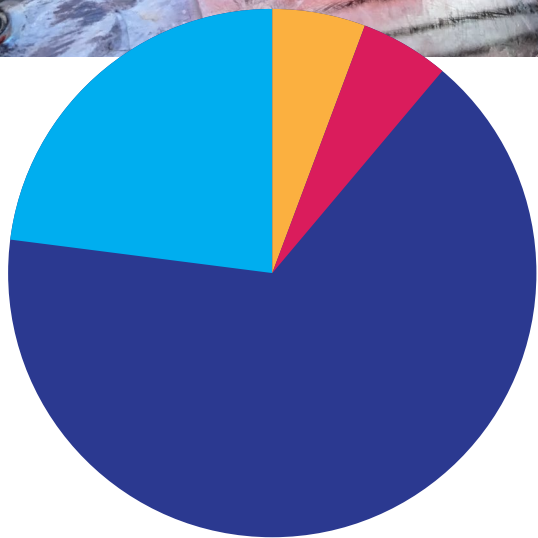


# Four kinds of tuna are important to Pacific Island economies

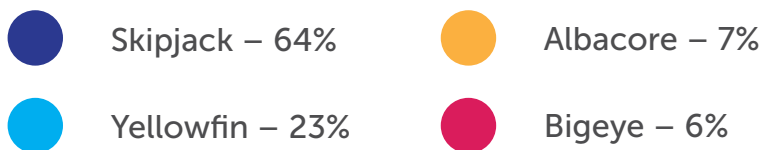
Forum Fisheries Agency fact sheet

Photo: Forum Fisheries Agency



Tuna has always been an important source of food for many Pacific Island peoples. Today, tuna provides income and employment for many Pacific Island Countries and Territories. The Pacific tuna industry is worth almost US\$1 billion in revenue and gross domestic product to the Pacific, and the tuna exported from the Pacific is worth many more billions in markets around the world. For some Pacific countries, the tuna found within their exclusive economic zone represents their only significant renewable resource and is their best opportunity for economic development.

Numerous species of tuna live in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, but four are important for commercial fishing and the economies of the Pacific islands: albacore, bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin.



**Fig.** Tuna catch proportions in the WCPO

## Tuna are streamlined and strong, and swim vast distances





Tuna are schooling fishes, and skipjack schools may number many thousands.

Tuna are highly migratory: their streamlined, torpedo shape makes them very fast, and they roam great distances across the open ocean.

Tuna follow food and react to changes in water temperature and other factors such as currents.

All four are predators at the top of the food chain (like sharks and humans are), helping to maintain the balance of life in the oceans.

## Young tuna all look similar but adult tuna look different

	<b>Skipjack</b> <i>(Katsuwonus pelamis)</i> (Credit: Les Hata, SPC) 	<b>Yellowfin</b> <i>(Thunnus albacares)</i> (Credit: Les Hata, SPC) 	<b>Bigeye</b> <i>(Thunnus obesus)</i> (Credit: Les Hata, SPC) 	<b>South Pacific Albacore</b> <i>(Thunnus alalunga)</i> (Credit: Les Hata, SPC) 
<b>Description of adults</b>	Small pectoral fins (the fins behind the gills)  3–6 distinct stripes along sides	Very long second dorsal (back) and anal fins, which are usually bright yellow  Dark, metallic blue back, yellow sides, and silvery belly	Quite small dorsal (back) and anal fins compared with the yellowfin  Large eyes  Deep body  Iridescent blue colouring along body	Very long pectoral fins  Dark, metallic blue back, and silvery sides and belly
<b>Size</b>	Up to 1 m long and 30 kg	Reach more than 2 m in length and weigh up to 180 kg; slightly smaller than bigeye tuna	Up to 2.5 m long and 180 kg	Up to 1 m long and 15 kg
<b>Life cycle</b>	Most live for 3 to 4 years (although they can live for 12 years)  Begin to breed at around 1 or 2 years of age  Because they don't live long, they grow quickly	Live for about 7 years  Grow fast and can breed when they are 2–3 years old	Grow quite slowly and may live 12 years  Start breeding at about 2 years of age	Can live for 10 years  Grow quite slowly, and mature at 4–5 years
<b>Where they live in the water</b>	Live in the surface layer of the ocean	Swim between surface and subsurface layers of the water	Descend to deeper layers	Swim between surface and subsurface layers of the water, but deeper than yellowfin
<b>Fishing methods</b>	Purse-seine and pole-and-line fishing on the surface of ocean waters	For juveniles, purse-seine and pole-and-line fishing on the surface of ocean waters  For mature fish, purse-seine fishing, and longline fishing of deeper waters	For juvenile fish, purse-seine fishing at the surface  For mature fish, longline fishing in deeper water	For juveniles found at higher latitudes, trolling or other surface fishing methods  For mature fish, longline fishing in deeper water
<b>Markets</b>	Sold fresh, frozen, canned, dried, salted, and smoked	Juveniles sold fresh, frozen, canned, dried, salted and smoked  Mature fish sold for high-value Japanese sashimi market	High-value Japanese sashimi market	Canned for export and also sold fresh on local markets


**FFA**

### For further information

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