

**JOINT IATTC AND WCPFC-NC WORKING GROUP MEETING ON THE
MANAGEMENT OF PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA
NINTH SESSION (JWG-09)**

Kushiro, Japan
10 – 13 July 2024

Report on CMM 2023-02 (Pacific bluefin tuna)

IATTC-NC-JWG09-2024/DP-17

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand Report on the WCPFC Conservation and Management Measure for Pacific Bluefin Tuna (2024)

Para 2: CCMs shall take measures necessary to ensure that total fishing effort by their vessel fishing for Pacific bluefin tuna in the area north of the 20° N shall stay below the 2002–2004 annual average levels.

Not applicable. During 2023, New Zealand flagged fishing vessels authorised to operate in the Convention Area did not fish above 20 North.

Para 3: Japan, Korea and Chinese Taipei shall, respectively, take measures necessary to ensure that its catches of Pacific bluefin tuna less than 30 kg and Pacific bluefin tuna 30 kg or larger shall not exceed the annual catch limits in the tables below.

Not applicable.

Para 4: CCMs, not described in paragraph 3, may increase their catch of Pacific bluefin tuna 30kg or larger by 15% above their 2002-2004 annual average levels. CCMs with a base line catch of 10 tons or less of Pacific bluefin tuna 30 kg or larger may increase their catch as long as it does not exceed 10 metric tons per year.

All Pacific bluefin tuna caught in the WCPFC Convention Area by New Zealand fishers is harvested inside New Zealand waters. During the 2023 calendar year, New Zealand saw an exceptional upsurge in bycatch of Pacific bluefin tuna within our domestic southern bluefin tuna and swordfish target surface longline fisheries. This resulted in an increase of Pacific bluefin tuna catch to 105 tonnes. Due to carryover from 2022 (because of under-catch in that year), New Zealand's limit in 2023 was 74 tonnes, and was therefore exceeded by 31 tonnes. Prior to 2023, New Zealand's catch of Pacific bluefin tuna in New Zealand waters was very low, and well below the WCPFC limit.

In 2023 New Zealand's regulatory settings meant that bycatch of Pacific bluefin tuna could not be returned to the sea. In response to this exceptional increase in bycatch, in March 2024, New Zealand finalised a new exception to domestic commercial landings and discards rules (under section 72A of the Fisheries Act 1996) which allows for surface longline and troll caught Pacific bluefin tuna in New Zealand to be returned to the sea if it is alive and likely to survive.

Pacific bluefin tuna catch is closely monitored. From January 2024, all New Zealand surface longline vessels, including those with bycatch of Pacific bluefin tuna, are required to have cameras onboard vessels. All Pacific bluefin tuna caught in New Zealand's waters are large fish.

Para 7: All CCMs except Japan shall implement the limits in paragraph 3 on a calendar-year basis. Japan shall implement the limits using a management year other than the calendar year for some of its fisheries and have its implementation assessed with respect to its management year.

This paragraph is not applicable to New Zealand. Domestic management of Pacific bluefin tuna in New Zealand is managed by fishing year, beginning 1 October. In a revised

conservation and management measure, New Zealand would like consideration of limits by fisheries management year (rather than calendar year) from 2025 onwards.

Para 8: CCMs shall report their annual catch limits and their annual catches of PBF, with adequate computation details, to present their implementation for paragraph 5 and 6, if the measures and arrangements in the said paragraphs and relevant footnotes applied. The Executive Director will compile this information each year into an appropriate format for the use of the Northern Committee.

For the 2023 calendar year, New Zealand's total available limit was 74 tonnes due to carry over from 2022 (New Zealand's standard WCPFC limit is 63 tonnes). Total fishing mortality for the 2023 calendar year was 105 tonnes (over catch of 31 tonnes). If the current payback provisions of the CMM are applied, New Zealand's limit in 2024 will be 32 tonnes.

New Zealand raised this issue at WCPFC20, noting that New Zealand has a small bycatch fishery (0.4% of the overall stock limits) covered by the measure, and that in recent years New Zealand has seen an exceptional increase in bycatch of Pacific bluefin in New Zealand waters. This has caused some management challenges in relation to the relatively small limit that is applied to CCMs, other than the CCMs named within the measure (i.e. in paragraph 3). New Zealand called for consideration for those members that have small bycatch fisheries covered by this measure, and sought the opportunity to review the arrangements following the new stock assessment.

Para 10: CCMs, in particular those catching juvenile Pacific bluefin tuna, shall take measures to monitor and obtain prompt results of recruitment of juveniles each year

New Zealand implements this requirement via the New Zealand electronic reporting system whereby fishers are required to report on any catches, including the size, of Pacific bluefin tuna daily. Landed catch reports are required monthly. In practice, Pacific bluefin tuna caught in New Zealand's waters are large fish (>30kg).

Para 11: Consistent with their rights and obligations under international law, and in accordance with domestic laws and regulations, CCMs shall, to the extent possible, take measures necessary to prevent commercial transaction of Pacific bluefin tuna and its products that undermine the effectiveness of this CMM, especially measures prescribed in the paragraph 3 above. CCMs shall cooperate for this purpose.

Pacific bluefin tuna is included in New Zealand's Quota Management System. All fish included in the Quota Management System must be accounted for at the point of capture - and must be retained, discarded, or landed in accordance with New Zealand commercial fishing regulations. All fish, including Pacific bluefin tuna, caught by commercial fishers in New Zealand waters may only be sold to Licensed Fish Receivers. Details of who sold the fish, as well as the species, and weight for each fish are recorded. This ensures that the sale of fish can be tracked, in order to reduce illegal fish trading, and help the Quota Management System work effectively. All exports of seafood, including Pacific bluefin tuna, must comply with New Zealand legislation and food standards. Seafood exporters are responsible for meeting the market access requirements of the destination country.

Para 13: CCMs shall also take measures necessary to strengthen monitoring and data collecting system for Pacific bluefin tuna fisheries and farming in order to improve the data quality and timeliness of all the data reporting.

All vessels fishing within New Zealand's exclusive economic zone are required to comply with Ministry for Primary Industries electronic reporting requirements as per domestic regulations. As of January 2024, New Zealand's surface longline fleet is required to have cameras onboard, meaning all fisher reported catch is 100% verifiable. Fishers are also required to electronically report catch and effort information on a daily basis.

New Zealand is also party to the United National Food and Agricultural Organisation Port State Measures Agreement which seeks to monitor all fish unloaded at port (by foreign vessels) to ensure that catch has not been caught as a result of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing.

Para 14: CCMs shall also monitor the international trade of the products derived from Pacific bluefin tuna and report the results to Executive Director by 31 July annually.

Pacific bluefin tuna from New Zealand's waters were primarily exported to Japan, with smaller amounts exported to the United States, Australia, Canada, and Switzerland.

Para 16: To enhance effectiveness of this measure, CCMs are encouraged to communicate with and, if appropriate, work with the concerned IATTC contracting parties bilaterally

New Zealand, despite being a member of the WCPFC, and having bycatch of Pacific bluefin tuna in our waters, is not able to become a member of the WCPFC Northern Committee. However, following an invitation from the Northern Committee Chair at WCPFC20, New Zealand will be participating at the IATTC-WCPFC NC JWG for the first time, in person. New Zealand warmly welcomes bilateral engagement with WCPFC and IATTC contracting parties on the sustainable management of the Pacific bluefin tuna fishery, including to ensure there are appropriate management settings for small bycatch fisheries in the Southern Hemisphere.

CCMs shall report to the Executive Director by 31 July each year their fishing effort and <30 kg and ≥30 kg catch levels, by fishery, for the previous 3 year, accounting for all catches, including discards.

Fishery	All catches (Para 5, CMM 2021-02)								All catches (Para 5, CMM 2021-03)					
	2002		2003		2004		2002-2004 Average		2021		2022		2023	
	<30kg	≥30kg	<30kg	≥30kg	<30kg	≥30kg	<30kg	≥30kg	<30kg	≥30kg	<30kg	≥30kg	<30kg	≥30kg
New Zealand														
Longline	0	56.86	0	40.77	0	43.6	0	47.08	0	41.65	0	34.27	0	104.58
Handline	0	0	0	0	0	22.2	0	7.40	0	0	0	0	0	0
Troll	0	0	0	0	0	1.6	0	0.53	0	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Total</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>105</u>

*Total catch now reported in whole numbers

Consideration of small bycatch fisheries in the southern hemisphere within the Pacific bluefin tuna CMM

At WCPFC20 “New Zealand thanked the NC19 Chair for the presentation. NZ had a relatively small bycatch fishery covered by the measure and had noticed an extraordinary increase in incidental catch of Pacific bluefin recently which had caused some challenges to manage in relation to the relatively small limit that is applied to CCMs other than the CCMs named within the measure. **New Zealand wanted some consideration for members that had a small fishery for the stock covered by this measure, after the Commission had the stock assessment and the opportunity to review the arrangements.**”

In New Zealand’s waters, Pacific bluefin tuna is primarily a bycatch species of the southern bluefin tuna surface longline fishery (and to a lesser extent swordfish fishery, Figure 1).

New Zealand’s current WCPFC catch limit is 63 tonnes, 0.4 percent of the overall limit. Japan has a current limit of approximately 9,621 tonnes, Chinese Taipei 1,965 tonnes and Korea 748 tonnes; and other WCPFC members have a default limit of ten tonnes. New Zealand understands the IATTC currently has a share of approximately 3,995 tonnes.

New Zealand’s surface longline fleet principally targets southern bluefin tuna, which is managed globally by the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna. The global southern bluefin tuna fishery is subject to a management procedure which is set to achieve a biomass level of 30% of the original spawning stock biomass by 2035. The stock has been rebuilding by approximately 5% per year since the low point in 2009. New Zealand is optimistic that the stock will continue to increase, and therefore there is a need for New Zealand to have a catch limit for bycatch of Pacific bluefin tuna that does not unduly constrain the southern bluefin tuna target fishery.

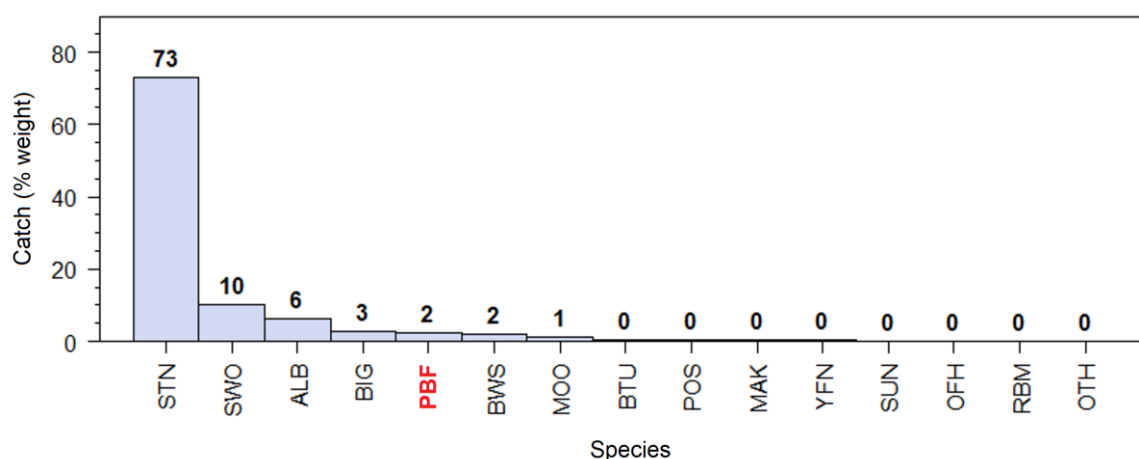


Figure 1: Species Composition of New Zealand surface longline catch 2022 (STN = southern bluefin tuna, SWO = swordfish, ALB = albacore, BIG = Bigeye, PBF = Pacific bluefin tuna).

New Zealand saw an upsurge of Pacific bluefin tuna bycatch in 2023

New Zealand's catch of Pacific bluefin tuna has been notably below the WCPFC limit. However, in 2023 New Zealand saw an upsurge in bycatch, with a total catch of 105 tonnes. This may be due to increased abundance in the stock, changing oceanic conditions, or both.

In 2023, New Zealand's domestic regulations meant that all Pacific bluefin tuna was required to be landed. In light of this, New Zealand prioritised work to introduce Pacific bluefin tuna as a new exception to domestic commercial landings and discards regulations (under section 72A of the Fisheries Act 1996). This came into effect on 1 March 2024 and allows surface longline and troll caught Pacific bluefin tuna in New Zealand to be returned to the sea if it is alive and likely to survive.

New Zealand fishers have tried moving to different fishing grounds to avoid bycatch of Pacific bluefin tuna, but this has been largely unsuccessful. Due to the small WCPFC and domestic limit, some fishers targeting southern bluefin tuna and swordfish are having to suspend fishing as they have been unable to avoid bycatch of Pacific bluefin tuna.

New Zealand's surface longline fishing effort has significantly decreased

Surface longline fishing effort has significantly decreased by over 80% in New Zealand's waters since 2002 to 2004 (upon which the current WCPFC limit is set). Despite this, New Zealand saw an upsurge in bycatch of Pacific bluefin tuna in 2023.

During the 2002-2004 period New Zealand had an average of 128 vessels operating in the surface longline fishery. In 2023, the number of vessels operating in the surface longline fishery has reduced by 84% of the 2002-2004 average, to 20 vessels (Figure 2).

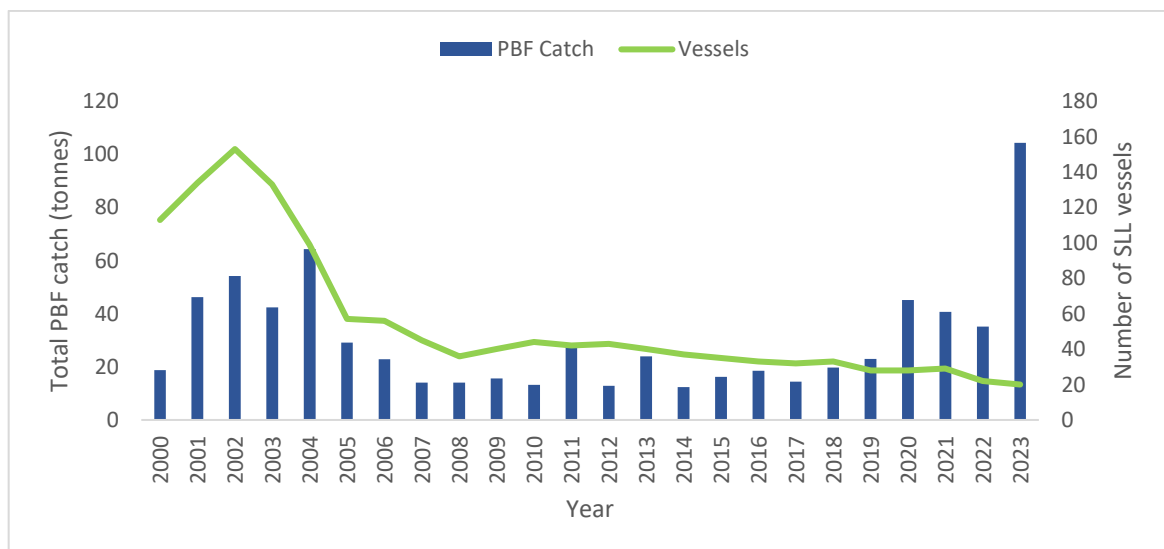


Figure 2: Annual Pacific bluefin tuna catch vs vessel numbers 2000-2023 calendar year

The average number of hooks used per year in New Zealand's surface longline fleet for the 2002 to 2004 period was 9,247,163 hooks. In 2023, the number of hooks used in the

surface longline fishery has reduced by 83% of the 2002 to 2004 average levels to 1,587,358 hooks used (Figure 3).

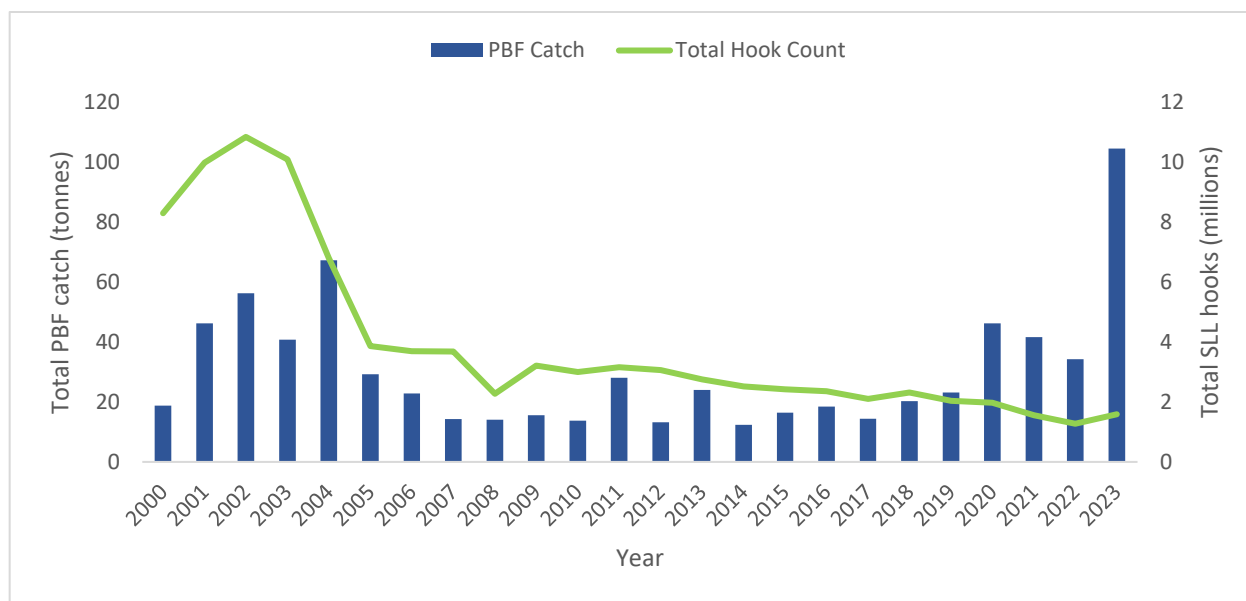


Figure 3: Annual Pacific bluefin tuna catch vs surface longline hook count 2000-2023 calendar year

New Zealand’s catch consists of large fish only

CMM2023-02 states “Harvesting small fish has a greater impact on future spawning stock biomass than harvesting large fish of the same amount”. New Zealand waters are the most southern point of the Pacific bluefin tuna migration within the WCPFC EEZs, and all fish caught within New Zealand’s waters are considered large fish (Figure 4) (>30kg).

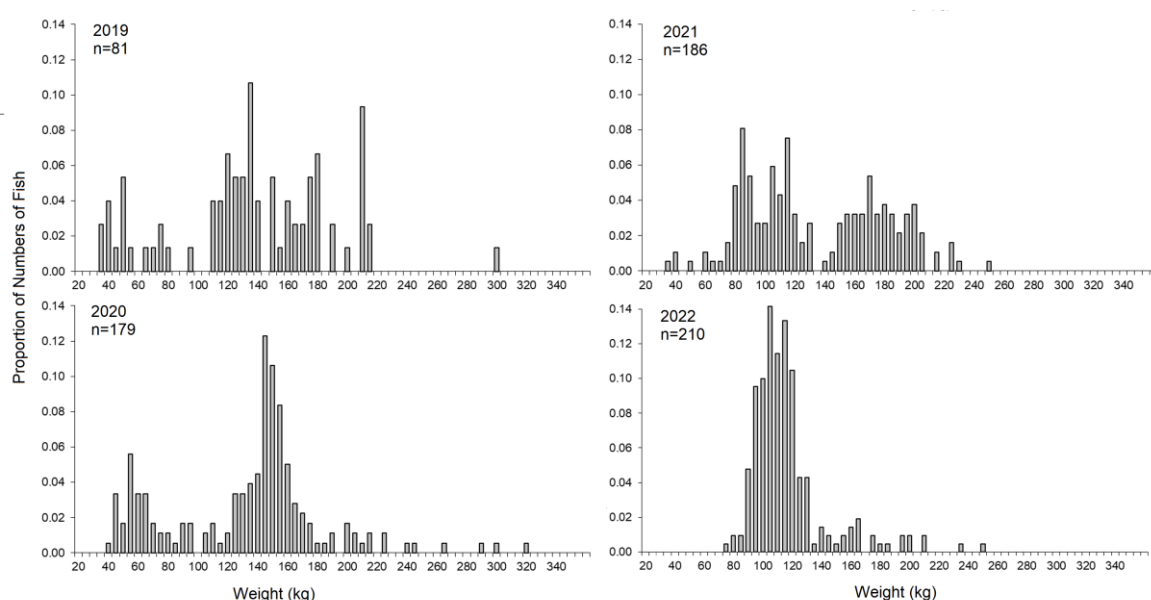


Figure 4: Size frequency distributions for New Zealand Pacific Bluefin tuna catch 2020-2022

Management settings

Currently, New Zealand's domestic Total Allowable Commercial Catch for Pacific bluefin tuna (116 tonnes) is set above New Zealand's national limit set by the WCPFC (63 tonnes). Landings of Pacific bluefin tuna have always been well below the WCPFC limit. This domestic allocation was set in 2004, prior to the adoption of the WCPFC conservation and management measure in 2014 and reflects a combination of the individual catch histories of New Zealand fishers and is not inconsistent with levels of catch from New Zealand's waters from 1981 (Figure 4).

In 2014, New Zealand was not part of the discussions at the Northern Committee that adopted the recommendation to the WCPFC to set limits to rebuild the Pacific bluefin tuna fishery, New Zealand's catch at this point was low and travel to the Northern Committee (as an observer) was not justified. At the WCPFC that year, in order to facilitate the critical adoption of the Pacific bluefin tuna rebuilding plan, New Zealand agreed to accept a WCPFC limit at less than the domestic Total Allowable Commercial Catch – this agreement came with assurances that there was no intention to restrict small bycatch fisheries in the Southern Hemisphere. This was reiterated at the WCPFC20 by the Northern Committee Chair. New Zealand's domestic management settings will be reviewed, as necessary, later this year to address alignment between the two limits.

Our initial proposition is for an increase to a fixed limit rather than a proportional increase (a proportional increase to an already small limit remains a small limit) and consider that a similar approach should be taken to small bycatch fisheries currently limited to 10 tonnes.

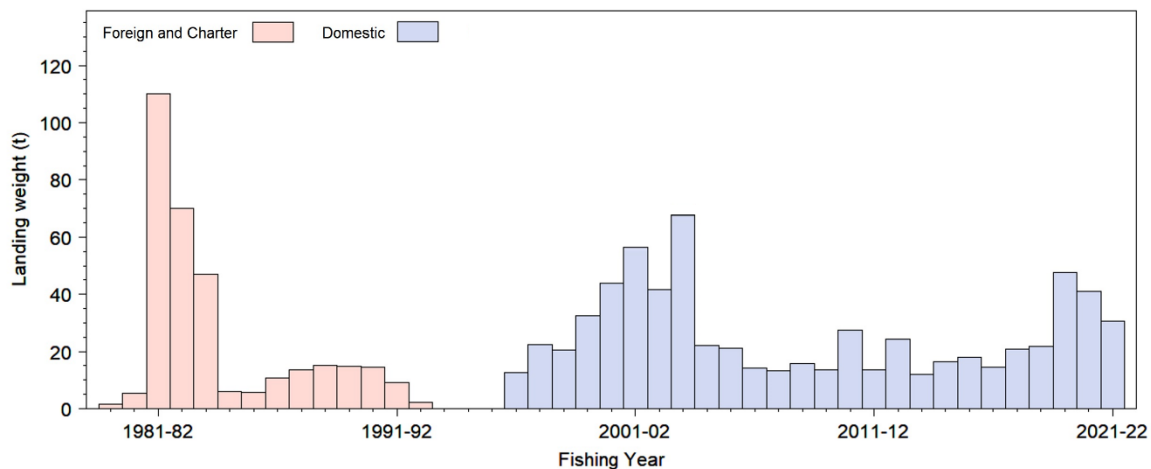


Figure 4: Pacific bluefin tuna annual catch in New Zealand's waters by 1 October fishing year