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**ANNUAL REPORT – PART 1
INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH, AND STATISTICS**

WCPFC-SC4-AR PART 1/WP-34

BELIZE



**2007 Annual Report to the
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission**

B E L I Z E

PART I: INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH AND STATISTICS (FOR 2007)

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Abstract

Belize's longline tuna fishing fleet operating in the WCPFC Convention Area has shown a steady decrease in its catch and effort from 2003 to 2007. There has been a reduction from 30 vessels in 2003 to 5 in 2007. 4 of these vessels were licensed exclusively for operation in the WCPFC area and 1 was also licensed to fish in other Convention areas. There were a further 4 longliners which were also licensed to fish in the WCPFC area but did not do so in 2007. Due to the reduction in fishing effort, all our catches have decreased when compared with earlier years. There has been an 80% reduction in our overall catches from 3445.99 metric tons in 2003 to 683.824 metric tons in 2007. Albacore was the main target specie from 2003 to 2006. However, our catches of yellowfin tuna exceed those of albacore in 2007. The average size of our vessels has also risen from 191 GT in 2003 to 646 GT in 2007. The majority of the vessels that operated during the period 2003-2006 were between 51-200 GT. In 2007 all our vessels were over 500 GT.

Blue shark is the most common non-tuna bycatch in our longline fishery followed by Sailfish and Skipjack. The large reductions in our longline effort have also resulted in the reduction in catches of our major bycatch species.

We did not receive any reports of seabird and sea turtle interaction by our vessels in 2007. In 2008 we introduced measures to mitigate the impact of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks on seabirds and sea turtles and advised the Secretariat of the measures currently being utilized by our vessels.

Our fishing vessel owners/operators are required to submit data of their fishing operations based on our format for such reporting and in compliance with WCPFC's reporting guidelines. For the purpose of ensuring compliance, surveillance is conducted on a regular basis or as a result of an investigation.

In the future, we intend to re-expand our longline fishing fleet to 8 active fishing vessels exclusively in the Convention Area to fish within the limits set by WCPFC.

BACKGROUND

Belize is a Contracting Party of ICCAT and IOTC. It is a Cooperating non-Contracting Party of IATTC and will become a Contracting Party when the Antigua Convention, to which Belize has acceded, comes into force. It is also a Cooperating non-Contracting Party of NEAFC and a Cooperating non-Member of WCPFC. Furthermore, it is engaged in the negotiations for the formation of SPRFMO. Belize's registered fishing vessels are compliant with the requirements of all RFMOs in whose Convention areas they operate. Belize has no vessels on any IUU List of any RFMO.

1.1 ANNUAL FISHERIES INFORMATION

Essential Information

1.1.1 Annual catch by species, gear in the WCPFC Convention Area

The table below shows our Annual Catch and Effort data by gear and species for the Belize long line fleet in the WCPFC Convention Area over a 4 year period (Source: Fishing Logs and Fishing Vessels Voyage Reports). As you will observe, Albacore has been the dominant catch specie, but the quantities have decreased over the years. Our overall catch totals have also decreased.

Table 1: Annual Catch and Effort for the Belize longline fleet, by species in the WCPFC Convention Area

Year	Effort	ALB	YFT	BET	SWD	MAR	Total
2003	3189	972.48	943.56	782.92	418.88	329.15	3445.99
2004	2973	410.734	206.848	286.122	118.147	51.944	1073.795
2005	2765	313.213	298.371	424.562	43.625	75.251	1155.022
2006	1524	270.655	106.348	254.447	23.032	44.211	698.694

Year	Effort	ALB	YFT	BET	SWD	BUM	BLM	MLS	Total
2007	1686484	164.101	272.713	157.802	7.055	51.712	27.234	3.207	683.824

1.1.2 Number of vessels by gear type, size (fleet structure)

The Belize longline fishing fleet in 2007 consisted of 4 longline fishing vessels licensed to operate exclusively in the WCPFC Convention area and 5 fishing vessels licensed to operate in the WCPFC area as well as in other Convention areas. The table below shows the number of active longline fishing vessels within the WCPFC area by gear type and size. We do not have any purse seiners.

Table 2: Number of active longline fishing vessels licensed to fish within the WCPFC Area over a 4 year period.

Year	GT				Total
	0 – 50	51 – 200	201 – 500	500+	
2003		23	3	4	30
2004	1	20	1	2	24
2005	1	17	1	2	21
2006	1	15		1	17
2007		2	2	5	9

1.1.3 Fishing Patterns (catch by time/area)

The area of operation of our longline fleet during 2003-2007 was as follow:

Year		
2003	20N-30S	130E-175E
2004	20N-30S	130E-170E
2005	29N, 40S	130E-170E
2006	39N, 40S	125E-175E
2007	25N-25S	155E-175E

As you will observe, the main deviation in the pattern was in 2006. This is attributable to one longliner.

1.1.4 Estimated total catches of non-target, associated and dependent species.

The table below shows our catches of non-target, associated and dependent species.

Year	Sharks	SKJ	SAI	WAH	Total
2003	506.1				506.1
2004	206.17	19.245	38.109		263.524
2005	77.087	20.117	1.91		99.114
2006		.859	1.181		2.04
2007	8.078	2.303	3.299	9.668	23.348

NB: The quantity of shark in 2007 consisted of 8.078 m/t of Blue Shark

Useful Information

1.1.5 Development/trends in fishery (changes in fishing patterns, fleet operations, target species, level of transshipment etc.)

- None of our fishing vessels transshipped in the WCPFC Convention area during 2007. This was also the case from 2003-2006.
- There has been a reduction in the number of active longline vessels down from 54 in 2001 to 5 in 2007. 4 of these were licensed exclusively for WCPFC and 1 was also licensed to fish in other Convention areas. There were a further 4 longliners which were also licensed to fish in WCPFC but did not do so in 2007.
- Due to the reduction in fishing effort, all our catches are much reduced when compared with earlier years. Albacore was the main target specie from 2001-2006. However, our catches of yellowfin exceed those of albacore for the first time in 2007.
- The average size of our vessel has risen from 191 GT in 2003 to 646 GT in 2007 and 486 GT in 2008. Also, their specification has improved. We currently have 4 longliners with freezing capacity of -60C.

1.1.6 Disposal of catch (fresh/frozen/other) market destination (export/domestic)

- Our catch is frozen and is exported to South Korea and American Samoa.

1.1.7 Onshore developments (processing plants, support facilities etc)

- We are not a Coastal State and therefore, do not have any processing plants and/or support facilities etc.

1.1.8 Future prospects of the fishery (long term viability, expansion/Contractions etc)

- In the near future, we will re-expand our longline fleet to about 8 active vessels fishing exclusively in WCPFC and will fish within the limits set at the 4th Regular Session of WCPFC which was held in Guam 3-17 December 2007, which are as follows:
 - Bigeye tuna – not to exceed 803 tonnes
 - Yellowfin tuna – not to exceed 2000 tonnes

Other Limits

 - We will limit the number of fishing vessels targeting striped marlin in the Convention Area south of 15 degrees south to 2 vessels
 - We will limit the number of fishing vessels actively fishing for South Pacific Albacore in the Convention Area south of 20 degrees south to 2 fishing vessels
 - We will limit the number of fishing vessels actively fishing for North Pacific Albacore in the Convention Area north of the equator to 5 vessels.

1.2 RESEARCH AND STATISTICS

1.2.1 Summary of observer and port sampling programmes (scientific data)

For the purpose of ensuring compliance, surveillance is conducted on a regular basis or as a result of an investigation by: boarding at sea or in port, plant checks, requesting the assistance of other Governments/Organizations as necessary. We do not currently have any at sea observer programs. As already indicated in our email of 26th June addressed to the Executive Director “we would like to cooperate and make use of any pool of observers which will be set up by WCPFC in due course as envisaged by WCPFC CCM ROP 2007- 01 Annex C”.

1.2.2 Research activities (tunas, other species, species of special interest, oceanographic influences etc)

We are not a Coastal State within the WCPFC Convention Area and do not currently conduct and research activities.

1.2.3 Statistical data collection system in use

Fishing vessel Owners/Operators are required to submit data on their fishing operations based on our format for such reporting, which includes a detailed Fishing Log and Fishing Vessel Voyage Report showing information regarding positions, time/dates, sets, catches by species including weights, start times, number of hooks, size etc., details of discards and bycatches etc., species unloaded, names of ports or details of transshipments (if any) in compliance with the requirements of WCPFC concerning the standards for the provision of operational catch and effort data.

1.2.4 Data coverage of catch, effort and size data for all species

- Our operational effort level is verified by VMS. The coverage was 100% in 2007.
- Our operational catch level for 2007 was verified by mate’s receipts and sales invoices and/or purchase contracts (98%) and also port sampling (25%). This included species and size by

weight in 2007. However, in 2008 we have also introduced the requirement of measurement by length for 25% of the daily catches of each species.

1.3 INFORMATION REQUESTED BY THE COMMISSION

Catch data and number of vessels fishing for South Pacific Albacore

Our catch data and number of vessels fishing for South Pacific Albacore was included in our submission to the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Oceanic Fisheries Program on 29th April 2008. However, by way of summary, we detail this information below.

No. of Vessels	South Pacific Albacore in M/T
5	102.715

Data collection and report of shark catches to the lowest possible taxonomic level

Our catch data and number of vessels fishing for shark was included in our submission to the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Oceanic Fisheries Program on 29th April 2008. However, by way of summary, we detail this information below.

No. of Vessels	Blue Shark
5	8.078

For your guidance, our fishing vessels target shark in the WCPFC Convention Area as a bycatch only. We are currently in the process of implementing the IPOA Sharks. In the meantime, we do require our fishers to fully utilize any retained catches of shark.

All available information on interactions with seabirds, including bycatch and details of species in all fisheries

- We have received no reports of seabird interactions by our vessels in 2007.
- Data on bycatches for the period 2003-2007 is detailed above in Table 3

Information on interaction with sea turtles and any details of research being conducted on sea turtle mitigation.

- We have received no reports of turtle interaction by our vessels in 2007.
- For your guidance, on 11th April 2008 we introduced Fishing Vessel Circular 08/01 “Measures to Mitigate the Impact for all Fish Stocks on Seabirds and Sea Turtles”. In accordance with this Circular we notified the Executive Director on 26th June 2008 of the measures implemented on our fishing vessels currently operating in the Convention area.