

Submitted by Lars Olsen¹



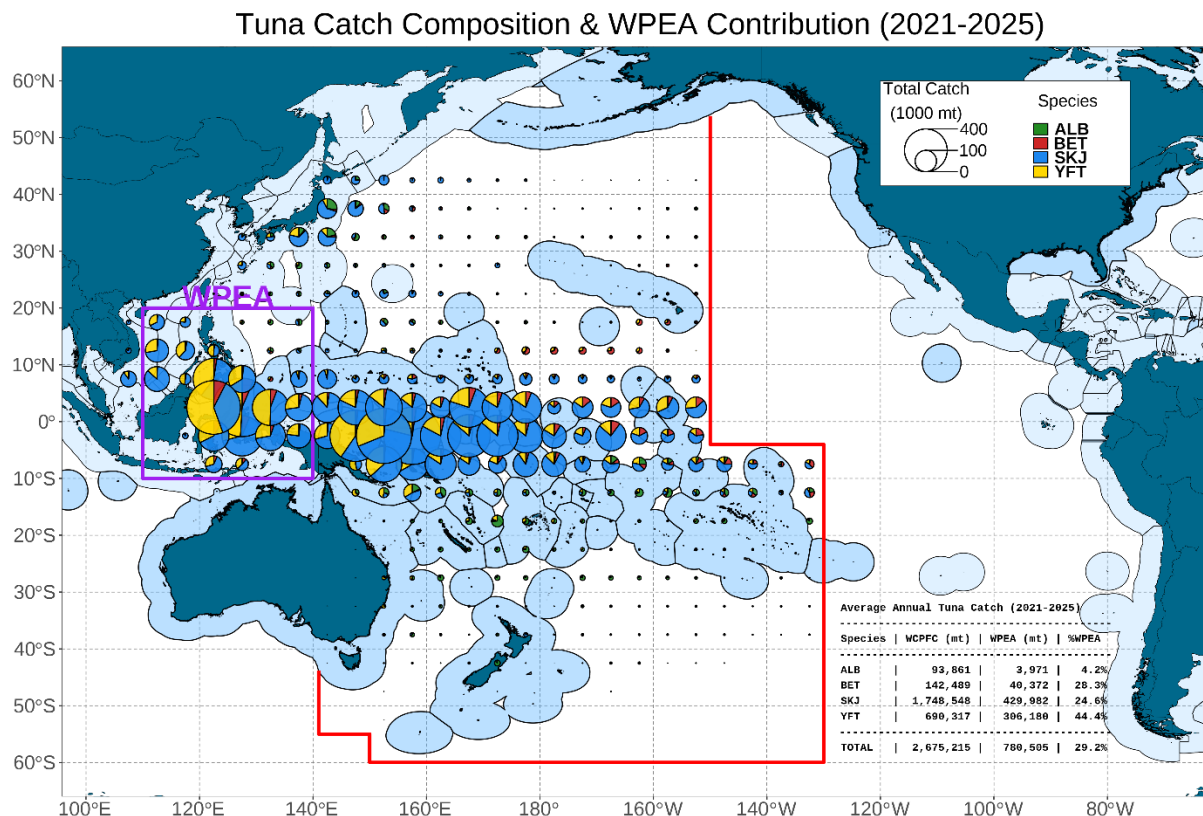
1. Contextual overview

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief update on activities under the Western Pacific East Asia Sustainable Pacific Fisheries Activity (WPEA-SPF project) over the past 12 months, for the information and noting of the Scientific Committee (SC22).
- 1.2. The tuna fisheries in the Pacific Ocean waters of Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam continue represent around 30% of the annual catches of key tuna species in the WCPO, including a significant proportion (40%) of the total yellowfin tuna catch in the WCPO (see Figure 1)². Figure 1 shows the cumulative catch between 2021-2025. Actual catch by year is included in Annex 8.2.
- 1.3. The lack of accurate data on catch, effort and the composition of catches in these waters has been highlighted as a key uncertainty in WCPO stock assessments at WCPFC for a number of years. A lot of work has been done to make improvements in these uncertainties. A supplementary paper to SC has been submitted this year to highlight some of these improvements and challenges: *Data improvements in the West Pacific East Asia (WPEA) Region of WCPFC* (WCPFC-SC22-2026/ST-IP-05).

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² Actual for 2025 is 32% total (SKJ, BET,YFT) and 42% for YFT

Figure 1. Catch of key tunas from 2021-2025.



- 1.4. In an effort to improve understanding of these fisheries and increase the accuracy of data available for stock assessments, a series of projects have been implemented since 2005 to support data collection in Indonesia and the Philippines, and later in Viet Nam. These projects have included the Indonesia and Philippines Data Collection Project (IPDCP), the West Pacific East Asia Oceanic Fisheries Management Project (WPEA-OFM), and the Sustainable Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the West Pacific and East Asian Seas (WPEA-SM). The last WPEA-SM project, implemented by the WCPFC Secretariat and the three countries, terminated on 27 April 2019 and the WPEA-ITM project concluded on 30 June 2024. This project is the West Pacific East Asia – Sustainable Pacific Fisheries (WPEA-SPF) and started on 1 July 2024 and was planned to run until 30 June 2027. New Zealand has just approved an extension to 30 June 2028 to align the timing of this project with other Sustainable Pacific Fisheries (SPF) projects it is currently funding.
- 1.5. Since these projects were first instituted in 2005, significant progress has been made on data collection, data analysis and verification, and the provision of catch estimates. Consequentially, the uncertainty in WCPO tuna stock assessments associated with tuna data in these three countries has been reduced. More detail on the activities and achievements of these projects can be found in WPEA updates to previous Scientific Committee meetings.
- 1.6. Recognizing the importance to the WCPFC of continuing to improve tuna data from these three countries, the Government of New Zealand is providing NZD 4.5 million over the period 2024 - 2027 for the Western Pacific East Asia Sustainable Pacific Fisheries Project (WPEA-SPF). At the time of writing this report, New Zealand has approved an additional NZD 1 million to extend the

project to 2028. The goal of the WPEA-SPF The goal of SPF is to increase prosperity, self-reliance and inclusivity across the Pacific region through a sustainably managed Pacific Ocean fisheries. We are thankful for the support from the Government of New Zealand.

- 1.7. The WPEA-SPF project is being managed by the WCPFC Secretariat, working closely with the national fisheries authorities in the three countries, and with SPC FAME playing a critical implementation role. Project components include:

Output 1: Partnerships and collaboration enhanced

Output 2: Improved fisheries management and MCS&E capability

Output 3: Improved observer and port data collection and management

2. Planned and completed activities (since SC21)

2.1. WPEA Shared Activities

2.1.1. Attendance at SC21, TCC21 and WCPFC22 was supported for each country

2.1.2. The WPEA-SPF Project Working Group met in San Remo, Australia on 27-28 January 2026 to review progress of the project to date to plan project activities for the coming year. The meeting also spent time considering the project exit strategy and what might come next, after this project phase concludes.

2.1.3. A special 3-country Data Gaps Workshop was held on 29 January, 2026 San Remo, Australia. This session was held to identify key data gaps to WCPFC from each country and to plan a more focused workshop later in the year to progress these issues.

2.1.4. The WPEA Data Gaps Workshop was held on 2-6 March, 2026 in Sydney, Australia.



- The workshop was expertly run by the SPC Data Management and Stock Assessment teams and was supported by our old friend Peter Williams. It was run a bit differently than previous workshops in that it was a one-week hands-on workshop to enhance data skills (e.g., using R scripts), identify and address data gaps, and prepare data for WCPFC SciData submissions. Significant progress was made in developing approaches for each of the 3 countries to start preparing their own aggregate catch and effort data, which is a big step forward. Key areas of progress included:
 - Each country was able to prepare code to format their catch estimates (ACE) using the new templates developed by SPC, submit their data in the test portal, and pass the validation checks.
 - Preparation of aggregate catch and effort data that reconciled to their ACE.
 - Exploration of how logbook data can be submitted in the future.

- 2.1.5. Representatives from the Philippines and Indonesia were supported to attend the SPC Climate Change Indicators workshop 16-20 March in Noumea, New Caledonia. The WPEA countries have been grappling with how climate change will affect their fisheries and how this can be monitored. CSIRO is working on/modelling the WPEA region in the model. This will be refined based on the areas where climate variability and climate change signals are strong or exhibited. More climate change related work will be pursued in 2027.
- 2.1.6. Representatives from the Philippines and Indonesia were able to stay on after the Climate Change workshop to attend the SPC Pre Assessment Workshop (PAW) on 23-27 March, 2026 in Noumea, New Caledonia.
- 2.1.7. The WPEA project is trying something new for its capacity building for stock assessment and harvest strategy work. We are piloting a Stock Assessment Mentoring programme in which two scientists from each country are nominated to work directly with an SPC mentor on key projects related to the WPEA project. Initial meetings have been held and work is expected to pick up after SC22 (noting that SPC stock assessment scientists have been quite busy preparing for SC22). Overall, the new approach will be managed by Paul Hamer from SPC with a focus on yellowfin tuna. The mentees, mentors and projects are:
- Viet Nam has put forward Dr. Vu Viet Ha and Dr. Ta Phuong Dong to work with SPC's Montana Wickens.
 - Indonesia has put forward Dr. Lilis Sadiyah and Tirtadanu to work with SPC's Thom Teears and Nan Yao.
 - Philippines has put forward Jhulie Ahnne Fruelda and Mary Charn Baculio. SPC mentors have yet to be identified.

2.2. Indonesia Activities

- 2.2.1. A special Port Characterisation study planning meeting was held on 30 January, 2026 in San Remo, Australia. One of the key data gaps in Indonesia is in measuring the catch from the thousands of small craft unmonitored landing sites around the country. The WPEA project with Indonesia is planning on trying to rank and characterise these fishing ports around Indonesia. This meeting was used to discuss ways to leverage the existing catch data to identify key ports that need to be visited for validation. Work on this project is expected to continue in 2026 and 2027.
- 2.2.2. Using a "Train the Trainer" approach, an Operational Catch & Effort data workshop was held on 2-6 February, 2026 in Melbourne, Australia. The purpose of this activity was to:
- Improve skills in error detection, data cleaning, and quality control. This is for detecting anomalous records, effort misreporting, species misidentification and missing values or inconsistencies;
 - Improve understanding and skills in communicating including why certain data fields are essential, how errors propagate into stock assessment uncertainty, and how high-quality operational data improves management advice;
 - Strengthen Indonesia's national capacity in data management and analytical methods, ensuring that its complex fisheries are accurately represented in WCPFC scientific processes; and
 - Ensuring Indonesian fisheries are accurately represented in regional assessments.

2.2.3. Building on the above train the trainer approach, an in-country Operational Catch & Effort data workshop was held 9-10 April, 2026 in Bogor, Indonesia. This was to increase the capacity for providing data management and compilation of tuna fisheries data for the WCPFC. Key outputs of this workshop were:

- Improved capacity to provide fishery data.
- Better understanding on the latest data reporting format to WCPFC.
- Improved coordination between national providers of institutional data.
- Scientific data with the new format submitted to the WCPFC before 30 April 2026.

2.2.4. Enumerators are supported in Indonesia in 2026. They are based out of the main WCPFC tuna fisheries port of Bitung, Sulawesi with some based in Manado, Sulawesi. The data collected by these enumerators are key to the calibration of the catch estimates used for WCPFC reporting.

2.2.5. The Annual Data Workshops were held from 1-12 June, 2026, Bitung, Jakarta, Bogor. A key improvement this year was the submission of aggregate catch and effort data along with the ACE through the data portal in the standardized format. Work to include logbook data for their large-scale fleets was progressed and full compliance with this requirement is anticipated next year. Another key work area was to validate the ratio of large and small yellowfin tuna in the handline catches. Previous to last year, it was assumed that small fish made up the greatest proportion in this fishery, but this year further validated that most of the fish are large (>70cm). SPC developed a simple regression approach using proportion large yellowfin (>70cm), by weight (using length-weight relationship applied to length data) as a function of the proportion of skipjack catch from that landing site or province. We think this is a reasonable approach to adding more rigor to the fish size classification in this complex fishery.



2.3. Philippines Activities

2.3.1. The WPEA project supported the purchase of port sampling tools (callipers) and uniforms for the enumerators as well as port sampling monitoring and coordination. Importantly, the WPEA project is not supporting the cost of the enumerators which the Philippines has taken on with their own budget.

2.3.2. The 19th Philippines Annual Data Workshops (Annual Catch Estimates) were held on 25-29 May, 2026 in Palawan, Philippines. Overall, catches were up by about 30K mt (14%), which was largely attributed to reduction in the FAD closure period in HSP1. Some progress was made on preparing and submitting the aggregate catch and effort data along with plans to include logsheet data from their largescale fleets in the coming year. The Philippines is conducting a national inventory of non-NSAP landing sites which will be useful in helping to understand the total volume of catch going forward.



2.3.3. A National Stock Assessment Program (NSAP) eDGES application refresher training is scheduled for October 2026. This will be supported by SPC. The data collected by the enumerators is entered into the NSAP eDGES application which feeds into Tufman 2. This information is key to the calibration of the catch estimates used for WCPFC reporting.

2.4. Viet Nam Activities

2.4.1. The Implementing Agreement between WCPFC and Viet Nam was signed in March 2026. After considerable delays and inability to implement project activities in country, this was a significant milestone.

2.4.2. With the Implementing Agreement in place, it was possible for the project to support Enumerators in 10 key provinces for 2026. There was a noteworthy decline in port sampling data in 2025 due to the inability to support the enumerators in late 2024 and all of 2025.

2.4.3. Viet Nam's Annual Data Workshop (ACE) was held on 7-9 April, 2026 in Quy Nhon, Gia Lai Province, Viet Nam. The workshop focussed on:

- A review of the fisheries data collected in 2025;
- Work to improve annual catch estimation methodologies;

- Validation and reconciliation of provincial fisheries data;
- Review of progress made on VTFACE-14 recommendations;
- Strengthening the technical capacity for fisheries data analysis and reporting; and
- Improving coordination among fisheries agencies and stakeholders.



2.4.4. A high-level engagement meeting of senior officials in the Vietnamese national government, provincial governments, WCPFC, SPC, and New Zealand is planned for 28 July, 2026 in Nha Trang. The specific objectives of this meeting are:

- Strengthen understanding among Vietnamese stakeholders of WCPFC requirements and CNM obligations, particularly in relation to CMMs, fisheries data reporting, and implementation responsibilities;
- Review challenges and limitations in fisheries data collection, management, and reporting systems, and discuss measures to improve data quality and coordination mechanisms;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities among central and provincial authorities in supporting the implementation of CNM obligations; and to
- Exchange views on opportunities, challenges, and considerations related to possible future full membership in WCPFC.

The WPEA-SPF Activity supports the development of catch estimates for the three project countries. The three countries have reported the following total tuna catches for all gears in the WCPFC Statistical area over the past 10 years (Figure 2):

Figure 2

Annual catch estimates (mt) from the WPFC-CA as submitted to the WCPFC by each WPEA country										
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 ³	2025
Indonesia										
BET	28,760	11,063	19,574	19,162	22,898	22,617	28,108	32,937	32,937	41,225
SKJ	336,455	302,158	291,441	297,860	258,169	272,193	263,438	268,912	268,912	280,733
YFT	160,418	157,346	215,460	219,178	233,452	252,049	221,818	209,696	209,696	174,075
Total	525,633	470,567	526,475	536,200	514,519	546,859	513,364	511,545	511,545	496,033
Philippines⁴										
BET	5,410	5,356	3,894	5,197	4,100	2,354	2,586	5,153	4,981	5,839
SKJ	119,938	104,820	80,566	92,551	123,117	90,040	82,331	86,290	115,355	132,892
YFT	89,330	89,667	71,606	62,335	87,438	84,344	62,398	66,568	79,886	90,794
Total	214,678	199,843	156,066	160,083	214,655	176,738	147,315	158,011	200,222	229,615
Viet Nam										
BET	4,867	3,923	3,618	2,458	3,464	3,175	2,208	1,249	1,229	180
SKJ	93,820	86,295	91,461	87,357	73,651	68,822	75,344	70,712	72,642	70,119
YFT	24,389	22,407	25,455	19,499	17,853	17,020	19,941	24,946	23,457	22,615
Total	123,076	112,625	120,534	109,314	94,968	89,017	97,493	96,907	97,328	92,914

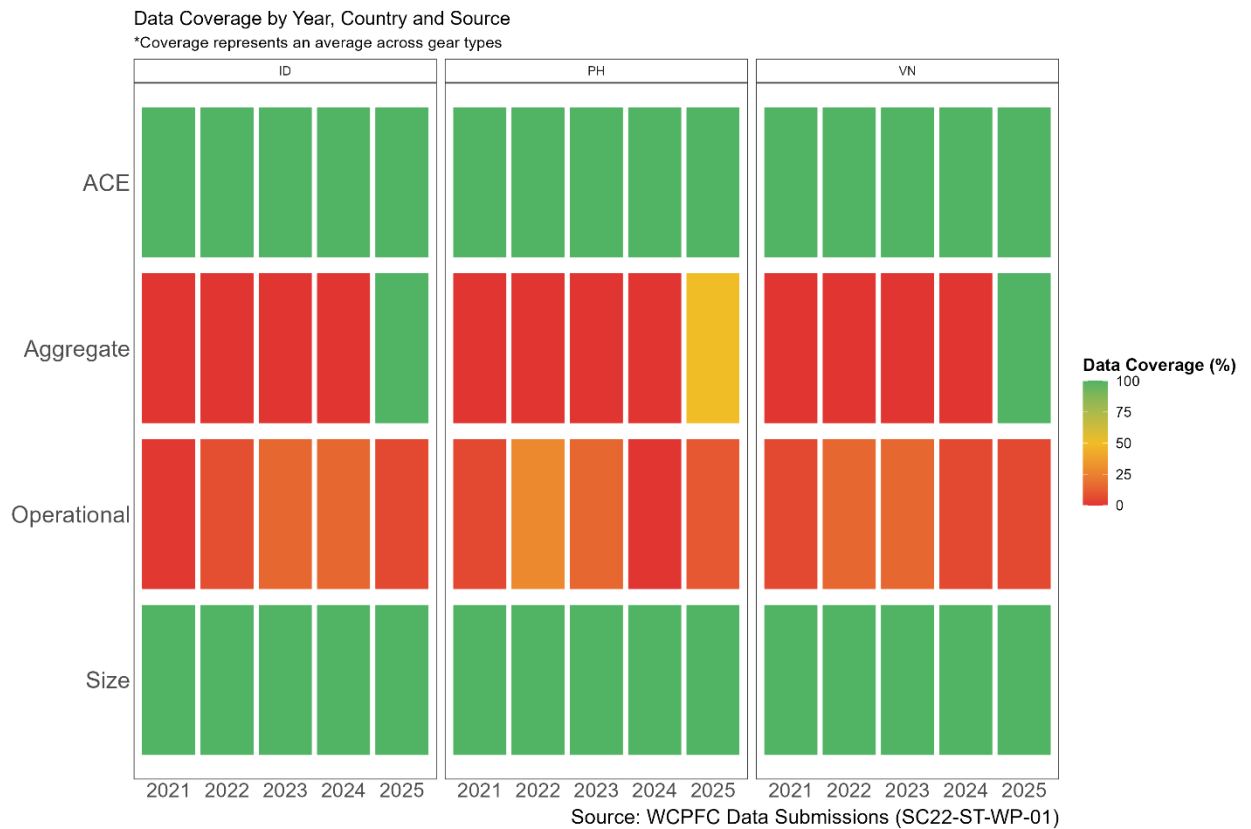
3. Key achievements and challenges

- 3.1. As is the case every year, one of the key achievements is the convening of the Annual Data Workshops (ADW) in each of the three WPEA countries. These workshops are the focal point of the tuna year bringing together national and regional stakeholders to work through catch figures and agree on the annual estimates. At each workshop, recommendations from the previous workshop are reviewed and new recommendations are made to seek improvements in the quality and quantity of tuna data. This year it was held in early April for Viet Nam, late May for the Philippines, and early June for Indonesia, making this the earliest ADW in Indonesia to date. Commitments from each country to hold their ADWs in 2027 even earlier was made and recorded in the recommendations. The goal is to complete these exercises before the 30 April deadline for data submissions to WCPFC.
- 3.2. A new graphic to show the progress of data coverage of WPEA countries was developed in response to a request at WCPFC21. Figure 3 shows the data coverage in each of the three WPEA countries by year between 2021-2025. All three countries have been providing ACE and size data consistently, but have struggled to provide aggregate and operational data to WCPFC. This is now starting to change, with 100% aggregate data being provided by Indonesia and Viet Nam along with around 50% being provided by the Philippines in 2025. This is a marked improvement and demonstrates progress being made. It is anticipated that further improvements will be seen in the coming years.

³ Indonesia's 2024 catches were carried over from 2023 until their 2024 ACEs are finalized, following the conclusion of their annual catch estimates workshop (7 August 2025)

⁴ Philippine catch figures do not include catches of Philippine flagged distant-water purse seine vessels.

Figure 3 Data Coverage



- 3.3. Other highlights are the occasions when all three countries come together for a shared workshop or meeting. This is when they all get to work together on shared objectives and challenges. This year we had a brief session on Data Gaps in January followed by a week-long intensive Data Gaps workshop in Sydney in March. This workshop followed a new “hands-on practical” format in which country representatives brought their data sets and worked with SPC to develop R scripts and capacity to streamline the national tuna data management in the future.
- 3.4. Another highlight that will likely come with some challenges is the start of our WPEA-SPC stock assessment mentoring project. While it is just now starting, we are excited to try this new format of capacity building. We think that linking key national staff with expert SPC scientists while focusing on key WPEA related stock assessment needs have the potential to yield meaningful results while building capacity.
- 3.5. The biggest challenge since the WPEA-SPF project began in July 2024, is that the Implementing Agreement between the WCPFC and the government of Viet Nam was not signed until March 2026. This has meant that planned project delivery in Viet Nam has been slowed. The impacts of this were particularly felt in the data collected by port samplers. As this was not funded in 2025, data quantity and quality dropped significantly, highlighting the important role that the WPEA-SPF project plays in collecting this data.

4. Partnership and collaboration

- 4.1. The WPEA-SPF Project Manager provided WCPFC WPEA centric input into the ASEAN Blue Economy: Implementation Plan for Sustainability and Prosperity Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, December 2025
- 4.2. The WPEA-SPF project was also able to support the Project 128 - Improving understanding of connectivity of key tuna species in the Western Pacific and East Asia region with the WCPFC Convention Area work being carried out by CSIRO. This is important work for the WPEA countries and further reinforces the need for good tuna catch data to better understand the implications of stock movements and stock assessments in the region.
 - 4.2.1. Connectivity wasn't funded at WCPFC22, but has an indicative budget of \$125,000 for 2027

5. Budget

- 5.1. Of the USD\$2,495,488 in operational budget, \$1,061,592 has been expended up to the end of June 2026, leaving a balance of \$1,433,896 remaining for the rest of the project. See the table in the Annex for more detail.

6. Key learnings, insights and risk management

- 6.1. The biggest risk to the overall project implementation has been the delay in getting the Implementing Agreement signed with Viet Nam. This has delayed implementing project activities at the national level in Viet Nam.
- 6.2. A key learning or insight in managing this project is need and ability to flexible and opportunistic in how we deliver the project goals.
 - One example of this is the pivot from our historical capacity building approach for stock assessment skills to the mentoring approach. We think by focussing our efforts on key staff and on key project needs, we can deliver better outcomes.
 - Another example is the development of the planned high-level engagement meeting in Viet Nam in late July 2026.

7. Planning for next 12 months

- 7.1. For the period of July 2026 – June 2027, a number of activities are planned.

7.1.1. Shared WPEA activities:

- Annual Working Group meeting
- Support to each WPEA country to attend SC, TCC, and WCPFC
- Climate change workshop – dates to be determined
- Stock Assessment and Harvest Strategy mentoring
- Data Raising Workshop

7.1.2. Indonesia activities:

- Continued operational training of catch and effort data reporting
- Annual Catch Estimates workshop
- Support of enumerators
- Large and smaller vessel fisheries profiles
- Exploration of establishing a national tuna data warehouse

- Observer data workshops
- Purchase of port sampling tools
- Workshop to improve port data collection methodology

7.1.3. Philippines activities:

- Annual Catch Estimates workshop
- Additional limited support for enumerators
- NSAP eDGES refresher training

7.1.4. Viet Nam activities:

- High-level engagement meeting
- Stock assessment attachment at SPC focussed on R and follow on national training workshops
- Species identification training (train the trainer approach)
- Annual Catch Estimates workshop
- Support of enumerators and national observer data coordination
- Training on improving port data collection methodology
- Cost recovery study for building a national observer programme
- Purchase of port sampling tools
- Tufman 2 training

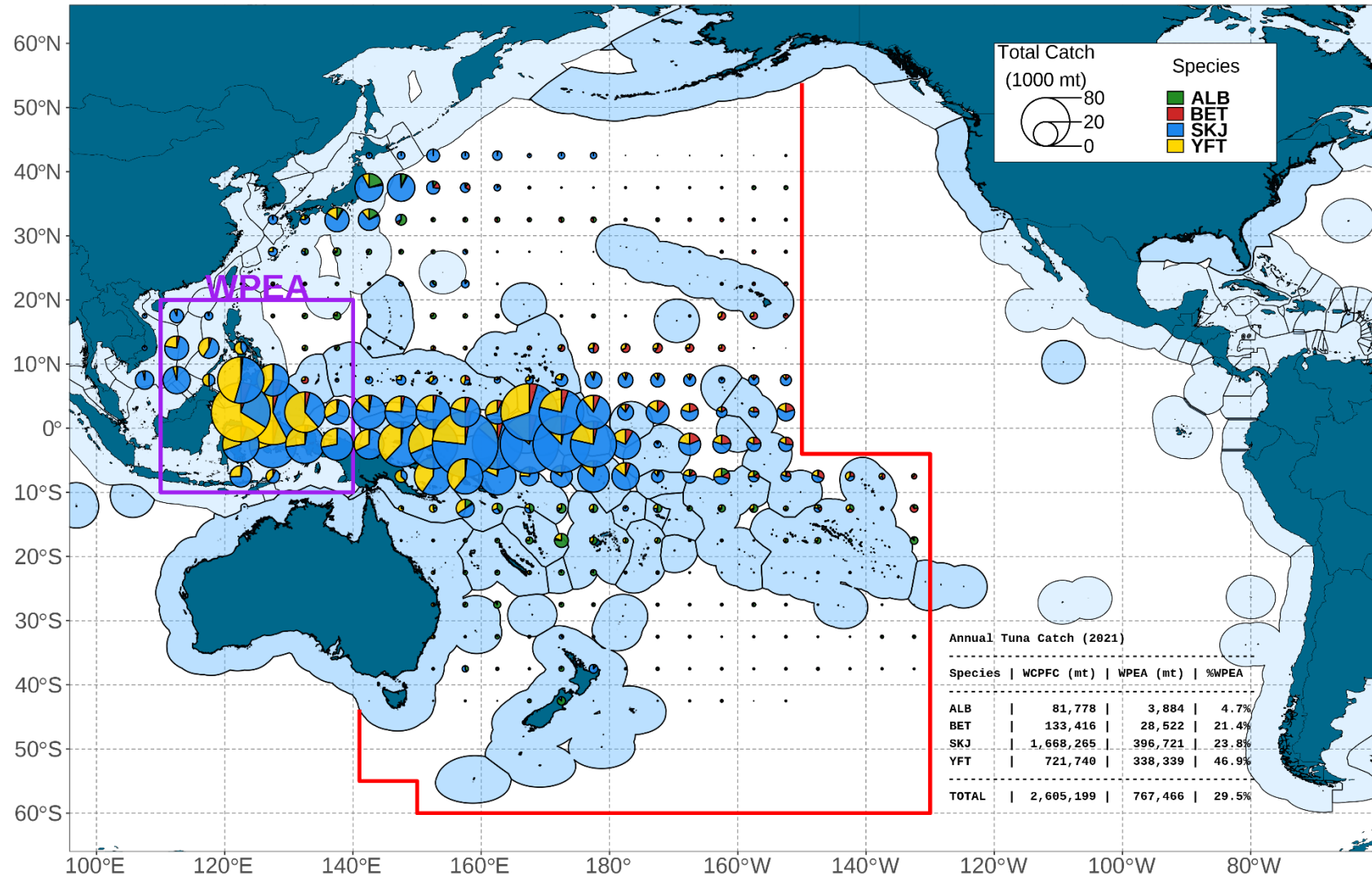
8. Annexes

8.1. Budget and Expenditure for the WPEA-SPF project from July 2024 – June 2026.

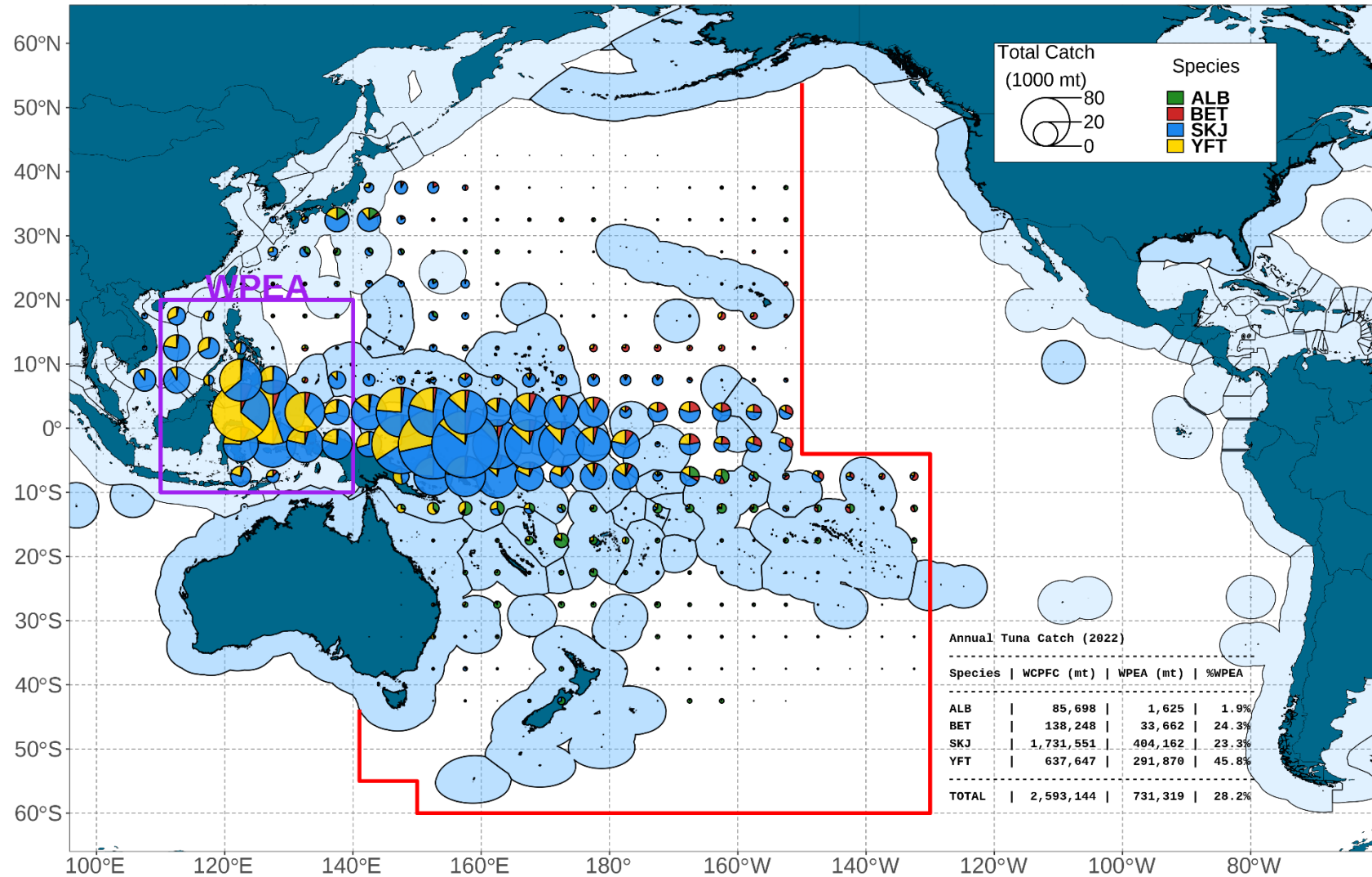
WPEA-SPF Activity	2024 (Q3-Q4) Budget	2024 (Q3-Q4) Expenditure	2025 (Q1-Q4) Budget	2025 (Q1-Q4) Expenditure	2026 (Q1-Q4) Budget	2026 (Q1-Q4) Expenditure	2027 (Q1-Q2) Budget	2027 (Q1-Q2) Expenditure	Completion period Budget	Completion period Exp	Total Budget 2024-2027	Total Exp 2024-2027	Balance 2024-2027
Partnerships and collaboration enhanced	\$89,938	\$66,405	\$195,800	\$166,682	\$183,200	\$75,175	\$128,200	\$ -	\$20,000	\$ -	\$617,138	\$308,262	\$308,876
Improved fisheries management and MCS&E capability	\$101,000	\$91,985	\$327,348	\$149,606	\$315,000	\$191,525	\$370,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$1,113,348	\$433,116	\$680,232
Improved observer and port data collection and management	\$106,500	\$77,165	\$202,000	\$133,498	\$309,252	\$109,552	\$147,250	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$765,002	\$320,215	\$444,787
TOTAL OUTPUT COSTS	\$297,438	\$235,555	\$725,148	\$ 449,786	\$807,452	\$376,251	\$645,450	\$ -	\$20,000	\$ -	\$2,495,488	\$1,061,592	\$1,433,896
Non-output	\$22,308	\$ -	\$54,386	\$ -	\$60,559	\$ -	\$48,409	\$ -	\$1,500	\$ -	\$187,162	\$ -	\$187,162
WCPFC overhead (7.5% of budget)	\$22,308		\$54,386		\$60,559		\$48,409		\$1,500				
TOTAL	\$319,746	\$235,555	\$779,534	\$449,786	\$868,011	\$376,251	\$693,859	\$ -	\$21,500	\$ -	\$2,682,650		

8.2. Catch of key tunas from 2021-2025 by year

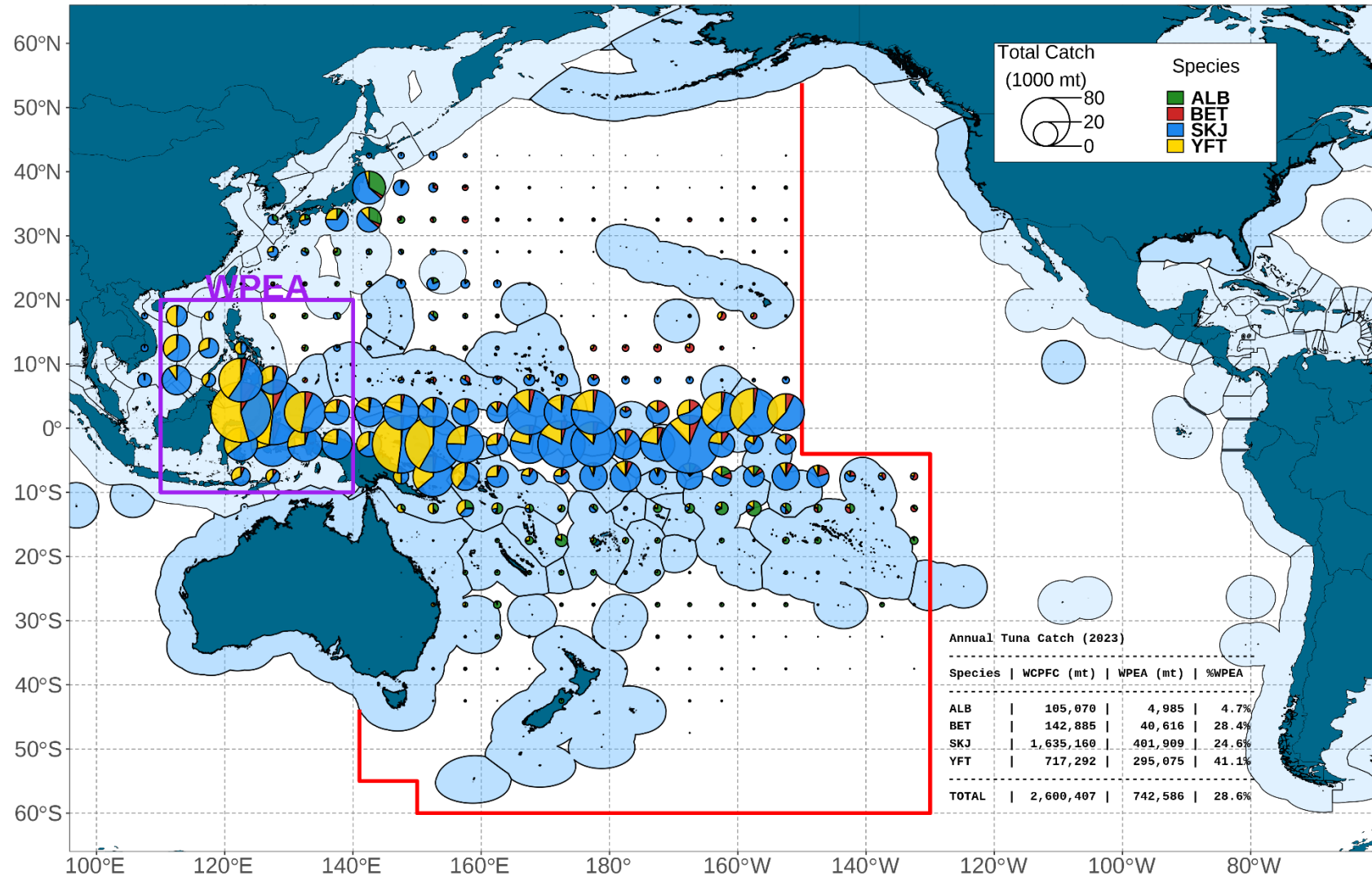
Tuna Catch Composition & WPEA Contribution (2021)



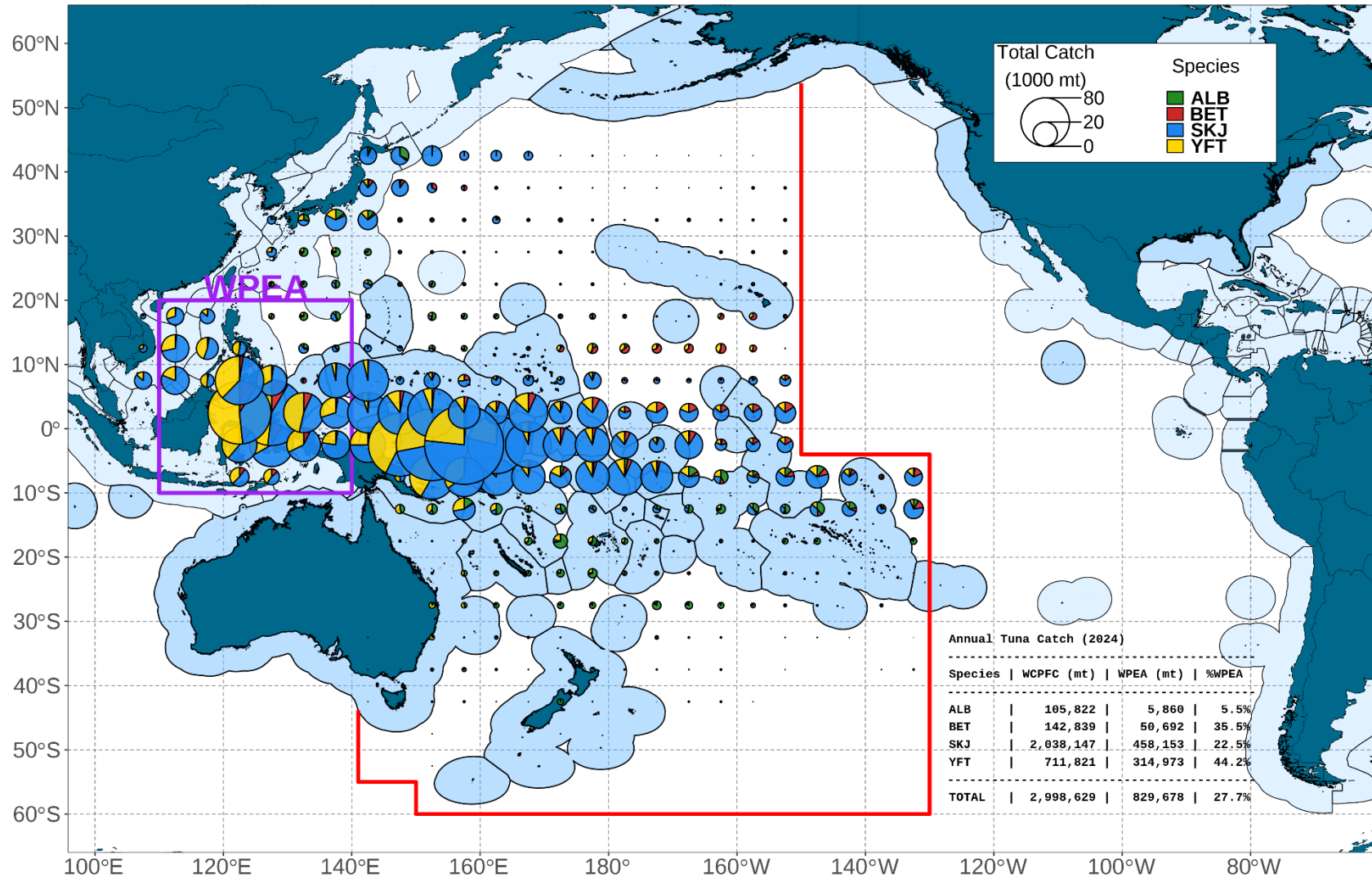
Tuna Catch Composition & WPEA Contribution (2022)



Tuna Catch Composition & WPEA Contribution (2023)



Tuna Catch Composition & WPEA Contribution (2024)



Tuna Catch Composition & WPEA Contribution (2025)

