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The Tropical Tuna Measure and Supporting American Samoa's Economic Development

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Submitted by American Samoa

American Samoa's economy is heavily dependent on the well-being of the tuna cannery and the American Samoa-based longline and purse seine fleets (see Attachment). American Samoa's highest priority is to maintain and grow development opportunities for its local fisheries sector, which provides a significant contribution to the economy and livelihoods of American Samoa and its Pacific island neighbors.

American Samoa and the United States are proposing the following footnote to Attachment 1, Table 2 of the WCPFC tropical tuna measure, *"Except for U.S. flagged vessels notified* as operating as an integral part of the American Samoa economy"*, so that the tropical tuna measure supports our development aspirations via a reliable supply of tuna for processing in our one remaining cannery. As a SIDS, under the Convention and re-affirmed in paragraph 6 of CMM 2021-01, American Samoa relies on Article 30 of this Convention, which spells out the need to ensure that these measures *"do not result in transferring, directly or indirectly, a disproportionate burden of conservation action onto developing States, Parties, and territories and possessions."* American Samoa views the proposed footnote in attachment 1, table 2 as a first step to begin alleviating the disproportionate burden imposed on the territory as a result of the existing measure.

American Samoa notes that this Commission has adopted mitigation measures that served the needs of other SIDS. Those measures have been successful as they have addressed the special requirements of certain SIDS, and as a result, the purse seine fisheries of American Samoa's Pacific Island neighbors grow and flourish. Unfortunately, American Samoa is moving in the opposite direction as a number of former U.S. vessels have recently reflagged to avail themselves of the opportunities provided to other SIDS and territories. When these vessels reflag, the purse seine vessels fish farther from American Samoa, resulting in fewer port calls, and reduced cannery landings and associated local revenues. This, in effect, amplifies the disproportionate burden on American Samoa.

American Samoa is extremely happy for the success of our Pacific Island community and only seeks similar opportunities for its people. As American Samoa has highlighted in the past, avoiding a disproportionate burden on SIDS, including Territories, is a collective responsibility of the Commission. We appreciate the opportunity to work together to find solutions to alleviate these impacts.

¹ Paper revised in the last paragraph to clarify the percentage of catch offloaded in American Samoa.

* The United States will submit new language for consideration by WCPFC replacing the word 'noticed' in the footnote with 'notified' to be more consistent with current language.

Background

American Samoa consists of five main islands and two atolls covering approximately 77 square miles of land. The portion of the U.S. EEZ around American Samoa, which is 156,136 square miles in size, is entirely surrounded by EEZs of neighboring Pacific Island nations - there is no direct access to the high seas. Article 10 of the Convention recognizes these special circumstances as one of the factors the Commission shall take into account in developing criteria for the allocation of total allowable catch or fishing effort (Article 10.3(h)).

Tuna fishing and processing have long been an important part of American Samoa's economy, with offloading from longline vessels starting in the 1950s and offloading from purse seine vessels starting in 1970. The first cannery was built in 1949, and a second was constructed in 1963. Currently, only one cannery operates in American Samoa.

American Samoa's economy is heavily dependent on the well-being of the tuna cannery and the American Samoa-based longline and purse seine fleets. Exports of canned tuna comprise the vast majority of exports from American Samoa, and imports of fish and materials for the cannery are key imports to American Samoa. Employment in the cannery alone represents approximately 24 percent of private employment in American Samoa, and other sectors of the tuna industry provide substantial additional jobs. The cannery provides jobs not only to citizens of American Samoa, but also to many nationals of other Pacific Island countries, particularly Samoa, Niue, Tokelau, Fiji, and Tonga. Port calls by longline and purse seine vessels are important for supplying fish for processing to the cannery, and also for supporting the local economy through purchases of fuel, supplies, and services.

Almost 85 percent of the purse seine vessels offloading in American Samoa are U.S.-flagged vessels, and the reduction in the size of the U.S. fleet in recent years has resulted in a significant decline in landings to the cannery in American Samoa. Recently, a significant number of U.S. vessels have reflagged - many to Pacific Island nations - due to preferential access fees and fewer regulatory requirements compared to operating under the U.S. flag. The reduction in size of the U.S. purse seine fleet operating in the WCPFC Area, has been detrimental to American Samoa, resulting in substantial economic loss to the Territory.

The Economy

Raw material for the cannery dominates imports to American Samoa. Total imports are valued at about \$884 million per year.² Fish processing contributes about 37 percent of the value of all imports.³ Cannery products dominate American Samoa's exports. In 2021, the total value of exports was about \$310 million, with canned tuna making up 98.5 percent of the total value of exports.⁴ U.S. purse seine vessels offloaded an average of 75,000 mt of tuna per year in Pago Pago from 2017-2020.⁵ However, in 2021 and 2022, less than 40,000 mt of tuna was delivered to Pago Pago through October, which is a decline of

² American Samoa Statistical Yearbook 2021, American Samoa Department of Commerce

³ American Samoa Statistical Yearbook 2021, American Samoa Department of Commerce

⁴ American Samoa Statistical Yearbook 2021, American Samoa Department of Commerce

⁵ U.S. Coast Guard and NOAA Fisheries. Distant Water Tuna Fleet. Report to Congress 2018-2021

almost 50 percent from previous years.⁶ This decline is related to the vessels reflagging from the United States to other Pacific island nations, among other factors.

The tuna industry brings other, indirect economic benefits to American Samoa. For example, due to economies of scale, the large economic footprint of the cannery and associated sectors moderate the costs of energy and freight for American Samoa. If the cannery in Pago Pago shuts down, energy and freight costs in American Samoa would increase by about 30 percent.⁷

Employment⁸

Total employment in American Samoa is about 16,399 (private and government). Private sector employees number 7,510.⁹ Eighty-four percent of them, or 7,407 people, fill positions in the tuna industry, with about two non-cannery jobs for every cannery employee.¹⁰ The cannery employs several different nationalities, to include Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Tuvalu, China, Philippines and others.

Purse Seine Fleet

About 85 percent of the purse seiners calling at Pago Pago are U.S. flagged,¹¹ reflecting the high degree of dependence of the cannery on U.S.-flagged vessels. While approximately 40% of U.S. purse seine catch across the Pacific is landed in American Samoa¹², in 2021-2022 about 86% of catch occurring in the WCPO was from trips that either originated or terminated in Pago Pago.¹³

The American Samoa-based purse seine fleet traditionally fishes in waters near American Samoa, including in the waters of Cook Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tokelau, and the United States, and on the high seas. From January to August 2023, the 12 U.S.-flagged purse seine vessels accounted for 40 of 42 purse seine port calls in Pago Pago (Figure 1).

⁶ U.S. Coast Guard and NOAA Fisheries. Distant Water Tuna Fleet. Report to Congress 2022

⁷ Estimate by American Samoa Chamber of Commerce

⁸ American Samoa Statistical Yearbook 2021, American Samoa Department of Commerce

⁹ American Samoa Statistical Yearbook 2021, American Samoa Department of Commerce

¹⁰ United States Government Accountability Office: [GAO 20-467](#)

¹¹ American Samoa Port Authority

¹² U.S. Coast Guard and NOAA Fisheries. Distant Water Tuna Fleet. Report to Congress 2022

¹³ NMFS unpublished data, 2020-2022

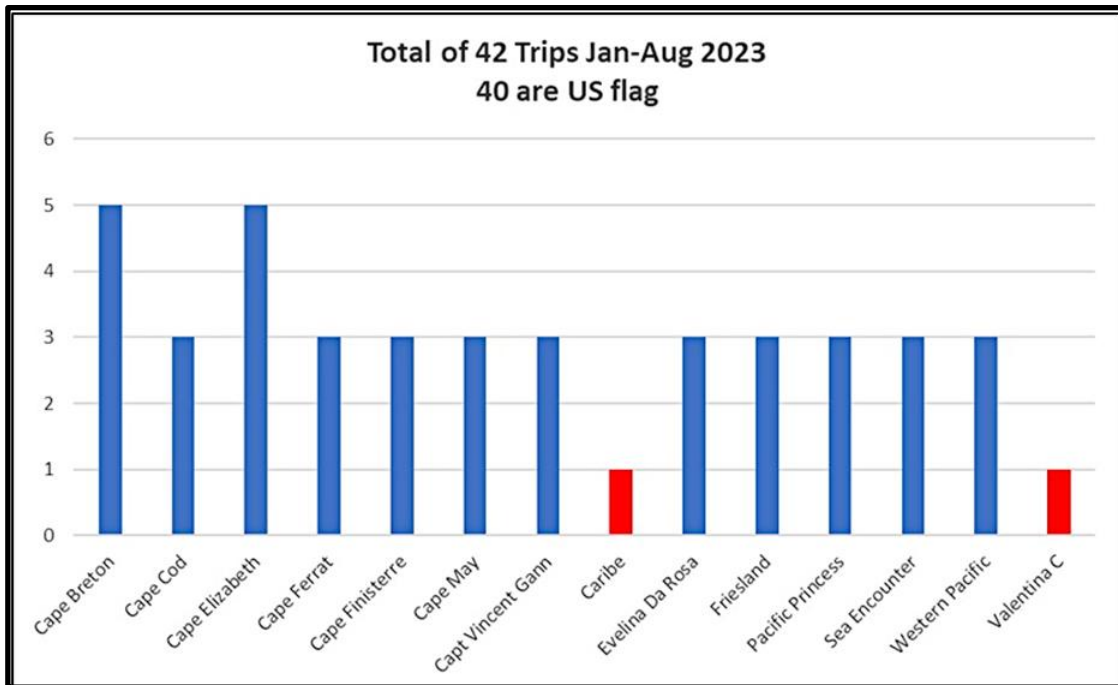


Figure 1: Pago Pago Port Calls 1Q to 3Q 2023. Blue bars indicate U.S.-flagged vessels; red bars indicated foreign-flagged vessels. Source: American Samoa Port Authority

**Application of CMM 2013-06 to the Proposed Footnote
by American Samoa and the United States**

The following information is being provided to assist the Commission understanding the CMM 2013-06 effects of the proposal by American Samoa and the United States that would add a footnote to the tropical tuna high seas purse seine effort table.

Proposal: Add the following footnote to attachment 1, table 2 in the updated Tropical Tuna Measure: *“Except for U.S.-flagged vessels notified* as operating as an integral part of the American Samoa economy”*

*Note: American Samoa and the United States previously submitted the proposal using the term ‘noticed’. Per discussion at TTMW4, the term could be revised to ‘notified’.

a. Who is required to implement the proposal?

American Samoa and the United States would be required to implement the proposal.

b. Which CCMs would this proposal impact and in what way(s) and what proportion?

This proposal would affect American Samoa and the United States. American Samoa and the United States, by introducing the footnote (to Attachment 1, Table 2), are seeking similar economic development opportunities for American Samoa as afforded other SIDS. Such economic opportunity would be provided via the U.S.-flagged vessels notified as operating as an integral part of the American Samoa economy.

c. Are there linkages with other proposals or instruments in other regional fisheries management organizations or international organizations that reduce the burden of implementation?

No

d. Does the proposal affect development opportunities for SIDS?

Yes. American Samoa’s economic and development opportunities would be significantly improved as a result of adopting this proposal. Other SIDS would not face adverse effects of the proposal.

e. Does the proposal affect SIDS domestic access to resources and development aspirations?

Yes. This proposal would result in greater access to resources in support of American Samoa’s economic aspirations, without adverse effects on conservation of relevant highly migratory species.

f. What resources, including financial and human capacity, are needed by SIDS to implement the proposal?

American Samoa will work with the United States to address any resource issues associated with this proposal. There are no resource implications for other SIDS.

g. What mitigation measures are included in the proposal?

This proposal is itself a mitigation measure to undo the transfer of disproportionate burden placed on American Samoa by previous and current WCPFC tropical tuna measures. If adopted, this proposal will ensure the Commission is living up to its obligations in providing economic development opportunities for American Samoa.

h. What assistance mechanisms and associated timeframe, including training and financial support, are included in the proposal to avoid a disproportionate burden on SIDS?

In accord with CMM 2013-06 paragraph 4(b) American Samoa has demonstrated its disproportionate burden of conservation action and CCMs shall cooperate to mitigate the the burden for implementation by American Samoa by adopting the proposed exemption from a specific obligation, as outlined in this proposal. American Samoa will coordinate with the United States to address any training and financial support that may arise from the implementation of the proposal. There would be no training or financial requirements for other SIDS.