
**COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF HIGHLY
MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS IN THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC
OCEAN**

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NATIONAL REPORT

FRENCH POLYNESIA

Introduction

1. Tuna fishery is a major component of the economical development of French Polynesia. Thus, it represents the third source of income from exportation. Notwithstanding the difficulties met by the tuna industry, due to low catches these past three years, the development of the domestic fishery is still a topical question.

2. French Polynesia fishery is composed of two components : a small scale coastal fishery and an offshore long line fishery. The last fishing agreement with foreign fleet has stopped on December 2000. Within the period of 1990 to 2000, the offshore fishery has switched progressively from the distant water fishery by the foreign vessels to the longline fishery by locals.

3. To implement this new concept of the tuna fishery number of public investments have been realised. A tuna fleet development plan was sponsored by the government. To support the project, an onshore facilities program consisting of building cold storage, auction market, export facilities approved by European standards and ice plants, has been set up by the government.

4. The fishery targets commercially valuable tuna species : albacore tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*), yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) and bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*). Skipjack (*Katsuwonus pelamis*) is mainly caught by the coastal pole and line vessels for the local market. Other species like blue marlin (*Makaira mazara*), striped marlin (*Tetrapturus audax*), swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*), dolphin fish (*Coyphaena hippurus*) and wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*) are also taken as by-catch by the longliners.

5. The longline fishing operations are limited to the exclusive economic zone of French Polynesia. In 2005, due to the low catches in the EEZ, some longliners have fished outside French Polynesia EEZ in international waters adjacent to the limits.

Fleet structure

6. As indicated in the national report of the scientific committee last august, the coastal fleet was composed, in 2004, of 52 pole and line 12 m vessels and 241 small boats fishing with various techniques like pole and line, troll, harpoon, deep handline.

7. The longline fleet was composed of 3 “bonitier” longliners (small longliners), 42 fresh tuna boats ranging from 13 to 20 m, 4 mixed (fresh and frozen) tuna boats of 21 m and 26 freezer vessels ranging from 23 to 26 m.

Annual catches in the WCPFC convention area, 2000 - 2004

8. The figures of the total catches from 1990 to 2004 for both coastal fleet and longline fleet are included in the national report to the scientific committee. The catch of the coastal fishery remains stable around 2000 metric tons. The catch of the longline fleet decreased from 2001 to 2004, from 7800 to 5160 metric tons.

9. Table 1 - Species composition of the longline catch (mt)

Species	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Albacore	3473	4261	4557	3846	2,164
Yellow Fin Tuna	1202	967	507	621	1,042
Bigeye Tuna	711	745	649	439	495
Skipjack	72	92	92	55	69
Blue Marlin			255	303	239
Striped Marlin			91	117	106
Swordfish			70	117	84
Black Marlin			2	1	1
Spearfish			52	15	12
Sailfish			23	11	5
Billfish	397	497			
Wahoo	119	143	168	195	192
Dolphin Fish	52	105	118	173	125
Mako Shark			40	49	36
Other Sharks	556	695	525	280	309
Others	309	306	252	308	281
Total catch	6891	7811	7401	6530	5,160

Developments and trends in the tuna fishery of French Polynesia

10. Despite the dramatic drop of the CPUE in the past three years, mainly for the albacore tuna, the objective of the tuna fishery is to maintain the current fleet operational. Actually, the fishing effort was concentrated in one area of the EEZ mainly due to the limited range of the fresh tuna boats. The technical departments of the government are considering new investments to help the fleet with low range to be deployed in the whole EEZ. Other solutions like technical support to the fishermen using real-time satellite data, or fishing outside the EEZ by the freezer vessels are to be considered.

11. The development of the longline fleet is expected to be stable in the next few years as long as the potential of the current fleet is not fully exploited.

12. Nevertheless, considering the number of active longline vessels, the total catch is likely to increase if the CPUE, currently abnormally low, returns to its level of the previous years.

13. The improvement of the onshore facilities is still ongoing to offer the best quality of tuna products for the local and export markets. The tuna industry targets the high valuable products. French Polynesia has no large processing plants.

Application of conservation and management measures in waters under national jurisdiction

14. A fishing authorisation must be delivered to any commercial fishing vessel to operate within the EEZ. Currently, all the licenses have been delivered to French Polynesia vessels. A national register is held by the fisheries department. Since the end of the last fishing agreement in December 2000, no foreign fishing vessel has been authorised to fish in waters under national jurisdiction.

15. The French army proceeds with aerial surveillance operations to investigate any illegal fishing in the EEZ. At this date there is no evidence of illegal fishing in French Polynesia waters. The domestic fishing vessels also collaborate with the army in case of sighting of foreign fishing vessel in the EEZ.

16. A national vessel monitoring system based on utilisation of Argos transponders will be tested, starting on December 2005. Simultaneously, the same tests will be carried out with the vessels equipped with Inmarsat C system. The objective is to equip all longline vessels with VMS.

17. As a member of the IATTC, the authorities are setting up a process to investigate the vessels at port. A security process consisting in investigation of the security equipment, the general condition of the vessel and the quantity of fish transhipped already exists. It should be improved next year with the other measures in respect with the RFMO's resolutions.

18. Resolutions of the Preparatory Conference and the WCPFC will be widely advertised to the fishermen. Several meetings on the role of the commission have been already organised with the vessels owners.

19. With the support of EC funding through the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, a scientific observer and port sampling program started two years ago and is likely to be extended for another two years period. French Polynesia should set up its own national program after that period.

20. With regards to the by-catch , a regulation on the protection of sharks has been elaborated and will be probably implemented in 2006.