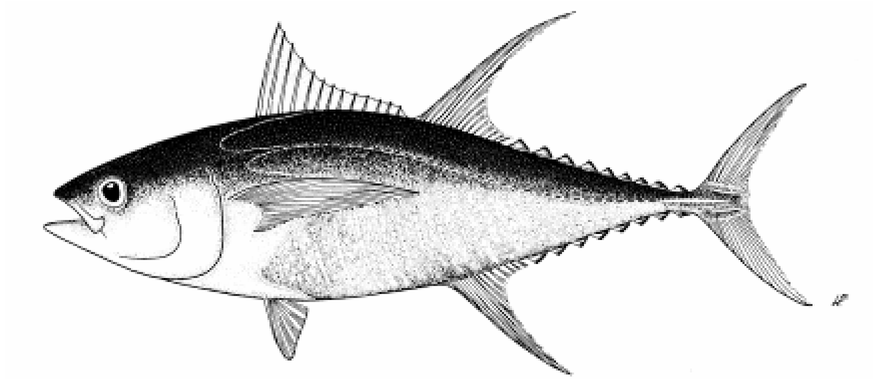
WCPFC–SC1 **FR WP–20**

1st Meeting of the Scientific Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
WCPFC–SC1
Noumea, New Caledonia
8–19 August 2005

Cook Islands Fishery Report



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August 2005

Cook Islands Fishery Report

SC1, Noumea, New Caledonia, August 2005

Longline Fleet Structure

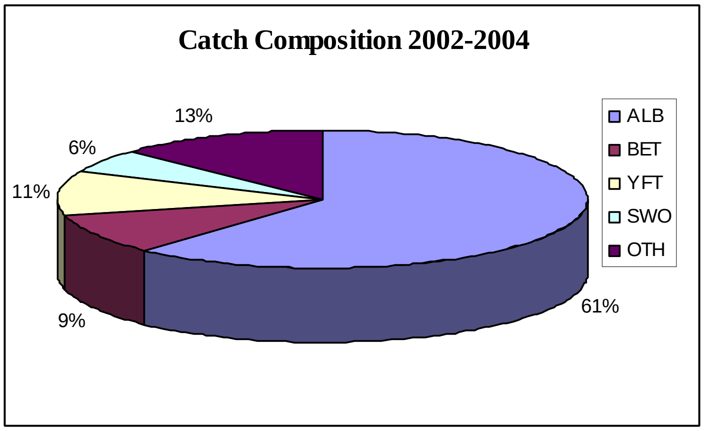
YEAR	TOTAL	<20m	>20m	HIGH SEAS
2002	19	12	7	-
2003	44	26	18	-
2004	46	14	23	9

The size of the longline fleet has increased slowly from 19 in 2002, to 46 in 2004. The majority of the larger (> 20m) longline vessels operate almost exclusively in the northern part of the EEZ, and base in Pago Pago, where most of their catch is unloaded at the canneries. Most of their catch is therefore albacore. The smaller (< 20m) longline vessels operate out of Rarotonga, targeting fresh fish - primarily bigeye, yellowfin, pacific bluefin and swordfish for markets in Japan and the US.

Annual Catches 2002-2004

	2002		2003		2004	
	number	weight (Mt)	number	weight (Mt)	number	weight (Mt)
ALB	50603	901.111	81978	1460.51	94435	1629.803
BET	2209	66.869	9315	201.964	17299	343.181
YFT	1756	51.591	8871	179.45	21250	458.271
SWO	214	15.407	2795	166.807	3489	176.314
OTH	8559	101.318	24461	331.806	34934	396.658
Hook total	1758446		5819479		7369849	
Total weight	1136.296	Mt	2340.537	Mt	3004.227	Mt
mean CPUE	59.795	kg/100hks	42.27	kg/100hks	40.45	kg/100hks

Total catches have increased from around 1000mt in 2002, to 3000mt in 2004, although the last two years have seen a decline in overall CPUE for this fleet. This trend has continued into 2005. The highest percentage of the catch has consisted of albacore tuna (61%), followed by yellowfin and bigeye tuna and swordfish. It is interesting to note there has been a continued small but lucrative catch of Pacific Bluefin Tuna in the southern part of the EEZ (approx.7mt).



Market Destinations
These include albacore to the canneries in Pago Pago, yellowfin and bigeye and swordfish to Japan and the US. All other bycatch is value added and sold on the local market.

Onshore Developments
- Port extension and redevelopment has continued after 5 cyclones passed through this year.
- Continuing to develop the fisheries statistics database with assistance from SPC
- Development of a high seas VMS system which allows Fisheries authorities to track vessels around the globe
- New Fisheries legislation recently passed through Parliament

Future Prospects
The future prospects for longline fisheries in the southern part of the Cook Islands EEZ seem bleak. Continued low catches, combined with high fuel prices and even higher freight costs have seen a number of the vessels move out of the fishery in 2005. The situation in the north is more stable, with reasonably good cannery prices and cheaper fuel in Pago Pago. This may see some vessels shift from the south to the north, and have negative impact on the local economy.

However, with the possibility of a fisheries agreement with French Polynesia, and the introduction of new legislation and rights based management, it is hoped that this will assist in providing some security for the industry as well as encouraging further growth and development.