

# Pacific Bluefin Tuna Fisheries and Management in Japan

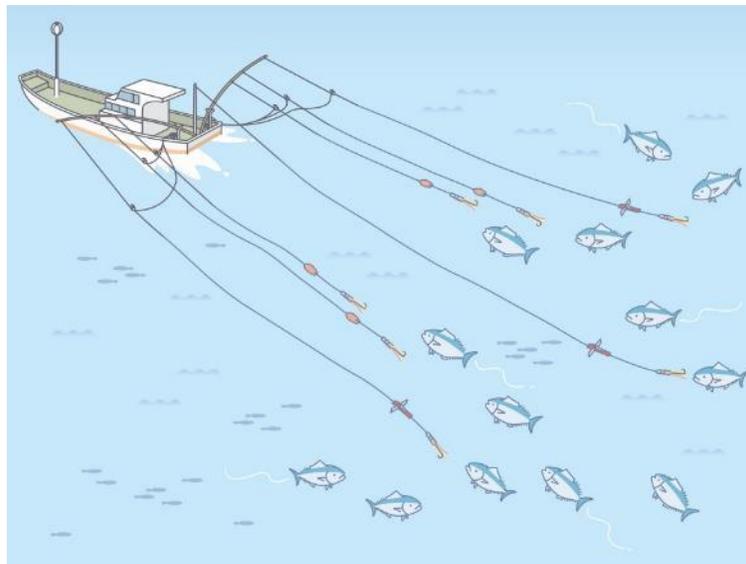
Third Intersessional IATTC-WCPFC NC Joint Working Group Meeting  
on PBF Management  
California, USA



# I. Overview of Japan's PBF Fisheries

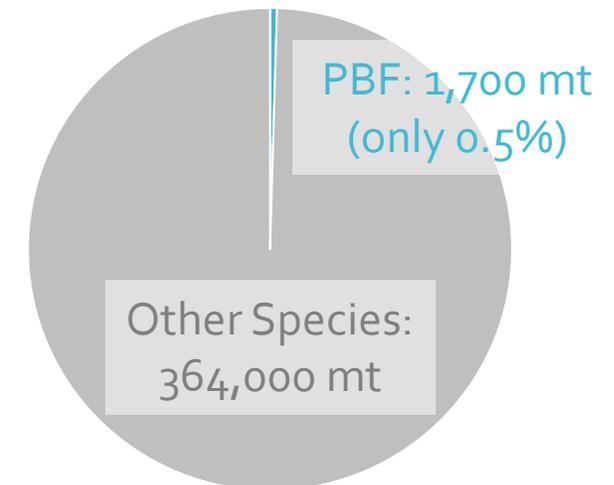
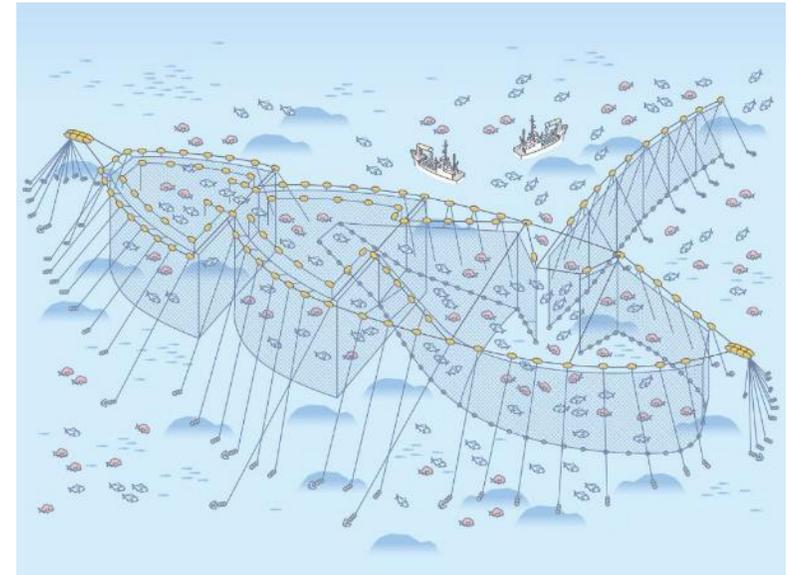
# 1. Artisanal Fisheries (Troll, Jigging, Handline, etc.)

- # of vessels: 16,863 in 2024
- Mostly troll fishery:
  - ✓ Traditional and Artisanal
  - ✓ One day fishing trip within territorial waters
  - ✓ Seasonal PBF Catch
  - ✓ Catch depends on migration of PBF, which fluctuates drastically



## 2. Set Nets

- Approximately 1,700 throughout Japan
- Passive fishing method waiting for any fish to swim into the net
- Catch depends on fish migration
- Not easy for fishers to control the catch
- PBF catches are less than 1% of all catches
- All set nets are located in either **internal waters or territorial waters**
- Releasing PBF from nets often comes with sacrifice of other catches

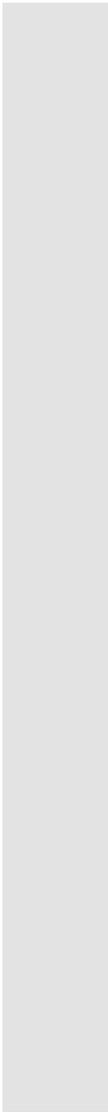
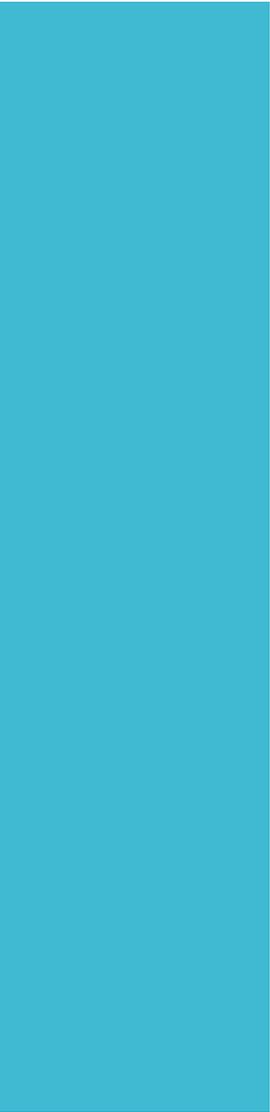


Set Nets Catch Composition in 2024  
(Source: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Statistics)

### 3. Purse Seine Fishery

- Main target species are jack mackerel and chub mackerel
- PBF is caught only during its migration season





## II. PBF Management Measures

## 1. Catch in 2024 Management Year

		Catch
<i>Small fish</i> (Limit: 3,757 mt)	Fisheries licensed by MAFF	559 mt
	Others (mostly coastal ones)	2,551 mt
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,110 mt</b> <b>(83% of Limit)</b>
		Catch
Large fish (Limit: 7,434 mt)	Fisheries licensed by MAFF	4,780 mt
	Others (mostly coastal ones)	2,159 mt
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,939 mt</b> <b>(93% of Limit)</b>

## 2. Management of Recreational / Sport Fishery

- Catch of small fish (< 30kg) is prohibited
- Bag limit: 1 fish per person per month
- Catch limit is divided into 12 months (5 mt per month)
- Catch reporting within 24 hours

From April 2026

- Pre-registration: All recreational fishers and boat operators for PBF

### Limit & Catch of Recreational / Sport Fishery in 2025 Management Year

	2025									2026	
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Limit	5 mt	5 mt	5 mt	5 mt	5 mt	3 mt					
Catch	6.2 mt	4.4 mt	12.6 mt	12.8 mt	2.8 mt	0.8 mt	2.2 mt	1.6 mt	3.9 mt	4.3 mt	7.2 mt
Ban	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X



# III. Challenges of PBF Management

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# 1. Why catch limit could not be fully utilized?

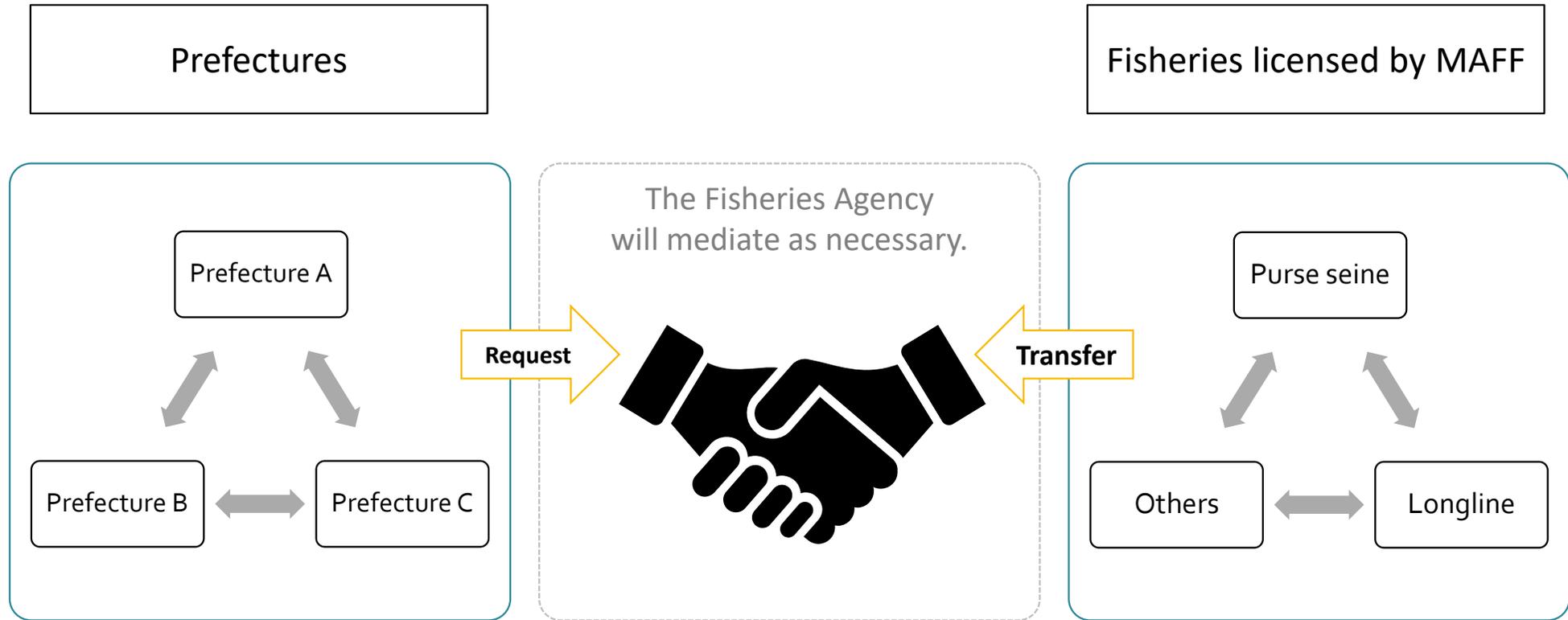
## 1. Limits are divided into small units.

The national catch limit is first distributed among prefectures. Some prefectures divide their allocations among fishery cooperatives, some of which further distribute them among individual fishers.

## 2. Migration pattern changes from year to year and fishers tend to keep their allocations until the last moment, which often results in unutilized one.

## 3. In general, PBF prices are lower in summer and higher in winter. As a result, fishers tend to save their allocations in summer, but PBF does not necessarily migrate to their regions in winter.

# 1. Why catch limit could not be fully utilized?



- A system designed to allow flexible transfers of catch limits in response to the migration patterns of Pacific bluefin tuna, enabling the effective use of national catch limit.

## 2. Challenges for Coastal Fisheries due to Increasing Migration

While the catch limit cannot be fully utilized, increasing PBF migration in coastal areas continue to cause interference with fisheries targeting other species:

### 1. Squid Jigging

Squid jigging fishing boats use fishing lights to attract squid, but many PBFs aggregate to eat those squids and fishers cannot catch squid. Recently, fishers suffer damage on their fishing gears caused by PBFs.



### 2. Yellowtail longline

PBF has not been incidentally caught by Yellowtail longline fishery for last 30 years, but recently, many PBFs were hooked and some PBF cut the fishing line.

### 3. Challenges for Set Nets due to Increasing Migration

The problem is even more serious for set nets since more PBF swim into the nets. To avoid overshooting, fishers make various efforts, such as:

1. **releasing PBF alive by pushing down the floating line;**
2. **reducing the number of net retrievals; and**
3. **no net retrieving or even closing the entrance of set nets**



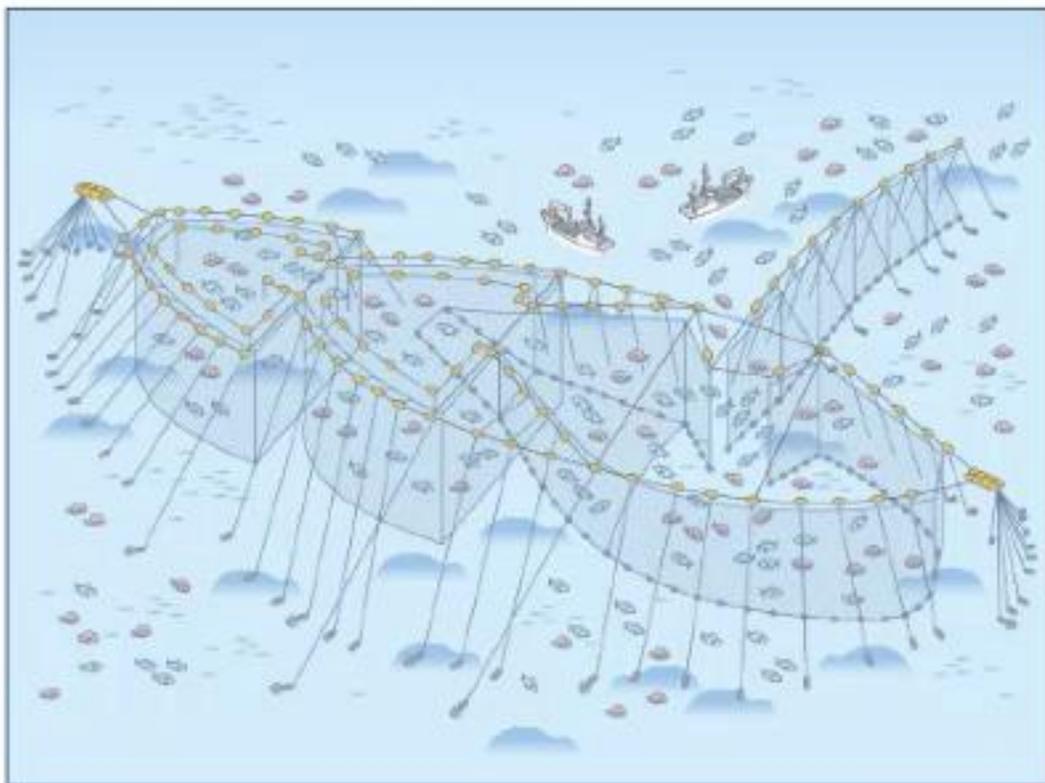
All these efforts cause tremendous sacrifice of other species for conservation of PBF.



(Short Video)

(Movie)

Releasing a school of Bluefin Tuna  
from a set net



# 4. Measures to Alleviate Problems Faced by Set Nets

- Development of new gear configurations to avoid bycatch of PBF

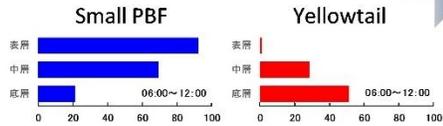
岩手県釜石(平成29年度)

To release PBF during net retrieval

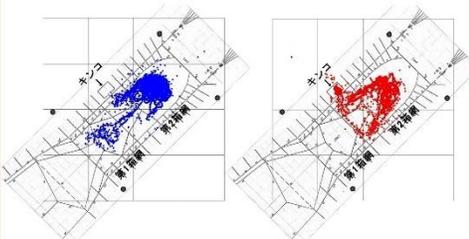
Difference of depth between small PBF and yellowtail

- PBF swim near surface
- Yellowtail swim deeper

応用



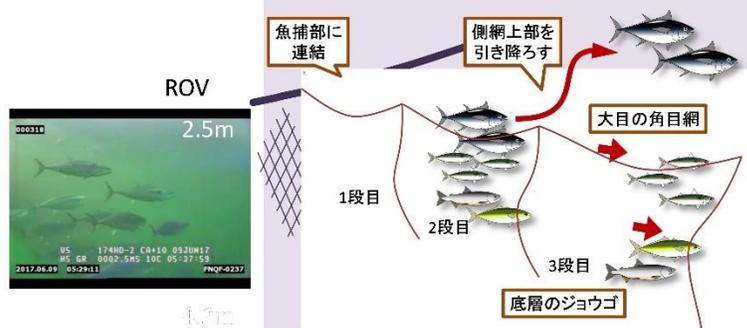
Difference of swimming pattern



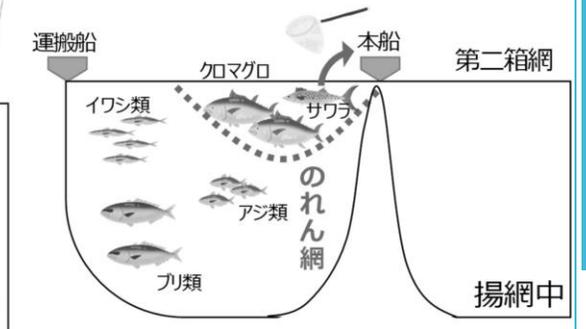
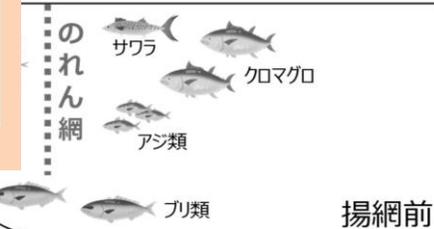
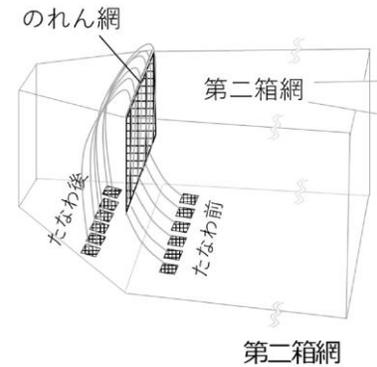
Small PBF swim away from net

Yellowtail swim close

Development of new net for separation

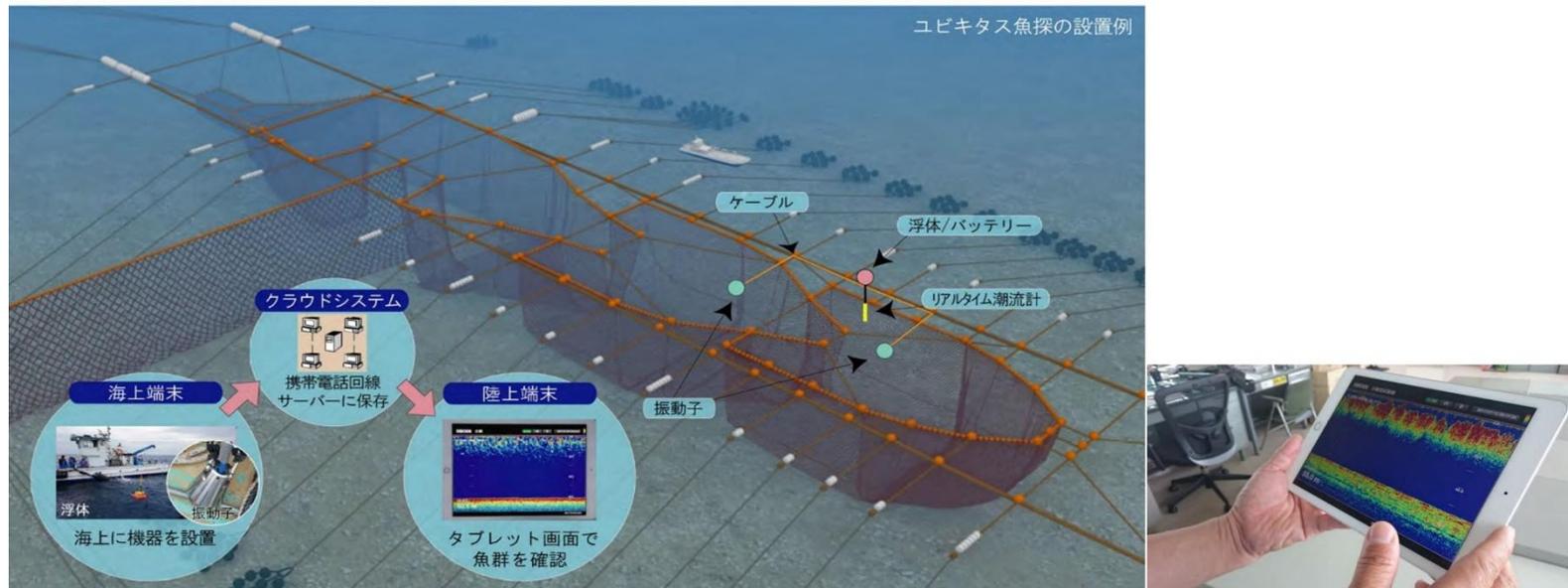


[2段目] 分離割合(%) [3段目]  
 100 80 60 40 20 0 20 40 60 80 100

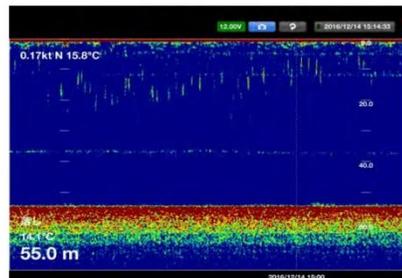


## 4. Measures to Alleviate Problems Faced by Set Nets

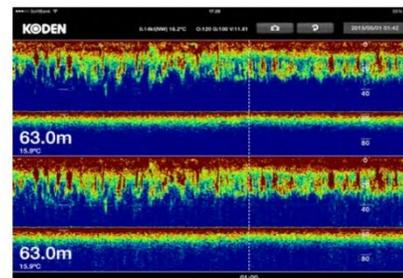
- Installation of fish finders to detect PBF before retrieving net



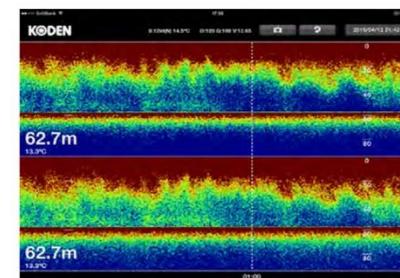
魚探画像の例



PBF



Yellowtail



Sardine