



FACTSHEET

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PACIFIC ISLANDS
OCEANIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT



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Offshore Fisheries

ENSURING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF PACIFIC TUNA

Fishing in the Western & Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) - 1

Global Tuna Catch

BY GEAR:

PURSE SEINE - 60%

LONGLINE - 14%

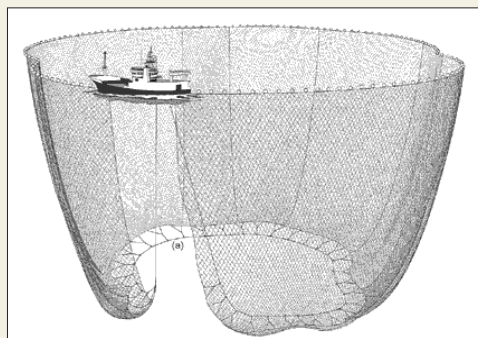
POLE-AND-LINE - 10%

TROLL - 2%

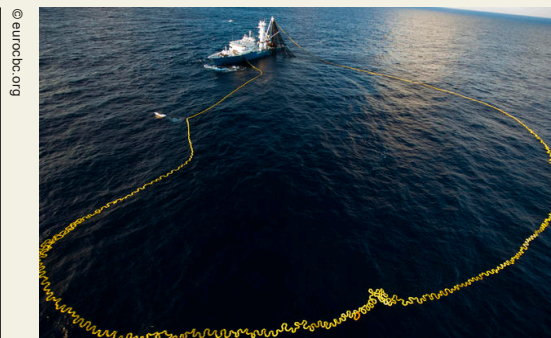
Tuna has been caught for centuries in the Pacific Islands, usually from canoes and often handlines, troll gear, or pearl shell lures. In the early 1900's, larger scale tuna fishing gear was introduced into the region. To date, four main types of gears is still in use and these are purse seine, longline, pole-and-line and trolling.

Purse Seine

This fishing gear mainly targets skipjack tuna and small yellowfin tuna, which are mostly caught for canning. Skipjack generally accounts for 70 – 85 per cent of the purse seine catch, with yellowfin accounting for 15 – 30 per cent and bigeye accounting for only a small proportion. As of 2009, the provisional catch of skipjack reached a record 1.8 million tonnes, with yellowfin falling to 0.2 million tonnes compared to 0.3 million tonnes the previous year. Bigeye tuna catch for 2009 was slightly lower than the previous year's record of about 0.04 million tonnes. The geographical distribution of the purse seine fishery is tightly concentrated in the equatorial band, with the highest catches in the zones 5N – 10S.



An illustration of a purse seine fishing operation.



Actual purse seine fishing being carried out.

© Paul Hilton/Greenpeace

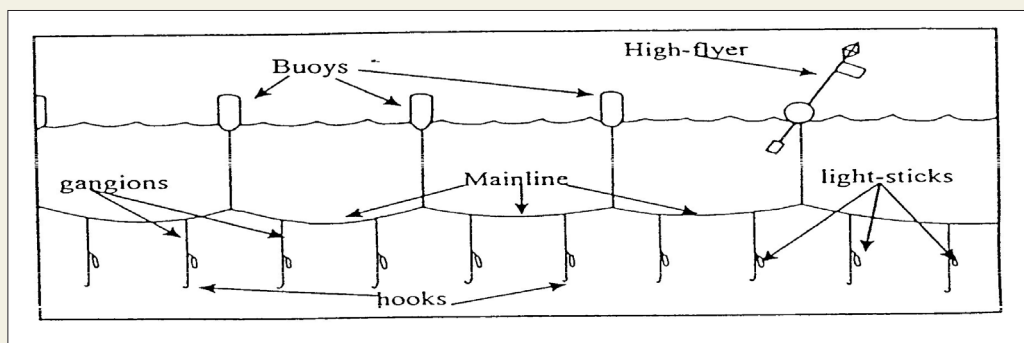
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Longline

Most tuna caught from a longline gear are large size yellowfin, bigeye, and albacore. The prime yellowfin and bigeye often are exported fresh to overseas markets. Most of the albacore is for canning. The longline fishery continues to account for around 10 – 13 per cent of the total Western & Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) region. It provides the longest time series of catch estimates for the WCPO, with estimates available since the early 1950s. The total number of vessels involved in the fishery has generally fluctuated between 3,500 and 5,500 for the last 30 years.

Two main operations are involved in this fishery:

- (i) Large distant-water freezer vessels, which undertake long voyages (months) and operate over large areas of the region (often based outside the Pacific Islands).
- (ii) Smaller offshore vessels, which are usually domestically-based, undertaking trips less than one month, with ice or chill capacity, and serving fresh or air-freight sashimi markets, or [albacore] canneries.



An illustration of how a longline gear is set. It typically comprises a main line that runs horizontally in the water for up to 75km, which is suspended by a series of buoys at depths of between 30 to 300 meters. Dropping vertically from this main line at regular intervals are lengths of lines, which each end in a baited hook. Each longline can accommodate up to 3600 baited hooks.



A longline fishing vessel.

Source: Secretariat of the Pacific Community, SPC (2011)

Fleet sizes in the WCP fisheries 2009.

- Purse seine - record vessel numbers (257)
- Longline offshore - stable
- Longline DWFN - decrease
- Pole-and-line - decrease (Sol. Is. inactive in 2009)

Estimated delivered value of the catch in 2009

- Purse seine - US\$2.354 billion (3rd highest)
- Longline US\$1.301 billion (record)

Get Involved and Help Ensure Tuna Will Always Be Here for the Future!

Spread the awareness and share what you've learned with your family, friends and colleagues. Find out what it means to buy sustainably caught tuna. Would you consider the tuna fishery in your country a well managed fishery?

For more information

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Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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