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**ANNUAL REPORT, Part I – Information on Fisheries, Research and Statistics**

**SOLOMON ISLANDS**

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National tuna status report for Solomon Islands for 2005

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## Introduction.

The country's tuna resources continue to be an important source of foreign revenue and other financial fringe benefits to the country and employment to many Solomon Islanders on vessels of the locally based tuna companies and at their tuna processing facilities. The revenues derived by the country are either from the export of frozen and other processed tuna products or from the licensing of both domestic and foreign fishing vessels under bilateral fisheries access agreements, the Multilateral Fisheries Treaty with the U.S. and the regional FSM Arrangement. The current bilateral fisheries access agreements are with Japan, Korea, New Zealand and Taiwan. The bilateral fisheries access agreement with the EU has been endorsed for its formal signing and is now expected to come into force in late 2006. In addition to the above financial benefits, a lot of fresh and frozen tunas and a variety of canned tuna products are also supplied to the domestic market for local consumption and is a source of animal protein to the local population.

The tuna resources of Solomon Islands are presently managed and developed under the provisions of the country's National Tuna Management and Development Plan which came into force in 1998. The Tuna Management plan was developed in accordance with the country's 1998 Fisheries Act. The 1998 Fisheries Act and the National Tuna Management Plan are anticipated to be reviewed this year under the institutional strengthening programme of the Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources. A new three year corporate plan which is aimed at making the Department more effective in carrying out its function to achieve the Government's fisheries policies has been completed. A restructuring of the Department's staff in line with the expected functions of the Department as outlined in the corporate plan has been completed also. It is expected that more developments both within the tuna industry and the inshore fisheries sectors will take place in the country within the next couple of years and this will be the subject of future national reports for Solomon Islands.

## 2. Domestic and foreign tuna fishing fleets that operated in Solomon Islands EEZ in 2005

During 2005, fishing vessels from four locally registered commercial tuna companies were licensed to fish for tuna in Solomon Islands fishery limits. These included three purse seine vessels from the National Fisheries Development (NFD), about five pole-and-line vessels from a fleet of ten pole-and-line vessels from Soltai Fishing and processing Company, four small purse seiners (< 100 GRT) from Global Fishing Company and about two longline vessels from a fleet of five longline vessels from Solgreen Enterprises Ltd.

Licensed fishing vessels under bilateral access agreements which includes purse seiners, longline and long-range pole-and-line vessels from Japan, purse seine vessels from Korea and New Zealand and purse seine and longline vessels from Taiwan were also fished in the fishery limits of Solomon Islands during 2005. Purse seine vessels licensed under the U.S Multilateral Fisheries Treaty and the regional FSM Arrangement also fished in the EEZ of Solomon Islands during 2005. Tunas caught by the foreign fleets during the 2005

licensing period were either transshipped at the officially designated ports of Honiara, Noro and Tulagi or landed at overseas ports as these were not required under current licensing conditions or by legislation to be landed in Solomon Islands.

### 3. Annual tuna catch estimates for the domestic and foreign licensed fishing vessels

The annual estimated summary total tuna catch for Solomon Islands' EEZ during the 2005 licensing period by both the domestic and foreign fleets amounted to 94,924.3 mts. This was an increase of 12.3% and 50.9% respectively over the 2004 and 2003 licensing periods. The overall high tuna catch in 2005 was mainly from licensed foreign vessels which accounted for about 81.8% of the total catch and 18.2% was from the domestic fleet. The total domestic catch of 17,280.5 mt for 2005 however, was a drop of about 38% from the 2004 total tuna catch. The total domestic tuna catch for 2005 was once again dominated by catch from the purse seine vessels which accounted for 79.1% of the total, 20.8% was by the pole-and-line vessels and that from the longliners making the balance. The total catch by licensed foreign vessels during 2005 from the waters of Solomon Islands mirrors that of the domestic fleet and was also dominated by that from the purse seine vessels which accounted for about 97.5% of the total and 2.5% was from the longline vessels. As for 2004, no pole-and-line catch has been received as yet from the Japanese licensed vessels. A historical summary total catch for both the domestic and foreign purse seine vessels, pole-and-line vessels and longline vessels are provided in table 1, 2 and 3 respectively for information purposes.

The overall catch by species for all vessels licensed to fish in Solomon Islands EEZ were not included in the data compiled, hence not provided here.

### 4. Markets for the tuna and tuna products.

As noted in the 2004 national report for Solomon Islands, some of the tunas caught by the domestic fleet are processed locally into canned tunas, smoked tuna, tuna loins and fishmeal for the export market. A large proportion of the total catch however, are exported frozen for either further processing overseas or as fresh tuna for the sashimi markets in Japan. Japan and Europe are still the main markets for tuna and tuna product exports from Solomon Islands, while the canned tuna products are exported mainly to other neighbouring Pacific Island countries.

Although a majority of the tunas caught by the domestic fleet are destined for the overseas markets as noted above, a lot of fresh and frozen tunas and canned tuna products are also sold at the domestic market for local consumption.

### 5. Transshipments and onshore developments.

#### 5.1 Transshipments

A lot of transshipments as reported last year continued at the port of Honiara and the other two officially designated ports of Noro in the Western Province and Tulagi in the

Central Province from late 2005 into early 2006. Most of the observer placements from Solomon Islands also occur during the transshipments at these ports as this is the most convenient time for both our Department and the vessel owners as provided for under the respective bilateral fisheries access agreements. Transshipments are deemed to be carried out by foreign fishing vessels only as all locally operated fishing vessel are required by legislation to land all their tuna catch in Solomon Islands.

## 5.2 Onshore developments

As reported last year, Soltai Fishing and Processing Company is the only major local company that currently produces canned tuna products, tuna loins, smoked tuna (arabushi) and fishmeal from its shore-base facilities at Noro for export. Further expansion of Soltai Fishing and Processing Company's onshore processing activities are anticipated to take place in the not distant future. The two newly build pole-and-line vessels for Soltai Fishing and processing Company have commenced operations and the pole-and-line tuna catch are likely to increase as a consequence. Solgreen, a domestic longline fishing company that was also involved with onshore processing of tunas caught by its fishing vessels and the packaging of fresh sashimi tuna for the export market had financial difficulties last year and discontinued its operations for the rest of 2005 until now. Global Fishing enterprises, a locally registered company is presently using the former NFD base at Tulagi in the Central Province for its onshore processing of tunas caught by its fishing vessels.

## 6. Anticipated future developments

As reported last year, the anticipated review of the 1998 Fisheries Act is expected to take effect this year and a review of the National Tuna Management Plan which used to guide the development of country's resources is also expected under the Department of Fisheries institutional strengthening programme.

Soltai Fishing and Processing Company's onshore developments are expected to expand in the future under its planned onshore base development activities.