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**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMISSION
PART 1: INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH AND STATISTICS**

WCPFC-SC20-AR/CCM-13

REPUBLIC OF MARSHALL ISLANDS

Annual Report to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
Part 1: Information of fisheries, statistics and research

Republic of the Marshall Islands



Oceanic and Industrial Affairs Division
Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority

Scientific data was provided to the Commission in accordance with the decision relating to the provision of scientific data to the Commission by 30 April 2024	Yes
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1 SUMMARY

In 2023, there were eleven Marshall Islands-flagged purse seine vessels operating throughout the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO). The total catch estimates by the national purse seine fleet in 2023 was 67,520 metric tons. Additionally, retained catch estimates, from twenty-nine chartered longline vessels associated with the domestically-based Marshall Islands Fishing Venture (MIFV), totaled 2,314 metric tons.

The commercial catches within the RMI EEZ are taken predominantly by the purse seine fishery but longline and pole-and-line operations also occur. In 2023, estimated total catch for all gears combined was 45,600 metric tons with purse seine accounting for 90% followed by longline 8% and pole-and-line 2%. Purse seine catch in the RMI EEZ increased from 41,123 metric tons in 2022 to 43,176 metric tons in 2023.

The RMI Observer program's 45 active observers carried out 94 purse seine and 23 longline trips during 2023. Observer coverage requirements for fishing vessels were reinstated during the year after a pause during the COVID19 pandemic. As in previous years, observers were also utilized to monitor transshipment and unloading activities in Majuro port.

2 FLAG STATE REPORTING

Annual catch and effort estimates for the national purse seine fleet, fishing throughout the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Convention Area (WCPFC-CA) during the last five years are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1. In 2023, total catch estimates were 67,520 metric tons for the purse seine fleet. Skipjack is the prominent species caught comprising 88% of the total followed by yellowfin, 10% and bigeye tuna at less than 1%.

There were 29 foreign long-liners chartered in 2023 whose catch estimates are provided in Table 2. All chartered vessels are based locally and fish almost exclusively in the RMI EEZ. Vessel numbers for both purse seine and longline vessels are presented in Table 3 below.

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate catch distributions for the RMI flagged purse seine and chartered longline fleets from 2022 to 2023. Purse seine catch and effort areas widened in 2023 with an increase in catches in the adjacent high seas compared to the previous year. As previously stated, longline vessels predominantly operate in the EEZ and effort was more concentrated in the south in 2023.

Table 1. Annual catch and effort estimates for the Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, by species and year, in the WCPFC Convention Area

Species	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Retain	Discard	Retain	Discard	Retain	Discard	Retain	Discard	Retain	Discard
ALBACORE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BIGEYE TUNA	616	21	718	24	683	23	433	0	713	19
PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SKIPJACK TUNA	84,253	719	74,625	1,521	81,741	1,362	81,445	34	59,723	411
YELLOWFIN TUNA	10,654	98	6,564	245	7,005	213	4,088	5	7,072	43
BLACK MARLIN	2	4	2	7	2	6	0	20	5	4
BLUE MARLIN	7	14	1	9	1	10	6	1	7	5
STRIPED MARLIN	1	2	3	3	3	2	12	0	0	1
SWORDFISH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BLUE SHARK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SILKY SHARK	0	69	0	72	0	47	0	66	0	59
HAMMERHEAD SHARKS	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
MAKO SHARKS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OCEANIC WHITETIP SHARKS	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	16	0	3
PORBEAGLE / SALMON SHARK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
WHALE SHARK	0	9	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	1
THRESHER SHARKS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	95,533	938	81,913	1,895	89,435	1,664	85,984	142	67,520	546

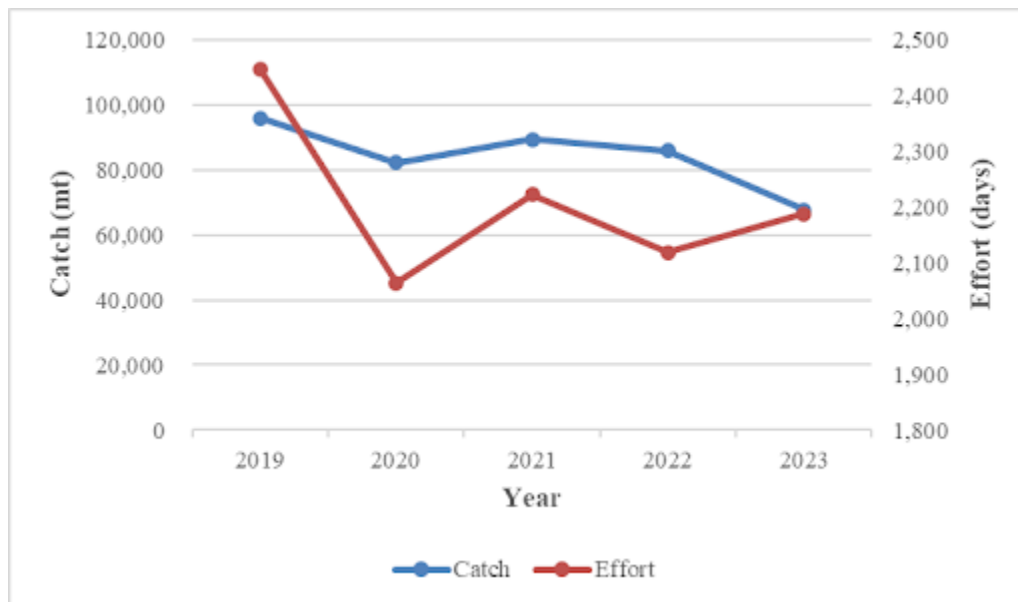


Figure 1. Annual catch and effort for the Marshall Islands purse seine vessels in the WCPFC Convention Area

Table 2. Annual catch estimates for the Marshall Islands-chartered longline vessels, by species and year, for the WCPFC Convention Area

Species	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Retain	Discard	Retain	Discard	Retain	Discard	Retain	Discard	Retain	Discard
ALBACORE	97	2	9	0	53	1	149	1	93	2
BIGEYE TUNA	1,428	30	751	13	915	13	1,151	22	1,414	14
PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
SKIPJACK TUNA	0	10	1	0	0	1	2	1	0	0
YELLOWFIN TUNA	1,152	23	730	13	620	14	940	24	667	9
BLACK MARLIN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
BLUE MARLIN	189	3	98	0	130	0	188	0	125	0
STRIPED MARLIN	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
SWORDFISH	24	16	10	7	15	8	15	0	16	5
BLUE SHARK	0	94	0	13	0	114	0	245	0	460
SILKY SHARK	0	20	0	10	0	68	0	47	0	319
HAMMERHEAD SHARKS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
MAKO SHARKS	0	2	0	1	0	4	0	2	0	1
OCEANIC WHITTETIP SHARKS	0	44	0	1	0	13	0	4	0	5
PORBEAGLE / SALMON SHARK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
WHALE SHARK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
THRESHER SHARKS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2,890	244	1,599	59	1,733	236	2,446	348	2,314	818

Table 3. Number of Marshall Islands-chartered and flagged vessels, by size category, active in the WCPFC Convention Area, 2019-2023

Year	GRT	Longline				Purse Seine			
		0-50	51-200	201-500	500+	0-500	501-1000	1001-1500	1500+
2019		0	22	0	0	0	0	7	4
2020		0	23	0	0	0	0	7	4
2021		0	27	0	0	0	0	7	4
2022		0	23	0	0	0	0	7	4
2023		0	29	0	0	0	0	7	4

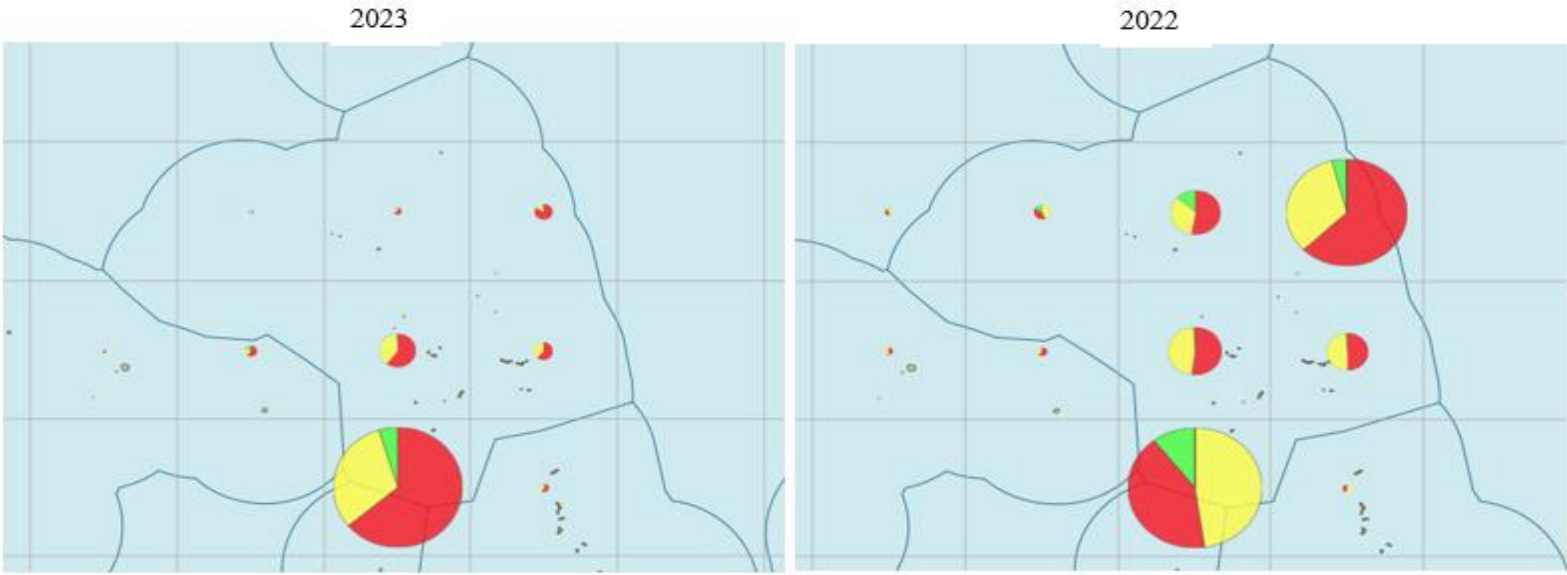


Figure 2. Annual distribution of catch by the Marshall Islands-chartered longline vessels in the WCPFC Convention Area in 2023 and 2022 (Red - BET, Yellow - YFT, Green - ALB)

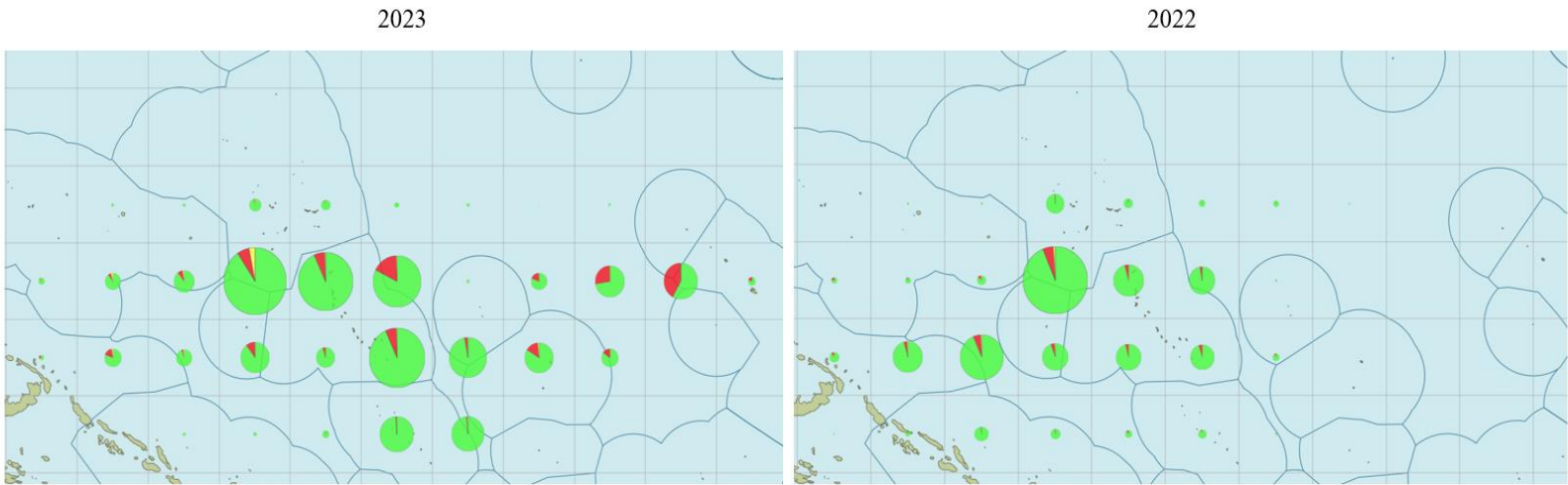


Figure 3. Annual distribution of catch by the Marshall Islands purse seine vessels in the WCPFC Convention Area in 2023 and 2022 (Green – SKJ, Red – YFT, Yellow – BET)

3 COASTAL STATE REPORTING

Table 4 provides a description of foreign-flagged vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands waters over the past five years. A total of 234 foreign vessels were licensed however, not all were actively fishing in the RMI EEZ during the period. Domestically-based foreign longline vessels affiliated with the Marshall Islands Fishing Venture (MIFV) have been operating under charter with the RMI since 2016, hence the inclusion of the charter component of the catches in the flag state reporting above.

Table 4. Number of longline, pole-and-line and purse seine vessels licensed to fish in the RMI EEZ, by year and flag

FLAG	GEAR	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
CHINA	LL	22	20	18	22	29
	PS	9	9	9	10	12
FSM	LL	9	10	12	11	10
FSMA	PS	54	70	83	79	81
JAPAN	LL	9	2	2	1	6
	PL	20	21	25	3	13
	PS	26	28	29	22	25
KIRIBATI	PS	7	3	4	2	2
KOREA	PS	25	25	21	20	22
NAURU	PS	0	0	0		2
PHILIPPINES	PS	10	15	15	15	6
CH-TAIPEI	LL	1	0	0	0	0
	PS	24	18	21	23	22
TUVALU	PS	1	0	1	1	1
VANUATU	PS	0	0	0	0	3
USA	PS	6	25	0	0	0
TOTAL	LL	41	32	32	34	45
	PL	20	21	25	3	13
	PS	162	190	183	195	176

Available logsheet data indicate that total catch by purse seine fleets operating in the RMI EEZ increased from 41,123 metric tons in 2022 to 44,232 mt in 2023 with 23% taken by the RMI fleet (Table 5). The catch rates in the RMI EEZ are usually influenced by the prevailing environmental conditions, with higher catches recorded during or immediately following strong El Nino periods. Skipjack tuna continues to be the dominant catch, accounting for 89% of the total catch in 2023.

The domestically-based foreign longline fleet comprises vessels from China and FSM and are managed and operated under Marshall Islands Fishing Venture, Ltd., which is a subsidiary of Luen Thai. Japanese longline vessels offload their catch in ports in Japan. In-zone longline catch estimates are provided in Table 6. Bigeye and yellowfin catches continue to account for the major part of the target catch composition. As with the purse seine fishery, most of the longline fishing effort occurs in the southern areas of the RMI EEZ however in the longline fishery, effort is more widely distributed throughout the zone.

In 2023, provisional catches from the pole-and-line fleet decreased to 516 metric tons from 893 mt in the previous year (Table 7). Skipjack is the main species making up the catch composition for this fleet and nearly accounts for the entire catch total each year. The RMI continues its efforts to deploy observers on board the Pole & Line fleet to attain coverage for validation purposes.

Table 5. Annual catches of purse seine fleets operating in the RMI EEZ, by flag and species, 2019-2023

Catches (metric tonnes)							Catches (metric tonnes)						
Flag	Year	SKJ	YFT	BET	OTH	TOTAL	Flag	Year	SKJ	YFT	BET	OTH	TOTAL
China	2019	280	30	20	1	331	RMI	2019	1,587	19	51	5	1,662
	2020	0	0	0	0	0		2020	9,027	482	154	7	9,670
	2021	0	0	0	0	0		2021	12,083	2,220	123	1	14,427
	2022	295	10	0	0	305		2022	17,531	505	144	14	18,194
	2023	403	11	1	0	415		2023	9,311	244	488	13	10,055
FSM	2019	220	49	13	6	288	Solomon Is	2019	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	5,197	1,064	108	12	6,381		2020	251	129	25	1	406
	2021	6,959	2,947	89	4	9,999		2021	20	495	35	0	550
	2022	3,750	224	78	4	4,056		2022	0	0	0	0	0
	2023	8,004	1,132	27	3	9,165		2023	70	0	50	0	120
Japan	2019	0	0	0	0	0	Chinese Taipei	2019	1,237	133	7	3	1,380
	2020	40	30	0	0	70		2020	2,798	711	256	7	3,772
	2021	1,384	2,096	10	3	3,493		2021	7,167	4,463	143	2	11,775
	2022	318	2	0	0	320		2022	8,118	380	204	6	8,708
	2023	1,203	27	2	1	1,233		2023	8,275	37	1,535	9	9,856
Kiribati	2019	186	28	1	0	215	Tuvalu	2019	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	2,899	1,343	40	3	4,285		2020	0	0	0	0	0
	2021	2,345	665	5	1	3,016		2021	680	497	6	1	1,184
	2022	4,591	196	30	1	4,818		2022	756	89	5	1	851
	2023	3,556	21	435	24	4,036		2023	543	0	67	0	610
Korea	2019	460	15	0	0	475	Vanuatu	2019	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	3,963	1,860	118	7	5,948		2020	0	0	0	0	0
	2021	2,077	2,898	23	0	4,998		2021	80	75	0	0	155
	2022	251	19	0	0	270		2022	0	0	0	0	0
	2023	5,656	3	517	3	6,179		2023	255	0	30	10	295
Nauru	2019	171	25	0	0	196	USA	2019	353	80	17	1	451
	2020	3,400	1,059	95	15	4,569		2020	1,340	323	75	3	1,741
	2021	3,047	1,914	80	2	5,043		2021	0	0	0	0	0
	2022	3,044	493	62	2	3,601		2022	0	0	0	0	0
	2023	2,133	9	76	4	2,222		2023	0	0	0	0	0
PNG	2019	379	16	0	0	395	TOTAL EEZ	2019	4,873	395	109	16	5,393
	2020	0	0	0	0	0		2020	28,915	7,001	871	55	36,842
	2021	0	0	0	0	0		2021	35,842	18,270	514	14	54,640
	2022	0	0	0	0	0		2022	38,654	1,918	523	28	41,123
	2023	45	0	0	0	45		2023	39,453	1,484	3,228	67	44,232

Table 6. Annual catches of longline fleets operating in the RMI EEZ, by flag and species, 2019-2023

Flag	Year	Catch (metric tonnes)				TOTAL
		ALB	BET	YFT	OTH	
China	2019	0	16	17	5	38
	2020	1	66	45	9	121
	2021	1	32	25	6	64
	2022	0	0	0	0	0
	2023	21	35	25	6	87
FSM	2019	41	695	594	140	1,470
	2020	10	686	533	111	1,340
	2021	36	637	392	125	1,190
	2022	71	438	373	107	989
	2023	34	480	237	61	812
Japan	2019	2	66	46	12	126
	2020	1	180	25	17	223
	2021	32	109	108	21	270
	2022	24	96	88	30	238
	2023	13	100	29	34	175
RMI-Chartered	2019	91	1,219	1,045	241	2,596
	2020	9	708	679	119	1,515
	2021	53	899	610	179	1,741
	2022	138	1,101	886	232	2,357
	2023	91	1,403	658	184	2,336
CH-Taipei	2019	0	4	17	18	39
	2020	0	0	0	0	0
	2021	0	0	0	0	0
	2022	0	0	0	0	0
	2023	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL EEZ	2019	134	2,000	1,719	416	4,269
	2020	21	1,640	1,282	256	3,199
	2021	122	1,677	1,135	331	3,265
	2022	233	1,635	1,347	369	3,584
	2023	160	2,018	949	284	3,411

Table 7. Annual catches of pole-and-line fleet operating in the RMI EEZ, by flag and species, 2019-2023

Flag	Year	Catch (metric tonnes)			
		BET	SKJ	YFT	TOTAL
Japan	2019	0	1,022	2	1,024
	2020	0	2,609	10	2,619
	2021	2	761	14	777
	2022	0	880	13	893
	2023	0	516	0	516

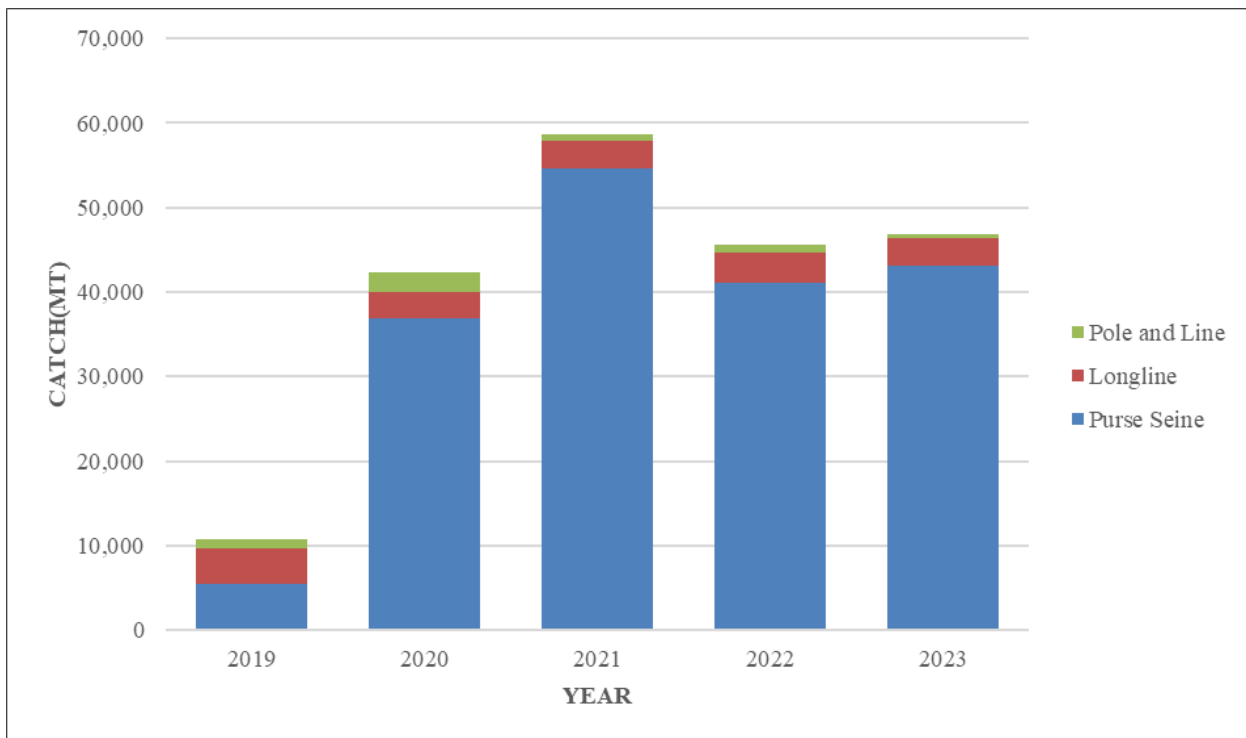


Figure 4. Total catch by the different gears operating in the RMI EEZ

4 DISPOSAL OF CATCH

As mentioned earlier, the Marshall Islands Fishing Venture, Ltd. (MIFV) operates the Longline Fish base with domestically-based foreign longline vessels. In 2023, there was a provisional total of 3,973 metric tons of fish unloaded by the longline fleet and most of it was bound for export markets (Table 8). The MIFV exports mainly fresh chilled tuna species to markets in the US. Frozen fish (rejects and bycatch) are shipped to Asia via transport containers and/or sold locally.

Majuro port is the only designated port for transshipment in the RMI. There were an estimated 294 purse seine transshipments and unloadings undertaken in Majuro in 2023 with a provisional total of 229,239 metric tons transshipped (Table 9). During the first quarter of the year, purse seine fishing concentrated in the western regions of the ocean resulted in a significant decrease in the number of vessel entries. Additionally, most transshipments by the national purse seine fleet are usually carried out in Majuro, however, foreign ports in the region are occasionally utilized (Table 10).

Table 8. Total unloaded catch (mt) for domestically-based longline vessels in 2023

Species	Unloaded Catch (mt)
Albacore	117
Big Eye	2,427
Blue Marlin	192
MahiMahi	23
Moon Fish	1
Sailfish	12
Striped Marlin	10
Sword Fish	31
Wahoo	45
Yellow Fin	1,115
TOTAL	3,973

Table 9. Provisional purse seine transshipments and unloadings in Majuro port in 2023

Flag	Number of PS Transshipments	SKJ	YFT	BET
Federated States of Micronesia	57	33,150	7,380	1,094
Korea, Republic of	1	870	308	5
Marshall Islands	47	27,734	5,248	456
Nauru	71	56,038	5,614	972
Papua New Guinea	8	6,346	69	30
Solomon Islands	1	180	0	140
Spain	3	3,569	482	787
Taiwan	98	61,965	10,692	1,264
Tuvalu	7	2,924	622	3
Vanuatu	1	1,163	137	0
TOTAL	294	193,938	30,551	4,750

Table 10. Purse seine transshipments by RMI-flagged vessels in 2023

Annex II (1)					
Species	Quantity Transshipped (MT)	Transshipped in port	Transshipped in WCP-CA	Caught in WCP-CA	Product Form
SKJ	56,468	Yes	Yes	Yes	Frozen Whole
YFT	7,186	Yes	Yes	Yes	Frozen Whole
BET	657	Yes	Yes	Yes	Frozen Whole
Annex II (2)					
Port	Number of Transshipments	Transshipped in port	Transshipped in WCP-CA	Caught in WCP-CA	Product Form
KIRITIMATI	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Frozen Whole
MAJURO	47	Yes	Yes	Yes	Frozen Whole
POHNPEI	13	Yes	Yes	Yes	Frozen Whole
TARAWA	36	Yes	Yes	Yes	Frozen Whole

5 ONSHORE DEVELOPMENTS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

MIMRA, on behalf of the Government, still maintains a joint venture partnership with Koo's Fishing Company, Ltd. (KFC). This venture continues to provide an additional revenue stream as well as a catalyst for further on-shore developments. Along these lines, MIMRA's joint venture with the Nature Conservancy (TNC), Pacific Islands Tuna Provisions (PITP), and the EU and German cooperation funded FISH4ACP program were also recent initiatives to promote tuna landings and further promote on-shore development and increase the RMI's participation throughout the tuna value chain.

The Pan Pacific Foods (PPF) loining plant continued operations in 2023 however was limited to cold storage and containerization of fish. As has been reported before, the company also operates six RMI-flagged purse seine vessels which supply the plant with raw materials. The plant did not produce any processed fish during 2023 due in part to staff storages.

Total volume of exports was 6,968 metric tons with whole containerized tuna exports making up the majority (Table 11). MIFV and Pacific International Inc. (PII) have steadily increased their numbers of containerized whole tuna exports in recent years. PPF exported the highest volume of whole tuna at 2,268 metric tons in 2023. The RMI continued to engage in projects to increase onshore opportunities with national stakeholders and partners.

Table 11. Total Purse Seine whole tuna exports (mt) in 2023, by destination and species

Destination	SKJ	YFT	BET
CHINA	271	537	92
FIJI	177	5	53
JAPAN	0	98	0
PHILIPPINES	2,183	5	4
THAILAND	1,766	284	27
TAIWAN	397	156	0
VIETNAM	0	912	0
TOTAL	4,795	1,997	176

6 FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE FISHERY

The RMI continues to support domestic fisheries development aspirations in the region so long as it goes hand in hand with sustainable management measures that do not put a disproportionate burden on SIDS, in accordance with Article 30 of the Convention.

Other notable future prospects for the RMI tuna fishery involve further observer and debriefer capacity development as MIMRA continues to progressively train and recruit additional fisheries observers. Since the latter half of 2015, MIMRA has also utilized observers (when in port) to carry out port monitoring duties on transshipments taking place in Majuro port. Work continued towards developing port monitoring apps and increased usage of electronic crane scales for all unloadings and transshipment events.

7 DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Data management and handling capacity continues to be a vital tool for MIMRA. The SPC-OFP has been very instrumental in the RMI’s data efforts. MIMRA continues to employ a dedicated port sampler covering almost 100% of longline unloadings at the MIFV fish base. The port sampler along with other staff collate the data and enter into the TUFMAN II database. MIMRA continues to utilize SPC’s Onshore port sampling app, which has improved the flow of data and allows for inputs of biological sampling data.

MIMRA intends to shift its focus towards the PNA FIMS as the standard by which it will manage and handle its data complemented by existing databases such as the TUFMAN II currently in use. This is partly due to the use of FIMS e-Reporting (ER) by more fishing vessels, notably the longline fleets fishing in the RMI which increased its ER coverage to over 90% in 2023. The FIMS electronic monitoring (EM) module was developed during the year whilst ongoing work to fully utilize EM on local fleets continued to be a MIMRA priority.

Regional observer coverage requirements were fully reinstated in 2023 after a pause during the COVID19 pandemic. There were 45 active RMI observers employed under the MIMRA Observer Program. This is a decrease from previous years due to pandemic travel restrictions affecting operations and resulting in observers seeking employment elsewhere. MIMRA conducted a basic training for 15 new observers during the latter part of the year and intends to conduct a few more in the coming year. A total of 94 purse seiner and 23 longliner vessel trips were observed during the year (Table 12).

Table 12. Observer purse seiner trips by flag in 2023

Arrangement	Flag	Trips	Sea Days
FSMA	NR	3	101
	FM	16	705
Bilateral	TW	73	1972
	CN	2	74
MIFV (LL)	FM	4	56
	CN	19	294
TOTAL		117	3202

APPENDIX 1 – CMM REPORTING



**Western and
Central Pacific
Fisheries
Commission**

ADDENDUM TO ANNUAL REPORT PART 1

8 April 2024¹

**SECTION A: SPECIFIC INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED IN ANNUAL REPORT PART 1 AS REQUIRED BY
CMMS AND OTHER DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION.**

CMM 2019-03 [North Pacific Albacore], Para 3	This is not a target catch for RMI vessels however, 93mt of NP ALB were caught as bycatch by the chartered longline fleet operating in the RMI EEZ.															
CMM 2006-04 [South West striped Marlin], Para 4	Not applicable. No RMI vessels fishing south of 15°S.															
CMM 2009-03 [Swordfish], Para 8	Not applicable. No RMI vessels fish south 20°S.															
CMM 2009-06 [Transshipment], Para 11 (ANNEX II)	99 in-port transshipments (Kiritimati 3; Majuro 47; Pohnpei 13; Tarawa 36) = 64,311 mt (prov.). See table 10.															
CMM 2011-03 [Impact of PS fishing on cetaceans], Para 5	<p>RMI continues to undertake more awareness work on this specific reporting obligation with vessel masters.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Interactions with cetaceans on RMI-flagged purse seine vessels</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Species</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Number</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Fate</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">ROUGH-TOOTHED DOLPHIN</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Released</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">COMMON DOLPHIN</td> <td style="text-align: center;">21</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Released</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">FALSE KILLER WHALE</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Released</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">TOTAL</td> <td style="text-align: center;">28</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Species	Number	Fate	ROUGH-TOOTHED DOLPHIN	5	Released	COMMON DOLPHIN	21	Released	FALSE KILLER WHALE	2	Released	TOTAL	28	
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¹ Reporting requirements requested by CMMs and decisions of the Commission, as of WCPFC20 (Dec 2023). First issued on 8 April 2024. Changes made from Addendum for 2022 include the revised CMM 2023-03 for North Pacific Swordfish and **WCPFC20 Agreed Audit Points**.

Observer coverage (WCPFC 11 decision – para 484(b))	This does not apply to RMI. There were no RMI flagged longline fishing vessels in 2023.
CMM 2015-02 [South Pacific Albacore] Para 4	Not applicable. No RMI vessels fished south of 20°S
CMM 2018-03 [Seabirds] Para 13	There were no RMI flagged longline fishing vessels in 2023.
CMM 2023-03 [North Pacific Swordfish], para 4	Not applicable. No RMI vessels fished north of 20°N.