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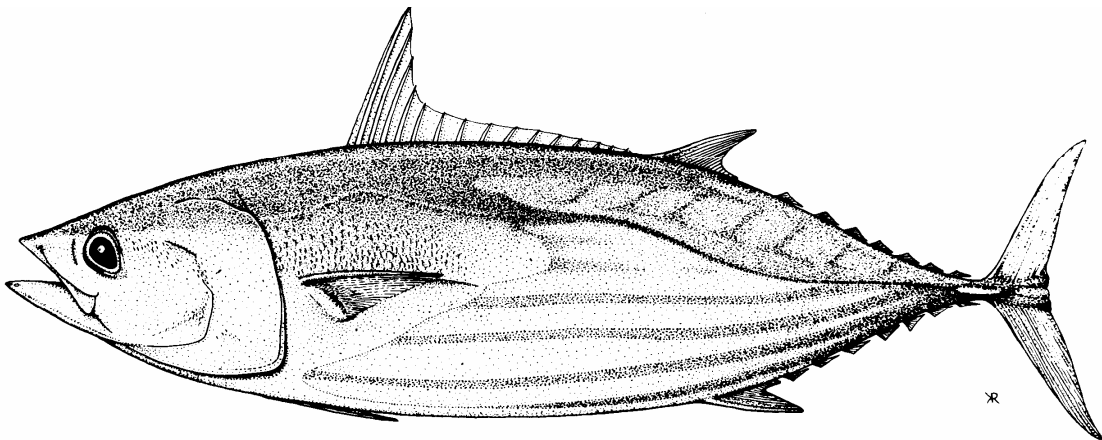
**ANNUAL REPORT – PART 1  
INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH, AND STATISTICS**

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**WCPFC-SC3-AR PART 1/WP-16**

**REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

## **Marshall Islands Tuna Fisheries**



Oceanic and Industrial Affairs Division  
Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority  
Republic of the Marshall Islands

July 2007

## **ABSTRACT**

The tuna fishery in the Republic of the Marshall Islands continues to be dominated by the purse seine fishery, predominately distant water fleets, whose catch comprises mostly of skipjack tuna. Currently, there are 5 RMI-flagged purse seine vessels fishing both within the EEZ and throughout the Convention Area. The remainder of the fleets licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ consists of distant water longline, domestically-based foreign longline, and Japanese pole-and-line vessels. In 2006, the overall number of vessels operating in the Marshall Islands declined from 283 vessels in 2005 to 228 vessels.

With the exception of the domestically-based foreign longline fleet, whose catch remained relatively stable, there was significant reduction in overall catch by all fleets in the RMI EEZ in 2006 compared to 2005. Similarly, the catch by the RMI purse seine fleet experienced a decrease of ~27% throughout the Convention Area.

The Marshall Islands Observer and Port Sampling Programs strive to maintain effective monitoring programs and have undergone significant improvements over the past few years. Domestically-based foreign longline and domestic purse seine vessels continue to dominate observer coverage due to the convenience for placements. While acknowledging the need for further expansion of the programs, the RMI looks forward to collaborating with the Commission in the establishment of the Regional Observer Program.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) has an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and territorial waters of around 2 million km<sup>2</sup>. The tuna fishery is the most important fishery both in terms of scale and economics in the RMI.

The Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA) is responsible for the management and development of the tuna fishery in the RMI. The fishery comprises of longline, purse seine, and pole-and-line vessels fishing under various access arrangements. The RMI is a party to a number of regional and international management arrangements such as the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) and the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA). With the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission in place, the RMI is also obliged to comply with the management measures of the Commission.

## **2. NATIONAL FLEET ACTIVITY IN THE WCPFC CONVENTION AREA**

### ***2.1 Fleet structure***

Table 1 provides a list of RMI-flagged vessels active in the WCPFC Convention Area over the past five years. As the relationship with respect to nationality of catch remains unresolved, a number of domestically-based foreign longline vessels are not included in this list, but may be included in the future. The national purse seine fleet is based out of Majuro and fishes throughout the region under the FSM Arrangement.

Coverage of data collected from the national purse seine fleet satisfies the coverage levels recommended by the WCPFC. Additionally, the coverage of unloadings data from the domestically-based foreign longline fleet is 100%.

**Table 1. Number of Marshall Islands longline and purse-seine vessels active in the WCPFC Convention Area, 2002-2006**

Year	RMI	
	Longline	Purse seine
2002	0	5
2003	1	6
2004	1	6
2005	1	6
2006	0	5

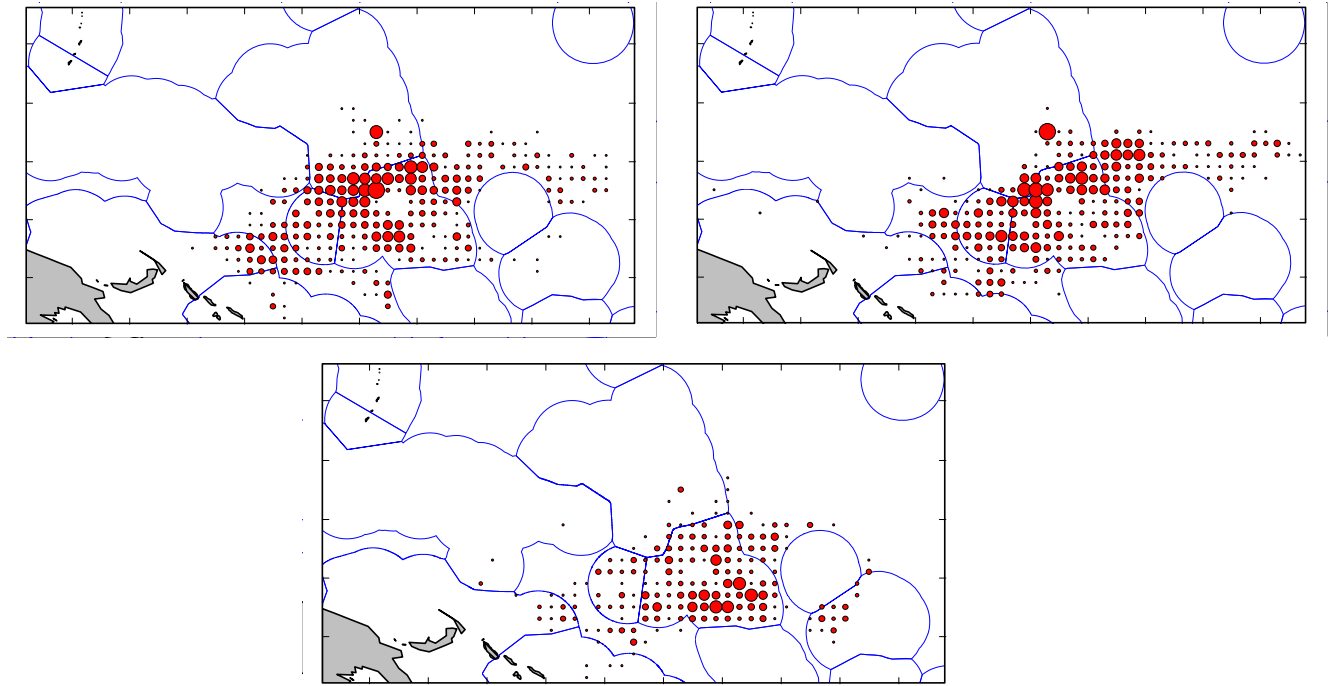
## 2.2 National purse seine catch/effort

Table 2 summarizes the estimated target tuna catch and effort for the RMI purse seine fleet throughout the Convention Area, and Figure 1 shows the distribution of effort for this fleet over the past three years. The increasing trend in catch in previous years was not observed in 2006 as total catch declined from 56,164 mt (2005) to 41,167 mt. Likely reasons for the decline may be the decrease in effort during the period and low catch rates in the areas where effort is concentrated for this fleet. As Majuro is the preferred port of unloading, the effort is concentrated in Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and adjacent high seas areas and the fleet almost exclusively fishes on associated schools (drifting FADs, etc.)

Table 3 (and Figure 2) shows the estimated total catch of non-target species (by species groups) by Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, according to observer data collection. Rainbow runner is typically the main non-target species taken by the fleet, but the following species/species groups are also commonly caught – small baitfish, silky (and other) sharks, blue and black marlin, triggerfish and mahi mahi.

**Table 2. Annual catch and effort estimates for the Marshall Islands purse-seine fleet, by species in the WCPFC Convention Area, 2002-2006. (Source: Raised logsheet data; Data for 2006 are unraised and provisional, but coverage is “HIGH”).**

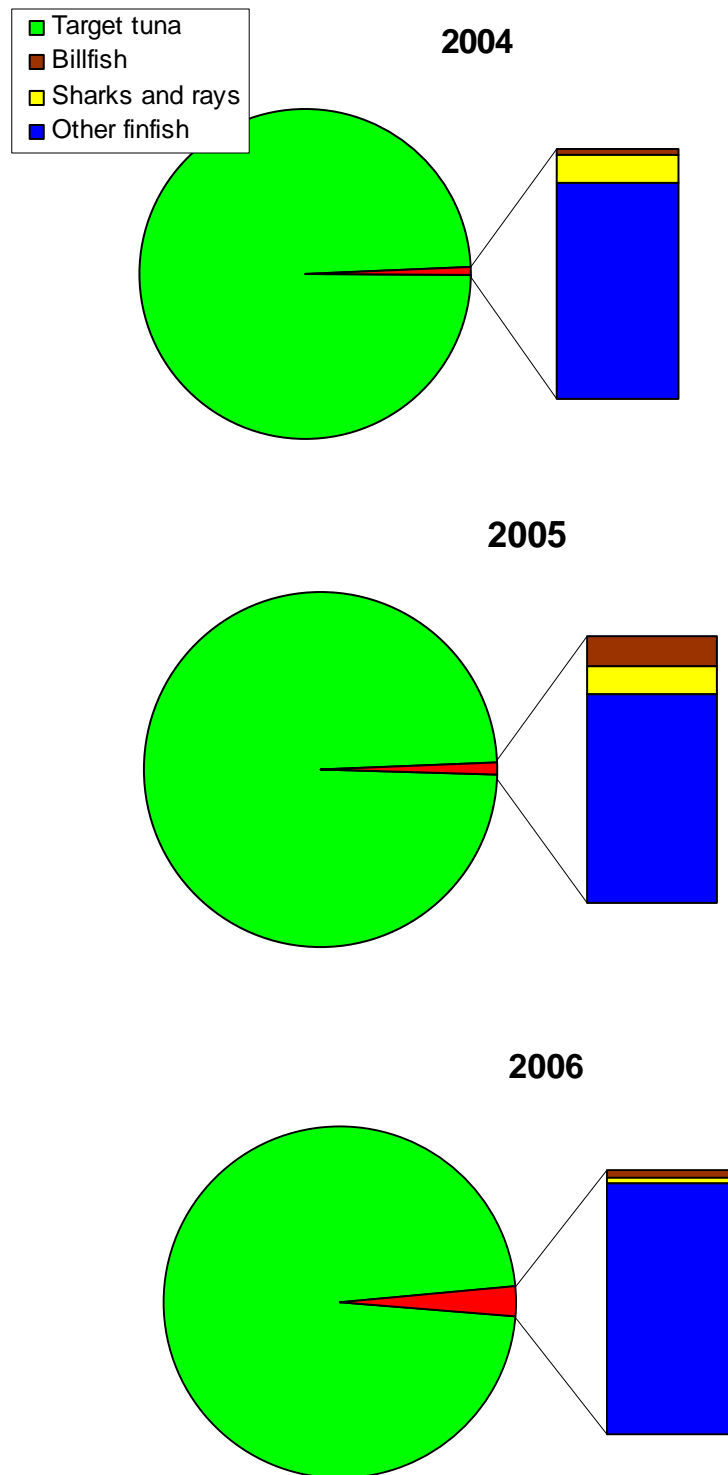
Year	Effort			Catch (metric tonnes)				
	Days Fishing & Searching	UnAss. Sets	Assoc. Sets	SKJ	YFT	BET	OTH	TOTAL
2002	1,201	137	580	37,745	1,049	158	0	38,952
2003	1,508	57	878	35,233	2,129	513	0	37,875
2004	1,408	53	1,066	42,078	3,716	878	0	46,672
2005	1,233	75	936	47,565	7,628	971	0	56,164
2006	961	73	768	37,661	1,296	2,062	148	41,167



**Figure 1. Annual distribution of effort (days fishing and searching) for the Marshall Islands purse seine fleet throughout the WCPFC Convention Area for 2004 (top left), 2005 (top right) and 2006 (bottom)**

**Table 3. Estimated annual total catches of non-target species and species groups, by Marshall Islands purse seine fleets, 2004-2006. (Source of data: Data collected under the FSM Arrangement Observer Programme, managed by FFA; Coverage has been estimated by comparing observer-recorded target species catch to annual catch estimates for this fleet; ‘%’ represents percentage of total catch which includes target tuna species catch)**

Species	Catch estimates					
	2004		2005		2006	
	MT	%	MT	%	MT	%
Blue marlin	8	0.02%	20	0.04%	30	0.07%
Black marlin	3	0.01%	1	0.00%	7	0.02%
Other Billfish	0	0.00%	52	0.09%	5	0.01%
<b>Total billfish</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0.02%</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>0.13%</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>0.10%</b>
Blue shark	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Mako sharks	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Oceanic whitetip shark	1	0.00%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%
Silky shark	22	0.05%	28	0.05%	28	0.07%
Other sharks and rays	13	0.03%	39	0.07%	1	0.00%
<b>Total sharks and rays</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0.08%</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>0.12%</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0.07%</b>
Other finfish						
Bullet/Frigate tunas	3	0.01%	1	0.00%	9	0.02%
Kawakawa	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Rainbow Runner	160	0.34%	210	0.37%	598	1.42%
Wahoo	8	0.02%	1	0.00%	4	0.01%
Common dolphinfish	6	0.01%	18	0.03%	47	0.11%
Triggerfish	57	0.12%	29	0.05%	74	0.18%
Barracudas	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Escolars	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Lanctfishes	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Ocean sunfish	4	0.01%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Oilfish	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Opah	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Pomfrets	0	0.00%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%
Small baitfish	22	0.05%	27	0.05%	191	0.45%
Other fish	29	0.06%	196	0.35%	240	0.57%
<b>Total other finfish</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>0.62%</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>0.85%</b>	<b>1,162</b>	<b>2.75%</b>
<b>Total non-target species</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>0.72%</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>1.10%</b>	<b>1,232</b>	<b>2.92%</b>



**Figure 2. Proportion of non-target species groups in the catch of Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, by year, 2004-2006.** (Source of data: Data collected by FSM Arrangement Observer Programme, managed by FFA)

### 3. FOREIGN FLEETS FISHING IN MARSHALL ISLANDS WATERS

#### 3.1 Fleet structure

Tables 4-6 provide a description of foreign-flagged vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands waters over the past five years. All gear types showed a marked decline in the overall number of vessels in 2006. Domestically-based foreign longline vessels operating under the Marshall Islands Fishing Venture fly foreign flags of registration and not necessarily the flag of the countries operating and managing these vessels, which is essentially the Marshall Islands.

In 2006, the Marshall Islands began implementing measures adopted through the WCPFC, and have subsequently ceased licensing fishing vessels that are flagged to non-members of the Commission.

**Table 4. Number of foreign longline vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by year and flag.**

Year	Longline						TOTAL
	CHINA	FSM	JAPAN	KOREA	CH-TAIPEI	BELIZE	
2002	29	2	30	1	10	1	73
2003	32	4	24	1	10	2	73
2004	39	4	17	1	3	8	72
2005	42	6	25	2	5	8	88
2006	36	9	29	0	5	0	79

**Table 5. Number of foreign pole-and-line vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by year and flag.**

Year	Pole-and-line
	JAPAN
2002	42
2003	23
2004	23
2005	35
2006	23

**Table 6. Number of foreign purse seine vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by year and flag.**

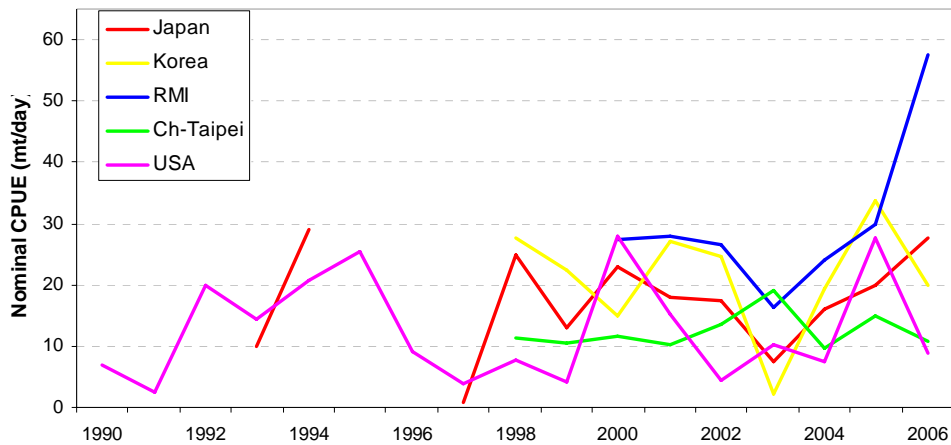
	YEAR				
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
CHINA	5	5	4	4	8
FSM	7	8	6	6	1
JAPAN	34	35	34	34	33
KIRIBATI	1	1	1	1	1
KOREA	27	27	29	27	20
NZ	0	4	4	3	3
PNG	9	16	17	17	7
CH-TAIPEI	39	38	34	35	19
VANUATU	2	2	7	8	17
SOLOMON	2	0	0	3	0
USA	29	25	21	15	12
	<b>155</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>121</b>



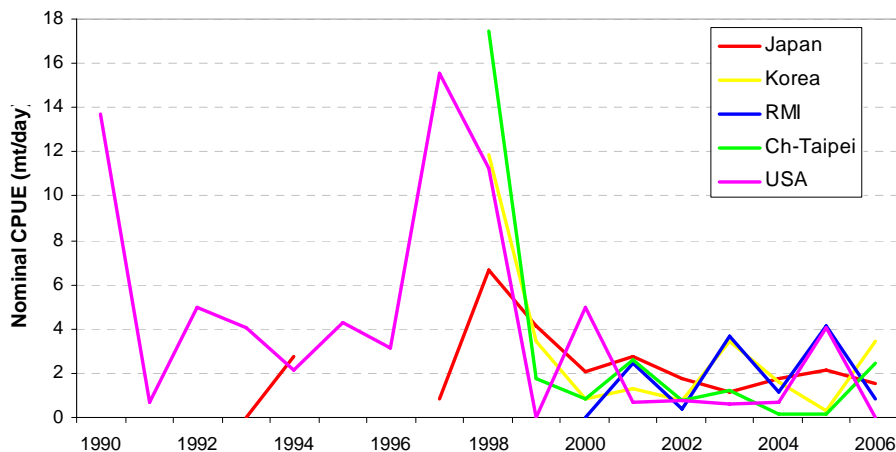
### 3.2 Purse seine fleet catch/effort

Total catch by purse seine fleets operating in the RMI EEZ declined from 17,974 mt in 2005 to 10,170 mt in 2006 (Table 7). Skipjack tuna continues to be the dominant catch, accounting for >90% of the total catch.

Most of the purse seine fishing in-zone is restricted to southern areas of the EEZ (Figure 5). Overall trends in CPUE indicate variable catch rates among fleets and years with RMI-flagged vessels having highest catch rates of skipjack in recent years (Figures 3 & 4).



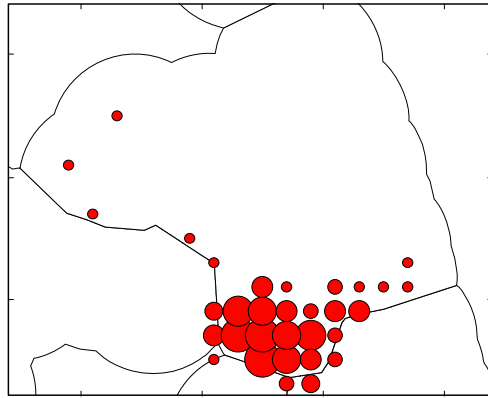
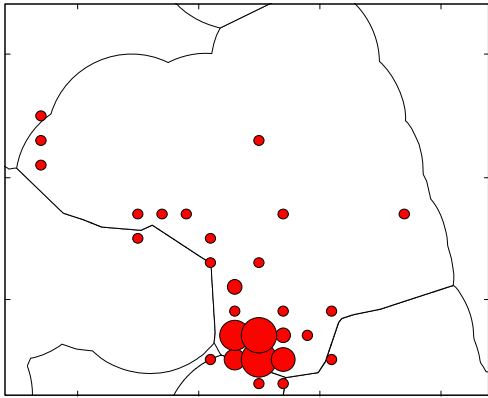
**Figure 3. Trends in nominal catch rates of SKIPJACK TUNA taken by purse-seine fleets operating in the Marshall Islands EEZ, 1990-2006**



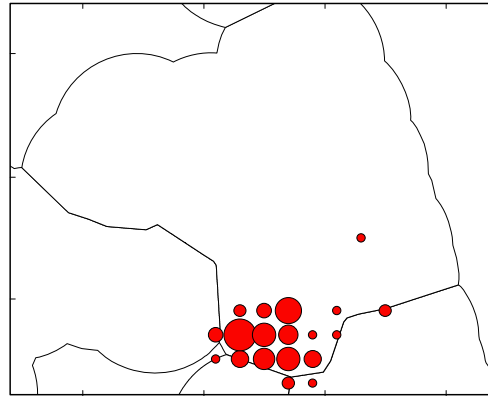
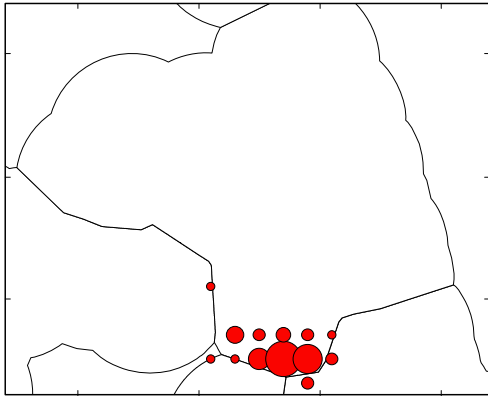
**Figure 4. Trends in nominal catch rates of YELLOWFIN TUNA taken by purse-seine fleets operating in the Marshall Islands EEZ, 1990-2006**

**Table 7. Annual catches by purse seine fleets in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by flag and species, 2002-2006 (Source: Unraised logsheet data collected by MIMRA)**

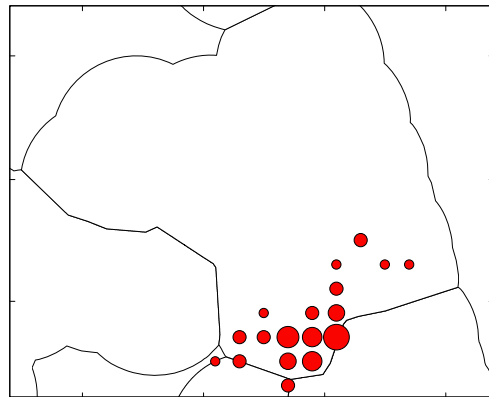
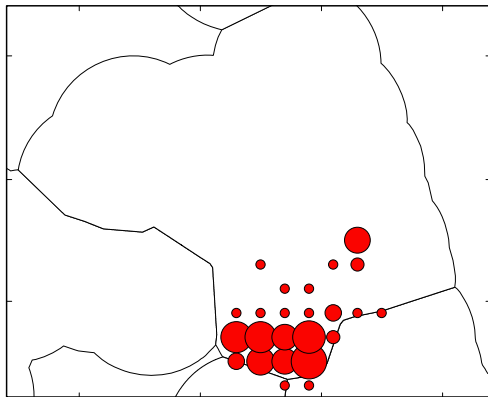
	YEAR	Catch (metric tonnes)				TOTAL
		BET	SKJ	YFT	OTH	
China	2002	0	15	0	0	15
	2003	0	0	0	0	0
	2004	0	345	0	0	345
	2005	0	0	0	0	0
	2006	0	40	30	0	70
FSM	2002	0	246	73	0	319
	2003	0	0	0	0	0
	2004	0	0	0	0	0
	2005	0	699	101	0	800
	2006	0	120	25	0	145
Japan	2002	5	8,010	825	238	9,078
	2003	0	458	71	21	550
	2004	6	2,416	263	38	2,723
	2005	22	1,255	136	77	1,490
	2006	0	3,221	177	17	3,415
Korea	2002	5	8,790	275	0	9,070
	2003	0	50	75	0	125
	2004	0	1,205	100	0	1,305
	2005	0	1,725	15	0	1,740
	2006	0	1,725	15	0	1,740
RMI	2002	35	2,620	35	0	2,690
	2003	0	1,095	245	0	1,340
	2004	265	4,772	235	0	5,272
	2005	175	3,375	465	0	4,015
	2006	30	1,665	25	22	1,742
New Zealand	2002	0	0	0	0	0
	2003	0	3	35	0	38
	2004	0	0	0	0	0
	2005	0	254	36	0	290
	2006	0	0	0	0	0
PNG	2002	0	1,710	225	0	1,935
	2003	0	45	0	0	45
	2004	5	1,886	79	1	1,971
	2005	0	2,605	170	0	2,775
	2006	5	1,060	115	1	1,181
Solomon	2002	0	49	1	0	50
	2003	0	0	0	0	0
	2004	0	0	0	0	0
	2005	0	0	0	0	0
	2006	0	0	0	0	0
Chinese Taipei	2002	21	5,331	300	0	5,652
	2003	11	782	50	1	844
	2004	0	1,335	20	1	1,356
	2005	3	1,434	13	1	1,451
	2006	0	485	110	0	595
USA	2002	0	27	5	0	32
	2003	21	366	22	0	408
	2004	0	133	13	0	146
	2005	98	2,758	406	0	3,262
	2006	0	53	0	0	53
Vanuatu	2002	0	45	30	0	75
	2003	0	30	0	0	30
	2004	0	1,382	0	0	1,382
	2005	0	2,065	86	1	2,152
	2006	0	1,080	150	0	1,230
TOTAL EEZ	2002	66	26,843	1,768	238	28,915
	2003	32	2,829	498	22	3,381
	2004	276	13,474	710	39	14,499
	2005	298	16,169	1,429	79	17,974
	2006	35	9,449	647	39	10,170



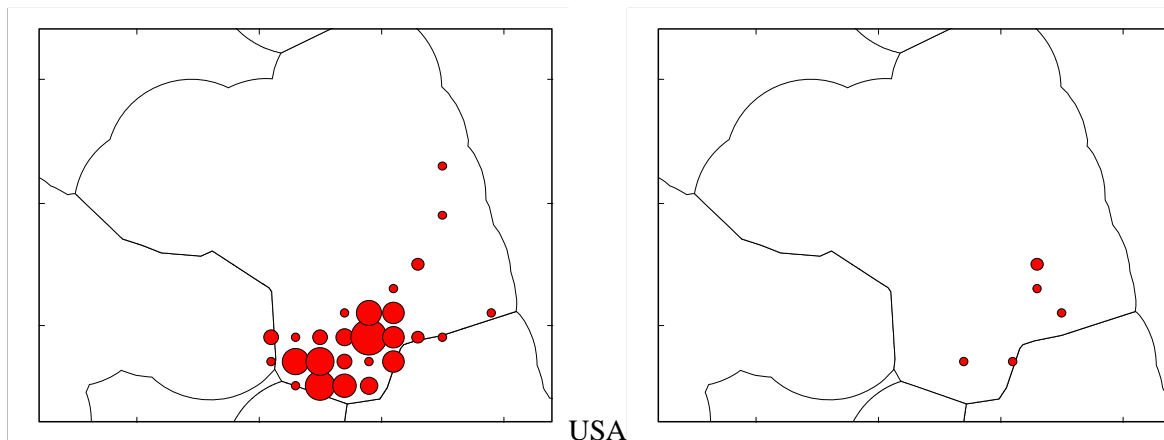
Japan



Korea



Ch-Taipei



**Figure 5. Annual distribution of effort (days fishing and searching) by the main foreign purse seine fleets active in the Marshall Islands EEZ for 2005 (left) and 2006 (right)**

### ***3.3 Foreign longline fleet catch/effort***

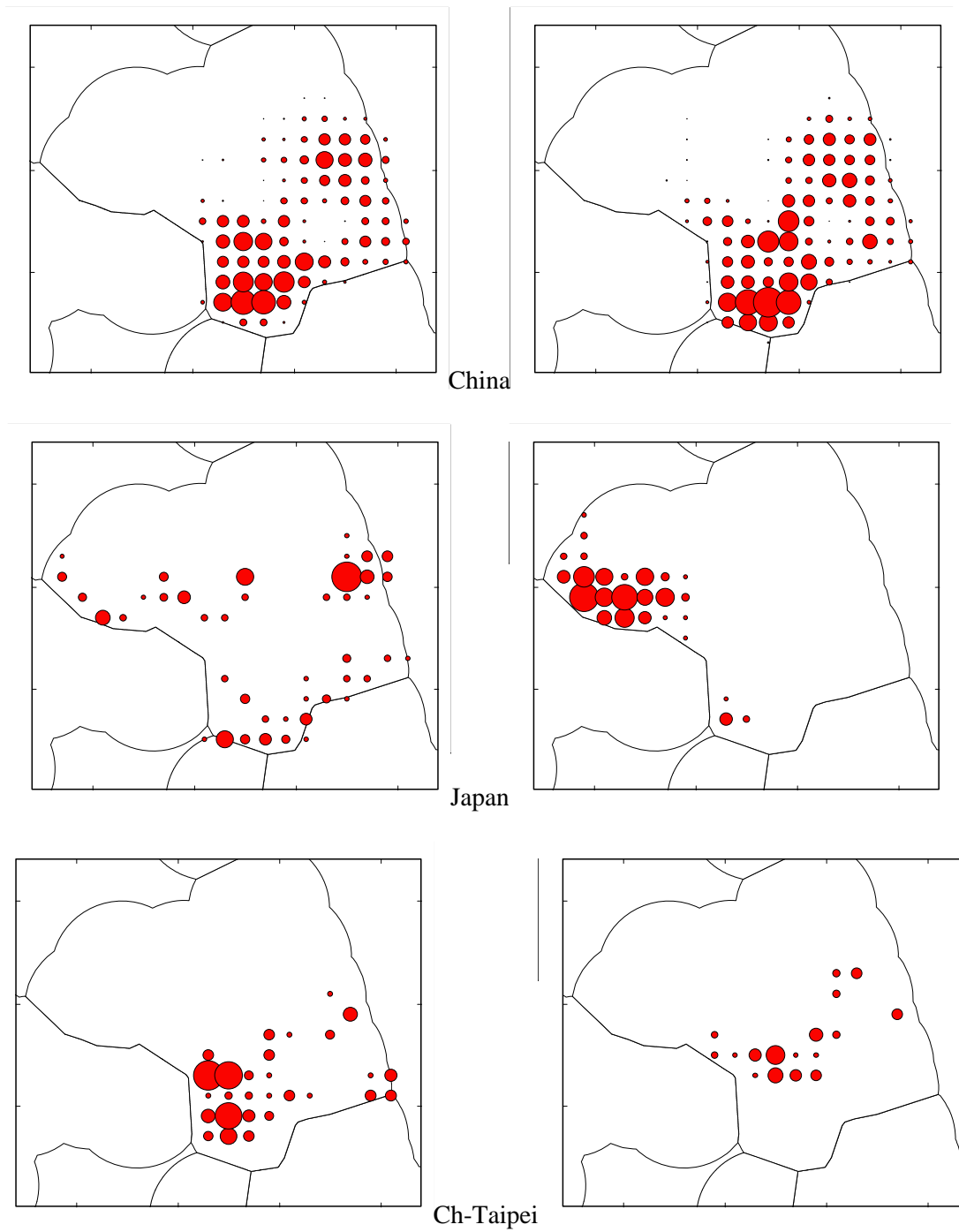
The domestically-based longline fleets comprise of vessels from China, FSM and Chinese Taipei, which are managed and operated through a local joint-venture fishing company. Japanese longline vessels offload their catch in ports in Japan. The actual 2006 catch by foreign longline fleets is higher than shown in Table 8 (which represents unraised catches) since logsheet coverage is not yet complete. The 2006 catch for domestically-based fleets, according to unloadings data, was around 4,393 mt for all species, including 2,127 mt –bigeye and 1,559 mt –yellowfin. Bigeye catch continues to account for the major part of the target catch composition (~48% in 2006).

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 in the zone (Figure 6).

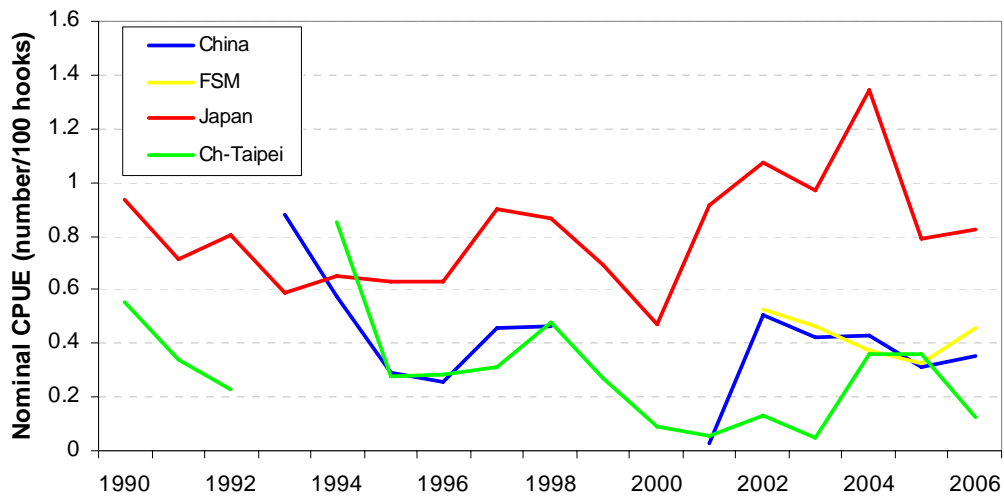
Table 9 (and Figure 9) shows the estimated total catch of non-target species (and species groups) by Marshall Islands-based longline vessels, according to observer data collection. As in the purse seine fishery, the target tuna species comprise most of the catch, but the proportion of non-target species catch is higher in the longline fishery (~34% in 2006). Observer data suggest that, for locally-based longline vessels the most predominant species in each category are: Blue marlin (billfish), Blue shark (sharks and rays), wahoo (“other” finfish).

**Tables 8. Annual catches by foreign longline fleets in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by flag and species, 2002-2006 (Source: Unraised logsheet data collected by MIMRA)**

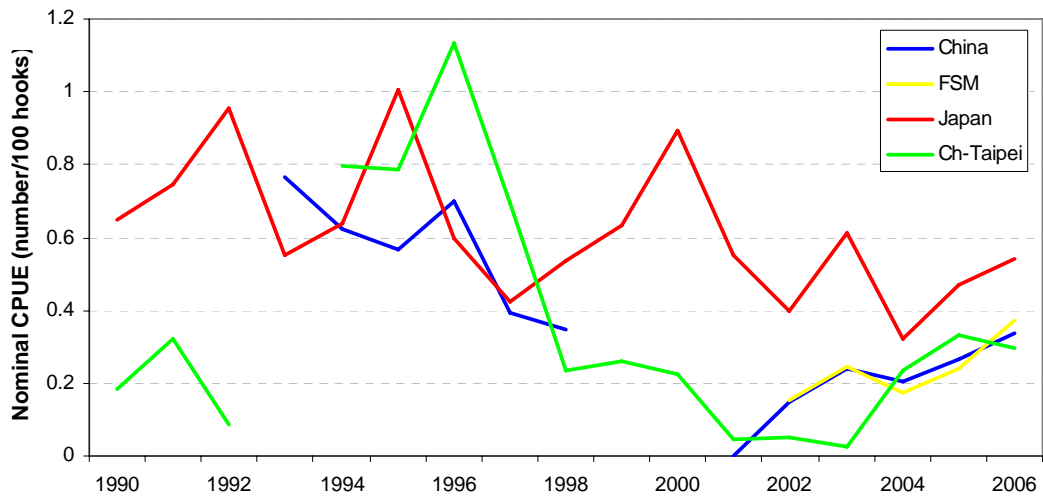
		Catch (metric tonnes)			
Fleet	Year	BET	YFT	OTH	TOTAL
China	2002	390	89	2	481
	2003	707	298	3	1,008
	2004	911	316	1	1,228
	2005	1,030	600	2	1,631
	2006	1,229	896	10	2,135
FSM	2002	103	21	0	124
	2003	135	51	0	186
	2004	218	74	0	292
	2005	136	74	2	211
	2006	236	155	2	393
Japan	2002	1,148	321	0	1,470
	2003	1,351	544	5	1,900
	2004	491	96	7	593
	2005	106	45	0	151
	2006	116	69	0	185
Chinese Taipei	2002	12	3	0	15
	2003	4	1	0	5
	2004	37	16	0	53
	2005	35	21	0	56
	2006	5	7	0	12
Total EEZ	2002	1,653	435	3	2,090
	2003	2,197	894	8	3,100
	2004	1,656	502	8	2,166
	2005	1,307	738	3	2,048
	2006	1,586	1,127	12	2,725



**Figure 6. Annual distribution of effort (100s of hooks) by the main foreign longline fleets active in the Marshall Islands EEZ for 2005 (left) and 2006 (right)**



**Figure 7. Trends in nominal catch rates of BIGEYE TUNA taken by longline fleets operating in the Marshall Islands EEZ, 1990-2006**

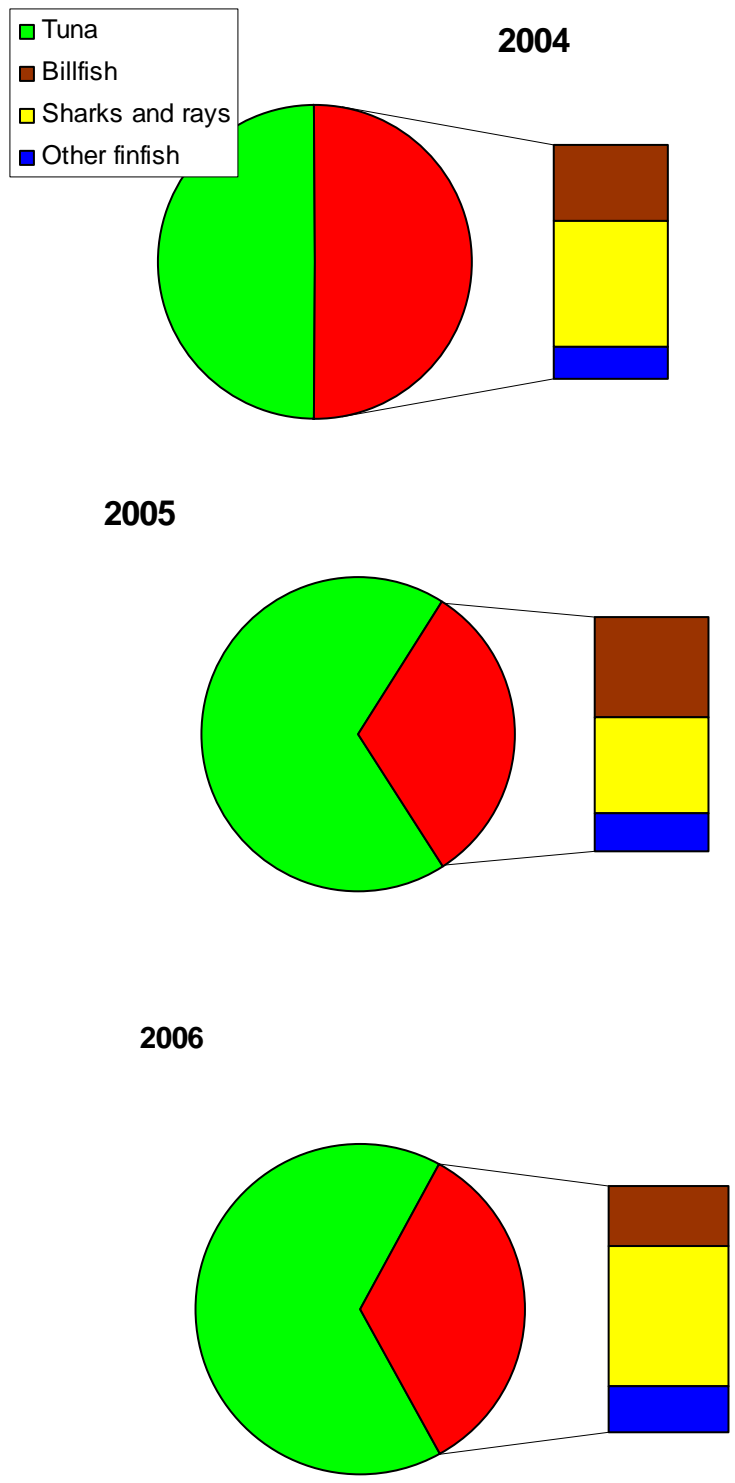


**Figure 8. Trends in nominal catch rates of YELLOWFIN TUNA taken by longline fleets operating in the Marshall Islands EEZ, 1990-2006**

**Table 9. Estimated annual total catches of non-target species and species groups, by Marshall Islands-based longline fleets, 2004-2006.** (Source of data: Data collected under the Marshall Islands Observer Programme, managed by MIMRA; Coverage has been estimated by comparing observer-recorded target species catch to annual catch estimates for the locally-based fleets; ‘%’ represents percentage of total catch which includes target tuna species catch)

Species	Catch estimates					
	2004		2005		2006	
	MT	%	MT	%	MT	%
Blue marlin	328	8.96%	377	8.96%	230	4.08%
Black marlin	77	2.09%	13	0.31%	50	0.88%
Striped marlin	63	1.73%	102	2.42%	88	1.57%
Swordfish	109	2.97%	65	1.55%	63	1.12%
Other Billfish	19	0.53%	20	0.47%	45	0.80%
<b>Total Billfish</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>16.29%</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>13.71%</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>8.45%</b>
Blue shark	458	12.52%	261	6.20%	508	9.02%
Mako sharks	34	0.93%	19	0.46%	85	1.50%
Oceanic whitetip shark	136	3.71%	51	1.22%	97	1.72%
Silky shark	239	6.53%	135	3.21%	251	4.46%
Other sharks and rays	116	3.17%	76	1.81%	144	2.56%
<b>Total Sharks and Rays</b>	<b>983</b>	<b>26.84%</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>12.90%</b>	<b>1,085</b>	<b>19.25%</b>
Bullet/Frigate tunas	0	0.00%	1	0.02%	1	0.02%
Kawakawa	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Rainbow Runner	1	0.01%	1	0.02%	0	0.00%
Wahoo	81	2.22%	75	1.78%	143	2.54%
Common dolphinfish	11	0.30%	29	0.69%	75	1.33%
Triggerfish	0	0.00%	0	0.01%	0	0.00%
Barracudas	6	0.17%	5	0.11%	13	0.23%
Escolars	20	0.55%	5	0.13%	13	0.23%
Lanctfishes	9	0.23%	9	0.21%	9	0.16%
Ocean sunfish	25	0.68%	3	0.07%	4	0.07%
Oilfish	16	0.43%	7	0.16%	3	0.05%
Opah	12	0.34%	9	0.21%	26	0.47%
Pomfrets	1	0.01%	3	0.07%	11	0.20%
Small baitfish	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Other fish	65	1.77%	64	1.52%	56	0.99%
<b>Total other finfish</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>6.73%</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>5.00%</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>6.32%</b>
<b>Total non-target species</b>	<b>1,826</b>	<b>49.87%</b>	<b>1,329</b>	<b>31.60%</b>	<b>1,917</b>	<b>34.02%</b>





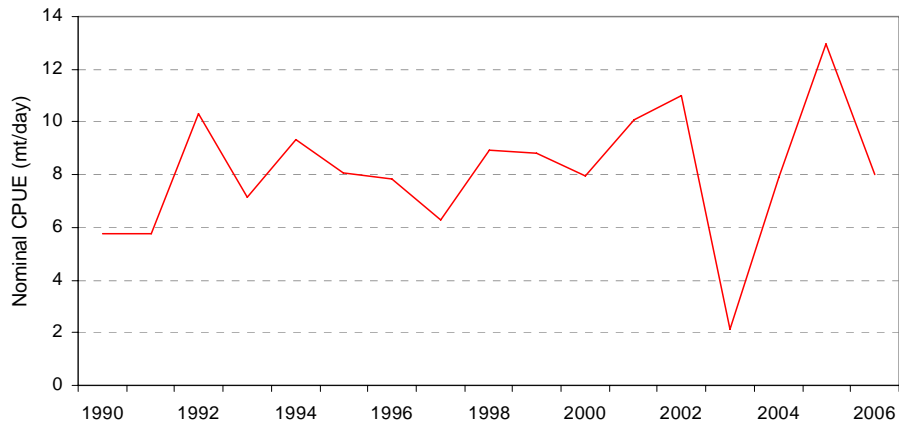
**Figure 9. Proportion of non-target species groups in the catch of Marshall Islands-based longline vessels, by year, 2004–2005. (Source of data: Data collected under the Marshall Islands Observer Programme, managed by MIMRA)**

### 3.4 Foreign pole-and-line fleet catch/effort

Catch by pole-and-line fleets decreased from 466 mt in 2005 to 24 mt in 2006 (Table 10). Skipjack is the main species making up the catch composition for this fleet accounting for 100% of the catch in 2006.

**Table 10. Annual catches by foreign pole-and-line fleets in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by flag and species, 2002-2006 (Source: Unraised logsheet data collected by MIMRA)**

Fleet	YEAR	Catch (metric tonnes)			
		SKJ	YFT	OTH	TOTAL
Japan	2002	7,312	4	0	7,316
	2003	92	2	0	94
	2004	1,152	9	11	1,171
	2005	466	0	0	466
	2006	24	0	0	24



**Figure 10. Trends in nominal catch rates of SKIPJACK TUNA taken by Japanese pole-and-line fleets operating in the Marshall Islands EEZ, 1990-2006.**

## 4. FINAL MARKET DESTINATIONS OF CATCHES

The Marshall Islands Fishing Venture (MIFV) operates the Longline Fishbase with domestically-based foreign longline vessels. While unloadings in 2006 remained relatively constant at >4,300 mt, there was a slight reduction (~8%) in exports and an increase of ~18% for the local market when compared to 2005 records (Figures 11-12). The MIFV exports mainly fresh chilled tuna species to markets in Japan, the US, and Canada. Frozen fish (rejects and bycatches) are shipped to Taiwan by carriers and sold locally.

**Table 11. Total unloadings for domestically-based longline vessels, 2005**

Species	Unloaded Catch (metric tons)		
	EXPORT	LOCAL	TOTAL
Albacore	0	16	16
Bigeye	2,015	146	2,161
Black Marlin	95	397	492
Blue Marlin	0	98	98
Mahi Mahi	15	8	23
Sailfish	0	17	17
Shark	0	124	124
Short-billed spearfish	0	0	0
Swordfish	14	34	48
Wahoo	64	44	108
Yellowfin	906	377	1,283
	3,109	1,261	4,370

**Table 12. Total unloading for domestically-based longline vessels, 2006**

Species	Unloaded Catch (metric tonnes)		
	Export	Other	TOTAL
Albacore	0	32	32
Bigeye	1,756	371	2,127
Yellowfin	942	616	1,559
Black Marlin	64	254	318
Wahoo	48	62	110
Mahi Mahi	21	41	62
Swordfish	13	17	29
Moonfish	8	11	18
Short-billed Spearfish	0	13	13
Sharks (unidentified)	0	120	120
Sailfish (Indo-Pacific)	0	5	5
Blue Marlin	0	0	0
Other Fish	0	0	0
	2,851	1,541	4,393

## 5. ONSHORE DEVELOPMENTS

The Joint Venture between MIMRA and Koo's Fishing Company, Ltd. (KFC) commenced in March 2006 with the vessel, *Marshalls 201*, duly registered and fully operating under the FSM Arrangement.

Another recent and noteworthy domestic development issue is that of the RMI's effort to revitalize the former PMOP loining plant, which at one time had provided much-needed employment opportunities and contributed around \$5-6 million annually to the RMI GDP. It is

part of the RMI's national aspirations to further ensure economic development by once again creating job opportunities.

In early 2006, the RMI signed a sub-lease agreement with Shanghai Deep Sea Fisheries Company, Ltd. to rehabilitate the loining plant. While it is only in its initial phase, future plans include the securing of raw materials for processing and this will entail the development of a locally-based fleet. The revitalization process for the plant has been well under way since January 2006. The actual renovation and related construction project commenced in early 2007 and is currently in full swing. It is anticipated that the project will be completed later this year with full production envisaged to commence immediately following completion.

Another significant source of revenue for the RMI, the transshipment activity is a positive indicator for economic spin offs in private sector areas dealing directly and indirectly with the vessels in port (e.g. fuel sales with Marshalls Energy Company, etc). The lagoon at Majuro has become a very important port for transshipments of tuna from purse seine vessels to cargo vessels. The RMI has recognized this as both an opportunity for collection of revenue and as a responsibility to collect catch data from vessels. As such, MIMRA places observers on all vessels transshipping in Majuro. Consistent with international agreements, under the *Marine Resources Act 1997*, transshipment at sea under any circumstances is prohibited.

## 6. TUNA RESEARCH AND STATISTICS

### 6.1 Port sampling

In 2006, port sampling activities showed a vast improvement compared to 2005 (Figures 13-14). With the increased focus on these activities at the MIFV fish base, a total of 52,353 fish were sampled, more than 92% increase of fish sampled over the previous year. Collated data are sent directly to SPC on a bi-weekly basis for analysis.

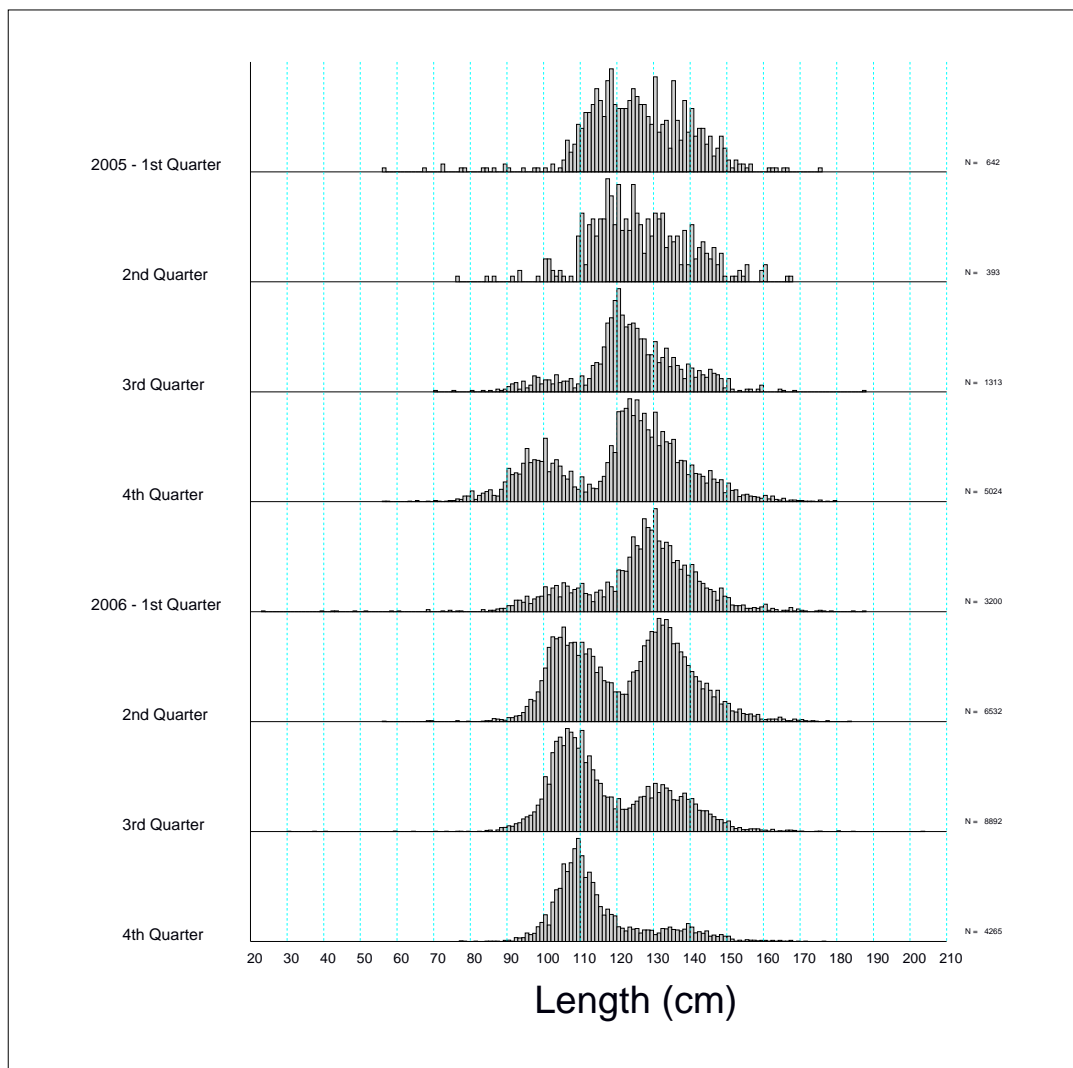
Length frequency data for yellowfin and bigeye longline catches are available from the port sampling and observer programs (Figures 11-12). The yellowfin data indicate a stable distribution of lengths around 120-130 cm fork length. The bigeye data displays a slightly different trend with more of the smaller fish being caught, especially in the latter quarters.

**Table 13. Port sampling 2005**

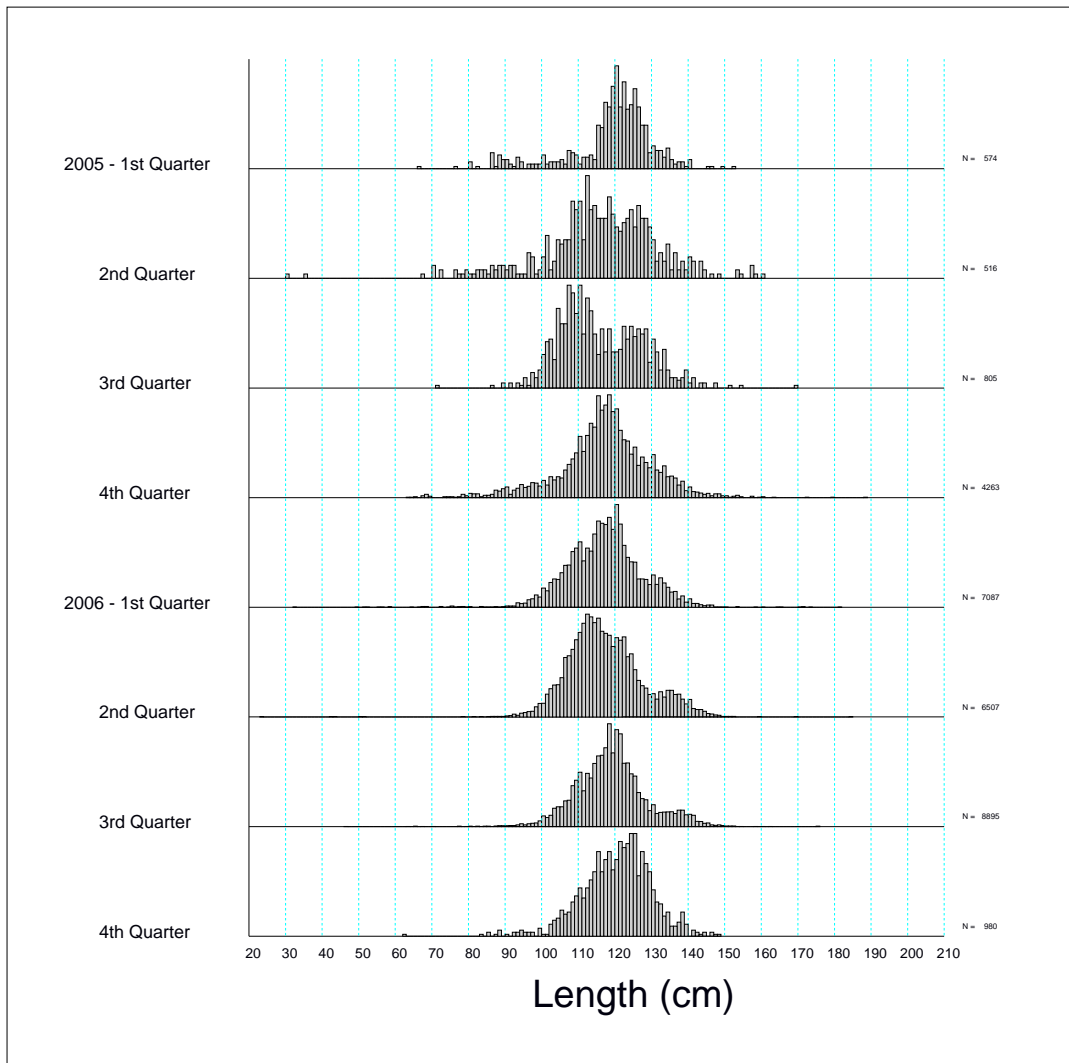
MONTH	PORT	ALB	BET	YFT	OTH	TOTAL
January	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
February	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
March	Majuro	0	102	76	10	188
April	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
May	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
June	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
July	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
August	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
September	Majuro	6	1,069	645	0	1,720
October	Majuro	0	1,431	663	0	2,094
November	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
December	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
		6	2,602	1,384	10	4,002

**Tables 14. Port sampling 2006**

Month	Port	Number (Measured)					Number (Not Measured)				
		ALB	BET	YFT	OTH	TOTAL	ALB	BET	YFT	OTH	TOTAL
January	Majuro	0	908	2,540	0	3,448	0	2	0	2	4
February	Majuro	0	1,004	2,766	137	3,907	44	0	0	1,941	1,985
March	Majuro	0	476	649	43	1,168	70	0	0	1,207	1,277
April	Majuro	0	1,195	2,629	158	3,982	36	0	0	2,811	2,847
May	Majuro	0	2,678	1,742	169	4,589	104	0	0	2,290	2,394
June	Majuro	0	3,052	2,486	135	5,673	258	85	119	1,753	2,215
July	Majuro	0	2,876	3,962	134	6,972	4	0	0	963	967
August	Majuro	0	1,823	1,966	50	3,839	0	0	0	231	231
September	Majuro	0	927	152	104	1,183	13	0	1	70	84
October	Majuro	0	4,771	986	302	6,059	5	0	0	129	134
November	Majuro	0	3,830	1,188	209	5,227	14	5	0	615	634
December	Majuro	0	4,847	1,318	141	6,306	69	15	13	1,587	1,684
		<b>0</b>	<b>28,387</b>	<b>22,384</b>	<b>1,582</b>	<b>52,353</b>	<b>617</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>13,599</b>	<b>14,456</b>



**Figure 11. Quarterly Bigeye length frequencies for the Longline fishery in Marshall Islands waters, 2005–2006.** (Samples collected by the MIMRA Port Sampling and Observer Programmes)



**Figure 12. Quarterly Yellowfin length frequencies for the Longline fishery in Marshall Islands waters, 2005–2006.** (Samples collected by the MIMRA Port Sampling and Observer Programmes)

### ***6.2 Observer Program***

MIMRA continues to build on the revised Observer Program, initiated with the assistance of the SPC- OFP. The program is still in its infancy and needs increased support to improve its effectiveness as more demands are placed upon it. With 20 active observers during 2006, the observers completed a total of 2,223 days at sea, 1,160 and 1,063 on purse seines and longlines, respectively (Table 16). A summary of 2005 observer trips is included for comparison (Table 15).

The MIMRA observer program can also expect to be called upon to support the observer program of the Commission throughout the Convention area. This implies increased workload in training, deployments, communications, briefing, debriefing, analysis, and data entry. It also implies the observer program needs an expanded base to work from, a base that includes adequate working space and environment for carrying out the observer program tasks and the anticipated expansion.

The mandate of the program needs to be expanded to include making enforcement observations and collecting information for follow up by Sea Patrol, the authorized fisheries enforcement agency. This may be accomplished with some coordination with Sea Patrol and an additional training module for observers to incorporate basic enforcement observations in their inspection routine.

**Table 15. Observer trips 2005**

MONTH	Number of Trips				Number of Sea Days			
	LL	PL	PS	TOTAL	LL	PL	PS	TOTAL
January	4	0	0	4	53	0	0	53
February	1	0	0	1	14	0	0	14
March	1	0	1	2	14	0	23	37
April	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
May	5	0	0	5	50	0	0	50
June	2	0	5	7	29	0	189	218
July	3	0	0	3	46	0	0	46
August	1	0	3	4	12	0	83	95
September	0	0	2	2	0	0	77	77
October	0	0	3	3	0	0	94	94
November	3	0	1	4	76	0	25	101
December	6	0	3	9	145	0	128	273
	<b>26</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>1,058</b>

**Table 16. Observer trips 2006**

Month	Number of Trips			Number of Days		
	LL	PS	Total	LL	PS	Total
January	1	0	1	19	0	19
February	2	1	3	27	19	46
March	15	3	18	216	62	278
April	10	4	14	152	98	250
May	9	7	16	132	152	284
June	5	3	8	69	88	157
July	5	2	7	74	53	127
August	7	4	11	102	131	233
September	3	3	6	42	100	142
October	6	5	11	90	183	273
November	7	4	11	98	157	255
December	3	4	7	42	117	159
	<b>73</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>1,063</b>	<b>1,160</b>	<b>2,223</b>

## 7. TUNA MANAGEMENT PLAN

The MIMRA adopted its (revised) Tuna Management Plan in late 2004. Since then, MIMRA has undergone significant changes, particularly in its implementation. As reported previously in the

Observer Program, the level of observer coverage continues to expand with the inclusion of longline vessels. MIMRA will work with the Japanese Bilateral partners to cover their fleet in the coming years. As such, the Observer program, while building and expanding its efforts, looks forward to collaborating and cooperating with the Observer program of the WCPFC.

Other changes through the TMP include the level of access fee applied particularly to purse seine vessels in the RMI. The new fee reflects an adjustment to changes in the value of fishery, taking into account historical efforts of the licensed purse seine fleet and its estimated CPUE in the RMI EEZ.

The development of its data and statistical capability continues at the MIMRA with assistance from the SPC, FFA and Japan. The SPC-OFP has been very instrumental in the Oceanic data efforts in the RMI, with the recent database development in the RMI. Japans Overseas Fisheries Cooperation Foundation (OFCF) will assist the MIMRA with a project starting next year, to develop the national fishery data center, with a view to integrate all fishery data, coastal and oceanic into a database network. In view of the Oceanic sector, OFCF will work initially with the Coastal Fishery to develop its data and statistical capabilities.

## **8. FUTURE PROSPECTS**

The WCFPC will no doubt change the dynamics of fisheries management and operation in the region. With this in mind, the RMI will need to develop further capacity, including internal organizational structure, to cope and take advantage of the opportunities that will transpire from its (WCPFC) development.

The RMI is a party to the Nauru Agreement, in which the Vessel Day Scheme is expected to commence full implementation starting 01 December 2007. MIMRA is also working closely with its Domestic Based Foreign fleet management, for a possible charter arrangement. While this work is still at large, the outcome will take into account the procedures and adherence to the Commissions rules and requirements.

All told, an immediate issue of critical importance and high priority for the RMI is the Resolution on Reduction of Overcapacity in the WCPO. As domestic fisheries development and related aspirations are currently being hampered by a lack of common understanding and interpretation of the resolution's intentions and implications as it applies to Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the RMI will remain open to future discussions and engagements with our respective counterparts concerned in the WCPFC arena. It is intended that sometime in the near future, a gradual shift in allocation of participatory rights from DWFNs to strictly domestic-based is what is needed to address the needs of CCMs so that no unnecessary burden is put on SIDS.

While the RMI admits to constraints in the overall development of national fishery including, but not limited to the Commissions rules and requirements, the RMI also hopes to take advantage of the opportunities and related benefits, as a SIDS party to the WCPF Convention.