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OVERVIEW OF TUNA FISHERIES IN THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC OCEAN, INCLUDING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

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Executive summary

This paper provides a broad description of the major fisheries in the WCPFC Statistical Area (WCPFC-CA) highlighting activities during the most recent calendar year (2025) and covering the most recent summary of catch estimates by gear and species.

The provisional total WCPFC–CA tuna catch for 2025 was estimated at 2,588,945 mt, which is less than the catch reported in the previous year (2024; 3,060,763 mt) but similar to that of the 2023 catch level (2,685,724 mt). The WCPFC–CA tuna catch for 2025 represented 72% of the total Pacific Ocean tuna catch of 3,575,435 mt, and 49% of the global tuna catch (the provisional estimate for 2025 is 5,310,863 mt), noting that unlike other oceans, over 80% of the WCPFC–CA tuna catch occurs in the waters of coastal states.

The 2025 WCPFC–CA catch of skipjack (1,668,409 mt – 64% of the total catch) was lower than that of the previous year (2025 - 2,060,984 mt). The WCPFC–CA yellowfin catch for 2025 (677,123 mt – 26% of the total catch) was 80,762 mt below the record 2021 catch (757,885 mt). The recent relatively high catches of yellowfin are partially due to the high catch levels from the 'other' category (primarily small-scale fisheries in Indonesia).

The WCPFC–CA bigeye catch for 2025 (155,864 mt – 6% of the total catch) was 9,146 mt greater than the 2024 catch level. The 2025 WCPFC–CA albacore catch (87,549 mt – 3.4%) was around 33,041 mt less than in 2024. The provisional South Pacific albacore catch in 2025 was 62,228 mt; however, these estimates are expected to change with the addition of catches from the Eastern Pacific Ocean, which have not yet been received.

The provisional 2025 purse seine catch of 1,787,386 mt was 358,754 mt lower than the record catch in 2024 (2,146,140 mt). With respect to species specific purse seine catches, skipjack (1,367,099 mt; 76% of total purse seine catch) was less than the 2024 record catch (1,731,248 mt) while yellowfin tuna (356,144 mt; 20%) was around 138,833 mt lower than the record catch in 2017 (494,977 mt). The 2025 provisional catch estimate for bigeye tuna (63,579 mt; 3.6%) was about 18,969 mt higher than the 2024 catch.

The provisional 2025 pole-and-line catch (103,588 mt) was down about 26% from 2024 (139,405 mt) and remains relatively low compared to the annual catches since the early-1960s, due to reduced catches in the Japanese fishery, although we note as in previous years the provisional nature of the estimates at this stage.

The provisional WCPFC–CA longline catch for 2025 (218,014 mt) was lower than the 2024 catch level (249,106 mt) and remains lower than the average over the previous decade. The bigeye (52,145 mt) and yellowfin (80,928 mt) components of the longline fishery decreased from 2024 catch levels - which are some of the lowest catches reported over the last two decades. Both albacore (79,517 mt) and skipjack (5,424 mt) catches also were lower in 2025 than in 2024.

The South Pacific albacore troll catches in 2025 (1,223 mt) were the lowest since the 1980s (744 mt were reported in 1983). The New Zealand troll fleet (74 vessels in 2025) accounted for the majority of the 2025 South Pacific albacore troll catch, but a small component came from the US fleet. Minor contributions have come from the Canada, Cook Islands, Australia, and French Polynesia fleets when their fleets were active in this fishery.

In 2025, market prices for purse seine-caught tuna products showed increases across key markets. Thai imports averaged \$1,641/mt, representing an 8% increase from 2024 levels. Similarly, Yaizu prices edged up 2% to \$1,519/mt.

Prices for longline-caught yellowfin showed mixed movements across major markets in 2025. Prices for yellowfin from Oceania rose by 6% to \$7.53/kg, while Yaizu prices increased by 13% to \$4.97/kg. Frozen yellowfin from selected Japanese ports rose by 16% to \$5.72/kg. In contrast, fresh yellowfin from selected ports declined by 14% to \$6.51/kg. Notably, U.S. fresh yellowfin import prices plunged 18% to \$8.65/kg.

Prices for longline-caught bigeye also showed mixed movements in 2025. In Japan, average prices for fresh bigeye from selected ports rose by 9% to \$11.80/kg, while frozen bigeye increased by 7% to \$6.79/kg. Fresh imports from Oceania, however, declined by 8% to \$10.86/kg. Similarly, U.S. fresh bigeye import prices declined by 19%, from \$11.57/kg in 2024 to \$9.42/kg in 2025.

Albacore prices also followed a mixed trend. Thai import prices rose by 11% to \$2.93/kg, and fresh prices from selected Japanese ports increased marginally by 3% to \$2.99/kg. Conversely, U.S. fresh albacore prices declined by 23%, falling from \$6.10/kg in 2024 to \$4.70/kg in 2025.

In 2025, the total estimated delivered value of the tuna catch in the WCP-CA declined by 5% to \$5.4 billion. The purse seine fishery remained the dominant contributor, accounting for 57% of the total value despite an 11% drop in the value of the purse seine catch from the previous year. In contrast, the value of the longline fishery increased by 9% to \$1.18 billion. The pole-and-line fishery also experienced notable growth, with catch value rising by 13% to \$230 million. The value of catches from other gears declined slightly by 5% to \$882 million.

In 2025, the value of the WCP-CA skipjack catch fell by 15% to \$2.7 billion, accounting for 51% of the total tuna catch value. In contrast, the value of other major species increased: yellowfin rose to \$1.7 billion (up 5%), bigeye to \$617 million (up 21%), and albacore to \$291 million (up less than 1%).

In 2025, economic conditions in the WCP-CA purse seine fishery deteriorated, while those in the tropical and southern longline fisheries also declined compared to 2024. The tropical purse seine index fell to 80, dropping below its 20-year average, largely due to a substantial decline in catch rates that outweighed the positive effects of cheaper fuel and marginally higher fish prices in real terms. From 2018 to 2020, the index consistently exceeded the long-term average, supported by high catch rates. It dipped slightly below average in 2021 and 2022 but rebounded in 2023, driven by a combination of rising fish prices, reduced fuel costs, and improved catch rates. This positive trend continued into 2024, sustained mainly by high catch rates and falling fuel prices but reversed in 2025 as catch rates declined.

Similarly, the southern longline fishery experienced a downturn in 2025, with the economic index falling to 79 well below its 20-year average weighed down by a decline in catch rates and continued low fish prices, despite a modest reduction in fuel costs. Similarly, economic conditions in the tropical longline fishery deteriorated further in 2025, as the index dropped to 74, remaining well below the long-term average. This decline was largely driven by a drop in catch rates, which offset any potential gains from lower fuel costs.

Introduction

The tuna fishery in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean is diverse, ranging from small-scale artisanal operations in the coastal waters of Pacific states, to large-scale, industrial purse seine, pole-and-line and longline operations in both the exclusive economic zones of Pacific states and on the high seas. The main species targeted by these fisheries are skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*), yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*), bigeye tuna (*T. obesus*) and albacore tuna (*T. alalunga*).

This overview provides a broad description of the major fisheries in the WCPFC Statistical Area (WCPFC–CA; see Figure 1), highlighting activities during the most recent calendar year - 2025. This overview draws on the latest catch estimates compiled for the WCPFC–CA, found in SC22 Information Paper: *Estimates of annual catches in the WCPFC Statistical Area* (Vidal et al., 2026a). Where relevant, comparisons with previous years' activities have been included, although 2025 data for some fisheries are provisional at this stage.

This paper includes sections covering the four target tuna species, as well as blue marlin (*Makaira mazara*), black marlin (*Istiompax indica*), striped marlin (*Kajikia audax*) and swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) catch in the WCPFC–CA tuna fisheries and an overview of the WCPFC–CA tuna fisheries by gear, including economic conditions in the main fisheries. In each section, the paper comments on recent developments in each fishery, with emphasis on 2025 catches relative to those of recent years, but refers readers to the SC22 National Fisheries Reports, which offer more detail on recent activities at the fleet level.

Additional graphical information that provides more detail related to the recent condition of the fishery and certain WCPFC Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) has been provided in an Appendix of this document, and other tabular and graphical information on the fishery can be found in (Hare et al., 2026) and (WCPFC Secretariat and SPC-OFP, 2026).

This overview includes brief summaries of several fisheries in the North Pacific Ocean, including those fisheries catching albacore tuna, Pacific bluefin tuna (*T. orientalis*), striped marlin and swordfish. Information on these fisheries will be expanded in future reviews, as two additional billfish species have been included as key species to report in the SciData (i.e., sailfish *Istiophorus platypterus* and shortbill spearfish *Tetrapturus angustirostris*). The Scientific Services Provider (SSP) will work with CCMs to improve the availability of historical catch data for these additional species.

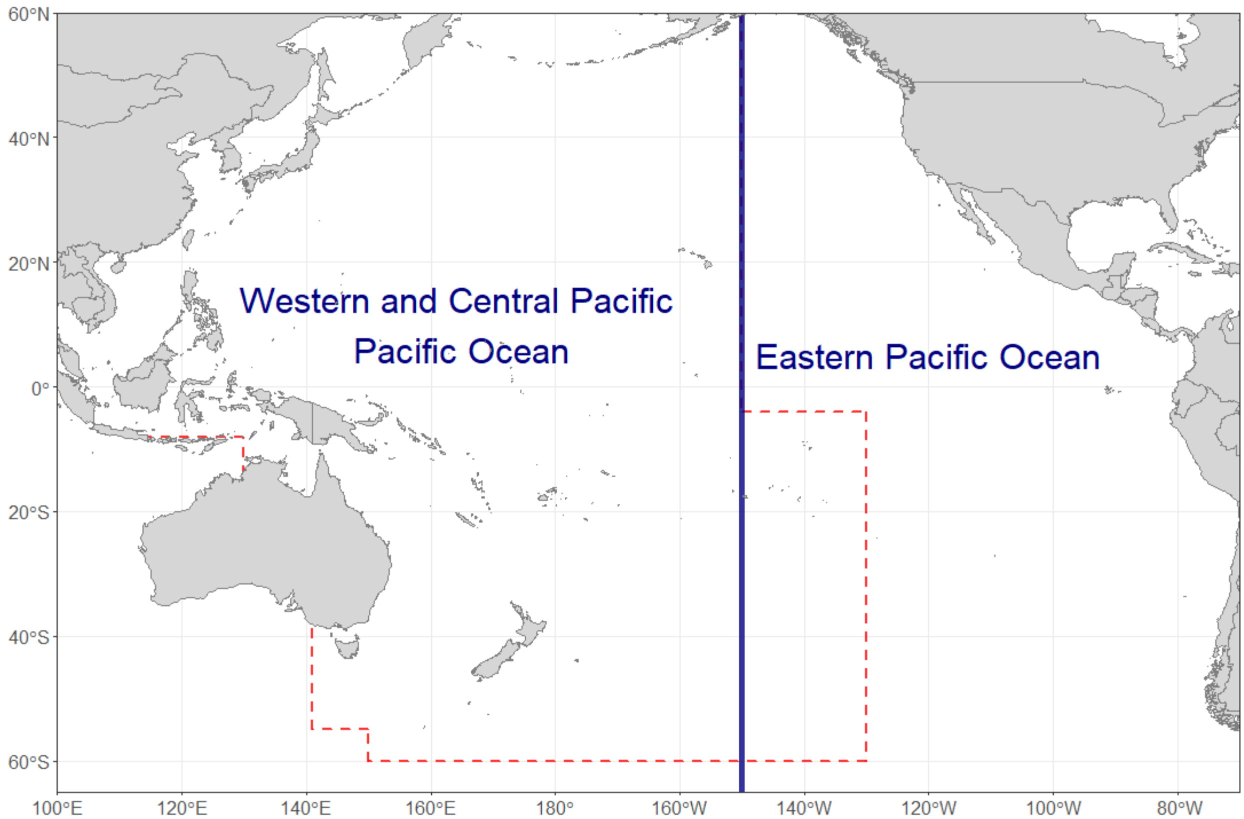

Figure 1: The western and central Pacific Ocean (WCPO), the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) and the WCPFC Convention Area (WCPFC–CA in dashed lines)

Total tuna catch and catch value for 2025

Annual total catches of the four main tuna species (skipjack, yellowfin, bigeye and albacore) in the WCPFC–CA increased steadily from 1980s through the 2000s with the purse seine fleet clearly becoming the dominant fishery in terms of catch volume. The increasing trend in total tuna catch continued through to about 2009, followed by two years (2010-2011) of reduced catches (due in part to La Niña conditions), before returning to high levels in successive years over the period 2012–2014. Catches have been relatively stable since around 2014, with some interannual variability. In 2024, record catches were reported in the WCPFC-CA, with total tuna catch exceeding 3 million metric tonnes. (Figure 2, Figure 3).

The provisional total WCPFC–CA tuna catch for 2025 was estimated at 2,588,945 mt, which was about 472,000 mt lower than the previous record catch in 2024 (3,060,763 mt). For 2025, the purse seine fishery accounted for a catch of 1,787,386 mt (69% of the total catch), with pole-and-line taking an estimated 103,588 mt (4%), the longline fishery an estimated 218,014 mt (8%), and the remainder

(19%) taken by troll gear and a variety of small-scale gears, mostly in the western Pacific-east Asia region (i.e., Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam). The WCPFC–CA tuna catch (2,588,945 mt) for 2025 represented 72% of the total Pacific Ocean tuna catch of 3,575,435 mt, and 49% of the global tuna catch (the provisional estimate for 2025 is 5,310,863 mt)[3], noting that unlike other oceans, over 80% of the WCPFC–CA tuna catch occurs in the waters of the coastal states (86% in 2025; see Figure A1 in the Appendix).

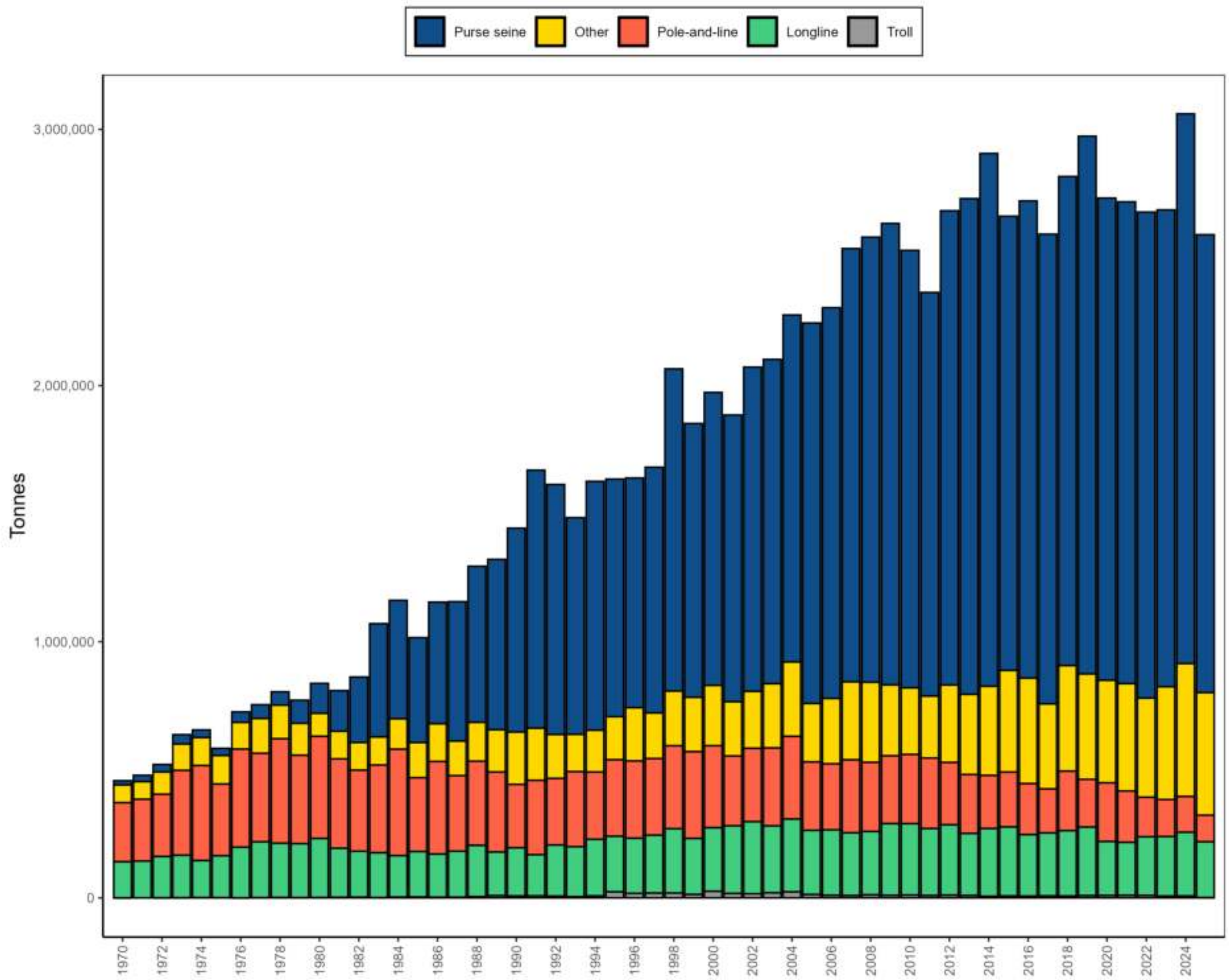

Figure 2: Catch (mt) of albacore, bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin tuna in the WCPFC-CA, by longline, pole-and-line, purse seine, troll, and other small-scale gear types

[3]This relative proportion of WCPFC catch estimates will likely be revised upward once the complete 2025 IATTC data for the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) are available, given the record catches observed 2024, which form that basis for the provisional 2025 EPO estimates.

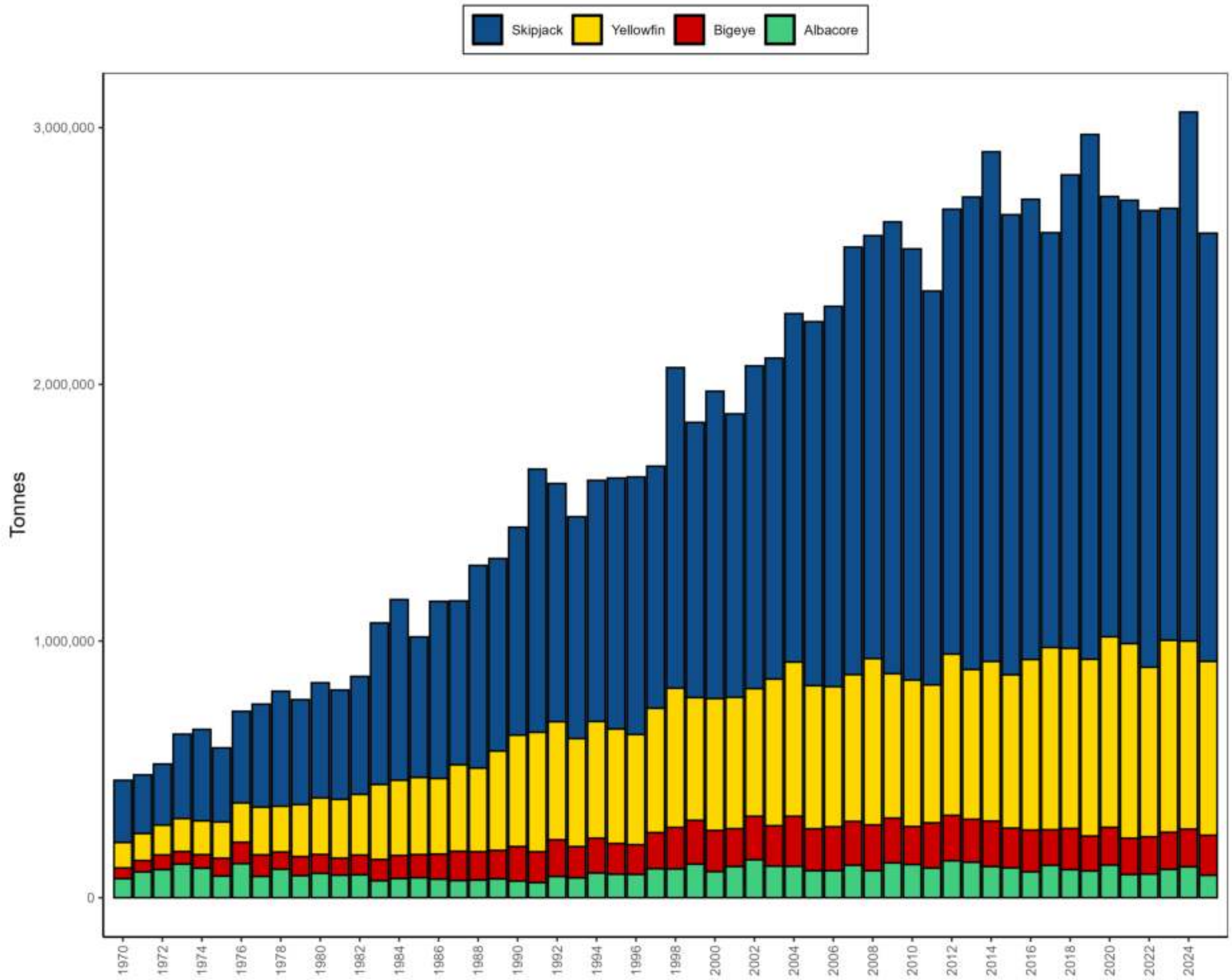

Figure 3: Catch (mt) of albacore, bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin in the WCPFC–CA

The 2025 WCPFC–CA catch of skipjack (1,668,409 mt – 64% of the total catch) was around 393,000 mt lower than the previous record in 2024 (2,060,983 mt). The WCPFC–CA yellowfin catch for 2025 (677,123 mt – 26%) was a decrease of 80,762 mt from the record 2021 catch (757,885 mt), and a slight decrease of 55,347 mt from 2024. The WCPFC–CA bigeye catch for 2025 (155,864 mt – 6%) was an increase of 9,146 mt from 2024 catch levels. The 2025 WCPFC–CA albacore catch (87,549 mt – 3%) was the lowest catch on records since 1993 and a reduction of 33,041 mt from 2024. The albacore catches have generally been increasing since 2021, excepting the recent dip, but remains below the record catch in 2002 of 148,051 mt.

In 2025, the provisional value of the tuna catch in the WCP-CA totalled approximately $5.4 billion, a 5% decrease from 2024. The purse seine fishery remained the largest contributor, valued at around $3.1 billion-accounting for 57% of the total despite an 11% drop from the previous year driven by a 17% drop in catch. In contrast, the longline fishery saw a 9% increase in value, rising to $1.2 billion and representing 22% of the total catch value. The pole-and-line fishery also grew, with a

13% increase to an estimated $230 million. Meanwhile, catch value from other gears declined slightly by 5% to $882 million, making up 16% of the overall total.

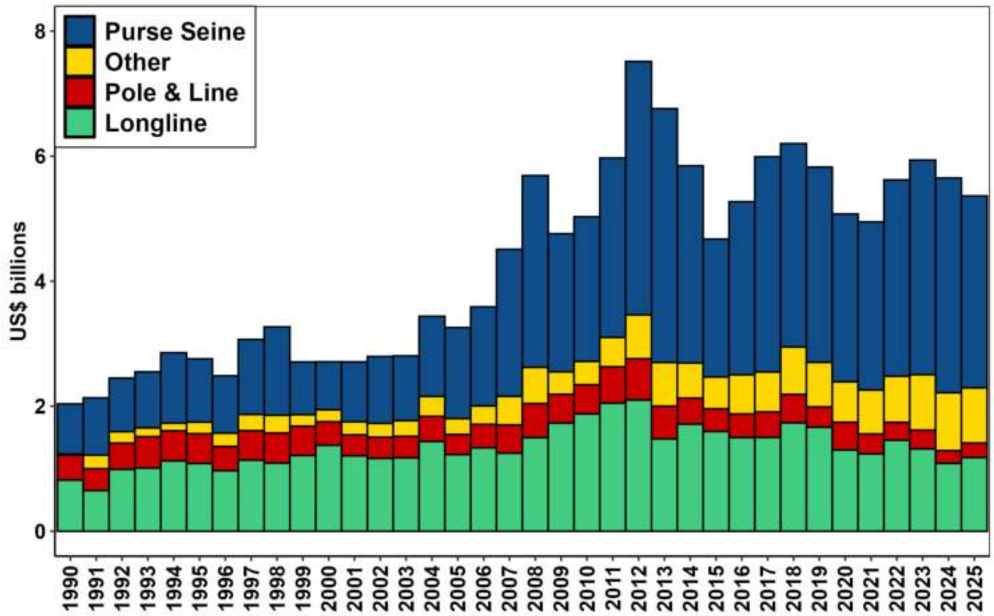

Figure 4: Catch value of albacore, bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin in the WCPFC-CA, by longline, pole-and-line, purse seine and other gear types.

In 2025, the estimated value of the skipjack tuna catch in the WCP-CA was $2.7 billion, reflecting a substantial 15% decline from 2024 and accounting for 51% of the total tuna catch value. The yellowfin tuna catch reached $1.7 billion, marking a marginal 5% increase over the previous year and accounting for 32% of the total. Similarly, the bigeye tuna catch saw a substantial 21% rise to approximately $617 million, representing 12% of the total. Meanwhile, the albacore tuna catch increased marginally by less than 1%, reaching $291 million and accounting for 5% of the total.

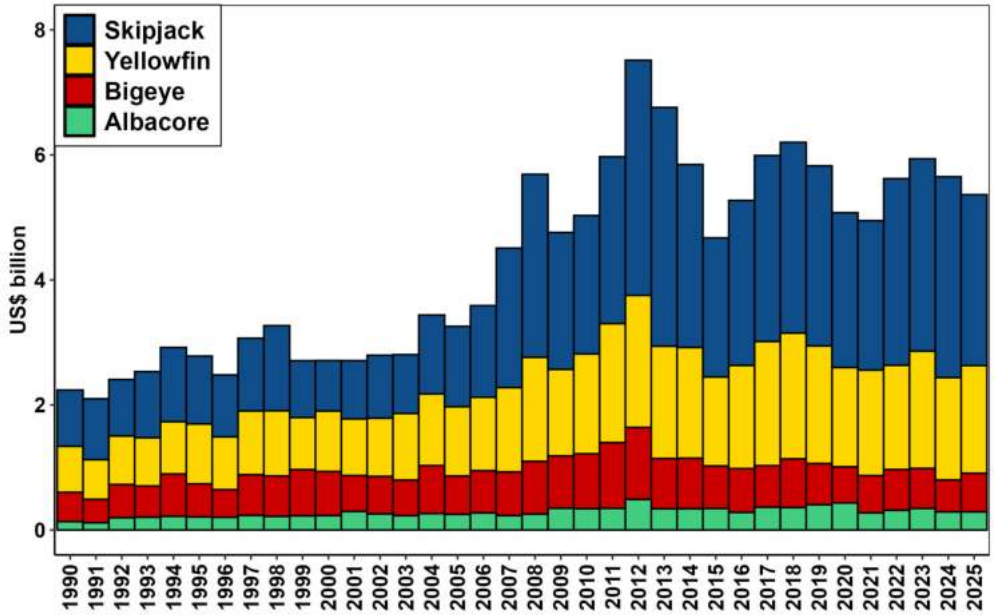

Figure 5: Catch value of albacore, bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin in the WCPFC-CA

WCPFC-CA Purse Seine Fishery

Historical Overview

During the mid-1980s, the purse seine fishery (400,000-450,000 mt) accounted for only 40% of the total catch but has grown in significance to a level now over 70% of total tuna catch volume (with more than 2,000,000 mt in 2014, 2019, and in 2024). The majority of the historical WCPFC–CA purse seine catch has come from four of the main Distant Water Fishing Nation (DWFN) fleets – Japan, Korea, Chinese-Taipei and USA, which numbered a combined 163 vessels in 1992 (Figure 6). There was a reduction in DWFN vessels from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s (due to reductions in the US fleet). There was a modest rebound in early to mid-2010s (up to 142 vessels in 2012); however this portion of the DWFN fleet has again been reduced to 70 vessels in 2024. The Pacific Islands fleets have gradually increased until about 2016, from which point the fleet has been relatively stable (167 vessels in 2025; Figure 6). The remainder of the purse seine fishery includes several fleets which entered the WCPFC tropical fishery during the 2000s (e.g., El Salvador, New Zealand and Spain).

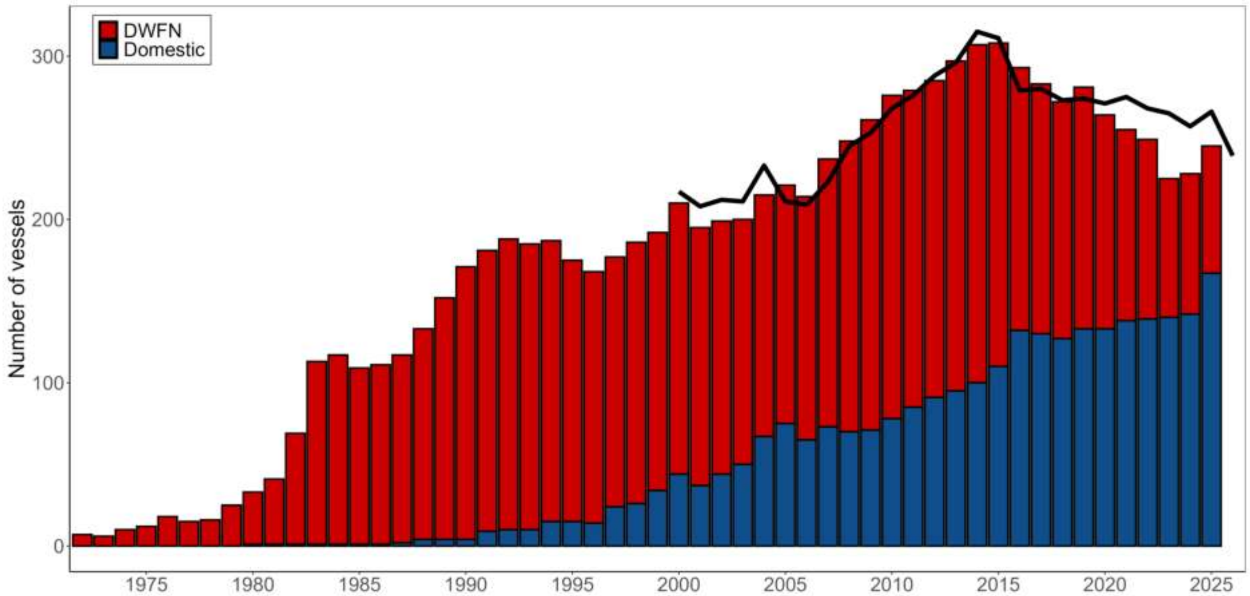

Figure 6: Number of purse seine vessels operating in the WCPFC-CA tropical fishery (excludes Indonesia, Philippine and Vietnam domestic purse seine/ringnet fleets; bars represent WCPFC yearbook vessel number data); line represents vessel numbers according to a combination of logbook and VMS data.

The total number of purse seine vessels was relatively stable over the period 1990-2006 (in the range of 170–250 vessels), but between 2006 and 2014, the number of vessels gradually increased, attaining a record level of 315 vessels in 2014, before steadily declining since (to 245 vessels in 2025). Further declines have generally occurred in recent years, with a significant reduction in vessels from one component of the US purse seine fleet. Table 4 in WCPFC Secretariat and SPC-OFP (2026) provides a breakdown on purse seine vessel numbers, tuna catch and effort by fleet, set type and species in the tropical tuna purse seine fishery based on raised logsheet data.

The WCPFC–CA purse seine fishery is essentially a skipjack fishery, unlike those in other ocean areas. Skipjack generally account for 65–80% of the purse seine catch, with yellowfin accounting for 18–28% in recent years and bigeye accounting for only a small proportion – 2-6%. In 2025, the catches of yellowfin and bigeye were 20% and 4% of the total purse seine catches, respectively. Small amounts of albacore tuna are also taken in temperate water purse seine fisheries in the North Pacific.

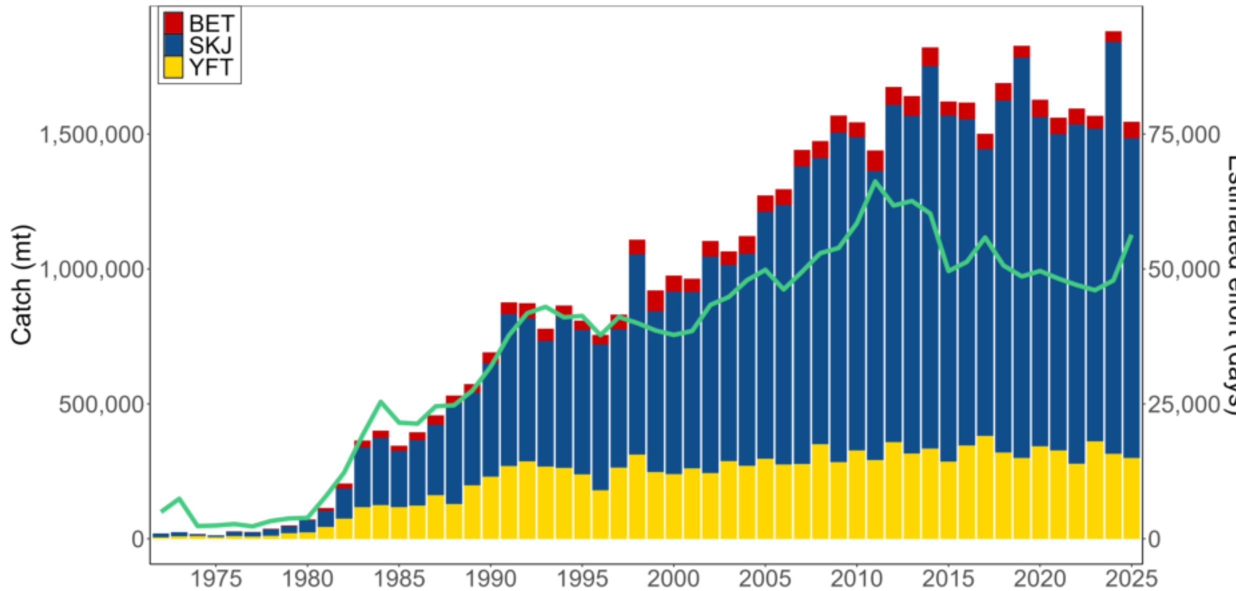

Figure 7: Purse seine catch (mt) of bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin (bars; left y-axis) and fishing effort (days fishing and searching; green line and right y-axis) in the WCPFC–CA (effort: excludes Indonesia, Philippine, and Vietnam domestic purse seine/ringnet fleets)

Features of the purse seine catch by species during the past two decades include:

1. Annual skipjack catches fluctuating between 600,000 and 850,000 mt prior to 2002, a significant increase in the catch during 2002, with subsequent skipjack catches maintained well above 1,200,000 mt, with a record catch of 1,731,247 mt in 2024;
2. Annual yellowfin catches fluctuating considerably between 250,000 and 400,000 mt, with a significant catch (record) of 494,977 mt taken in 2017. The proportion of large yellowfin in the catch is generally higher during El Niño years and lower during La Niña years, although other factors appear to affect purse seine yellowfin catch;
3. Increased bigeye tuna purse seine catch estimates, coinciding with the introduction of drifting Fish Aggregating Devices (dFADs) since mid-late 1990s. Significant years for bigeye catches have been 2011 (86,997 mt – record high), 2013 (84,404 mt) and 2014 (81,430 mt) which correspond to years with a relatively high proportion of associated sets, increased bigeye tuna availability to the gear, and/or strong bigeye recruitment.

Total estimated effort shows the same increasing trend as the catch over time (Figure 7), until around 2010 after which estimated purse seine fishing days start to decline. In 2025, there was an uptake in estimated effort and a decrease in total catch, relative to the year prior. Years of relatively high catch rates are apparent when the gap between the effort and the top of the histogram bar is large (that is, in 1998, 2014–2023, and most notably in 2024).

Provisional estimates of catch, effort, and fleet size 2025

The provisional 2025 purse seine catch of 1,787,386 mt was an average catch relative to the past decade, and a decrease of about 359,000 mt from the record 2024 catch. The 2025 purse seine skipjack catch declined from 2024 to 1,367,099 mt (76% of the catch). The 2025 purse seine catch for yellowfin tuna (356,144 mt; 20% of the total purse seine tuna catch) was relatively consistent with the catches from the previous decade. The provisional catch estimate for bigeye tuna for 2025 (63,579 mt; 4% of the total purse seine fishery) was the highest catch since 2018 and a 42% increase from 2024 catch levels. The increased bigeye tuna catches from 2020-2022 and again in 2025 appear to be related to a higher number of associated sets. Figure 8 compares annual purse seine effort and catches for the five main purse seine fleets operating in the tropical WCPFC–CA in recent years. The combined 'main-fleet' effort increased steadily from about 1998-2010 but has been relatively stable since 2018.

The decline in effort during 2015/2016 was related to several factors including reduced access to fishing areas for some fleets, economic conditions and simply a choice to fish in areas outside the WCPFC-CA. In contrast, catches have generally trended upwards over this time series until about 2014 after which catches (and effort) have been maintained at a fairly stable level, albeit with some inter-annual variability. The 2019 and 2024 catches for the 'main fleets' are consistent with the overall record catches and years with good catch rates. The slight drop in effort from 2017 to 2023 appears to be primarily related to a decline in vessel numbers (Figure 6). In 2025, effort increased slightly while catches for this sub-sector of the fleet decreased notably from 2024.

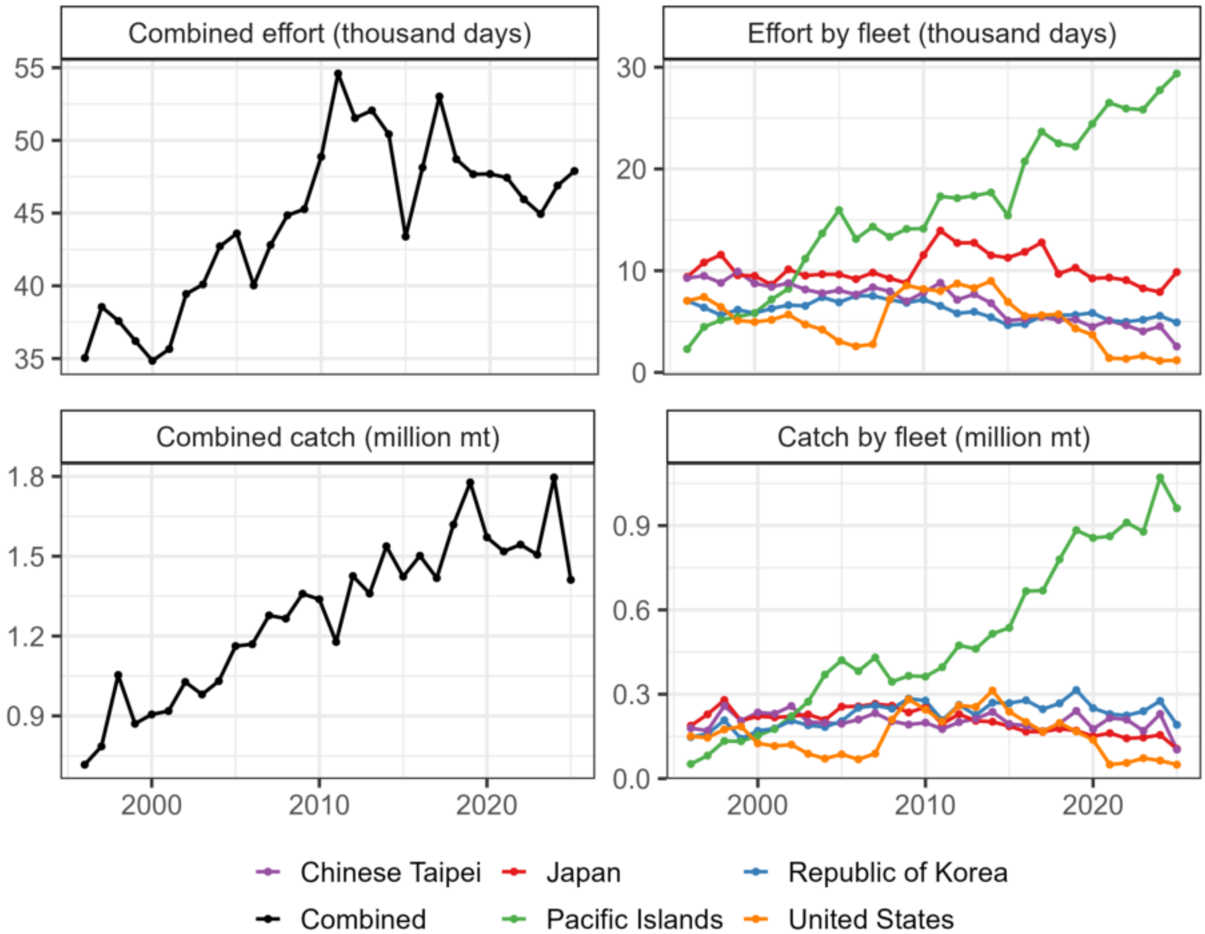

Figure 8: Trends in annual effort (top) and catch (bottom) estimates for the entire fleet (left) and top five purse seine fleets operating in the tropical WCPFC–CA (right), 1996–2025.

The combined Pacific Islands fleet has been clearly the most dominant in the tropical purse seine fishery since 2003 and unlike the other fleets shown in Figure 8, their recent catches have generally increased each year, but with a slight downturn in 2025. There was a hiatus in the Pacific Islands fleet development in 2008 (when some vessels re-flagged to the US purse seine fleet) but catch/effort has picked up in recent years and catch by this component of the fishery continues to be the main contributor to purse seine catches (with a record high in 2024; 1,062,328 mt). The combined Pacific Islands fleet catch in 2024 far exceeded the combined catch from the other fleets shown in Figure 8 (combined 2024 catch for Japan, Korea, Chinese Taipei and USA was 724,848 mt). In 2025, the catch for the non-Pacific Island fleet was 449,623 mt, an approximate 38% decreased from the 2024 catch. The fleet sizes and effort by the Japanese and Korean purse seine fleets have been relatively stable for most of this time series, but both declined in 2025. Several Chinese-Taipei vessels re-flagged in 2002, dropping the fleet from 41 to 34 vessels, with fleet numbers relatively stable since. Since 2014, the catch/effort by most of the non-Pacific Island fleets have tended to decline while the catch/effort by the combined Pacific Islands fleet have continued to increase.

The total number of the combined Pacific Islands purse seine fleet vessels has gradually increased over the past two decades, attaining its highest level in 2025 (167 vessels). The combined Pacific Islands purse seine fleet covers vessels fishing under the FSM Arrangement, bilateral agreements and domestically based vessels, and in 2025, comprised vessels from the Cook Islands (1 vessel), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM; 25 vessels), Kiribati (32 vessels), Nauru (17 vessels), Marshall Islands (11 vessels), Papua New Guinea (PNG; 60 vessels including their chartered vessels), Solomon Islands (11 vessels), Tuvalu (8 vessels) and Vanuatu (2 vessels).

The domestic Philippine purse seine and ringnet fleets operate in Philippine waters and, since 2013 (as was the case prior to 2010), in the high seas pocket between Palau, Indonesia, FSM and PNG (i.e., High Seas Pocket #1); this fleet accounted for a catch in the range 55,000-90,000 mt annually in the period since 2013. Prior to 2013, the domestic Indonesian purse seine fleet accounted for a similar catch level to the Philippines domestic fishery but generally has not fished in high seas areas (purse seine catch of approximately 96,753 mt in 2012). During 2013, the Indonesian fleet catch increased substantially (215,582 mt) with more on-shore processing facilities and more vessels entering the fishery. However, the purse seine catch in 2015 (~56,000 mt) dropped considerably from this level, mainly due to the introduction of a ban on fishing and transhipment-at-sea for vessels not built in Indonesia (which, at the time, was nearly all of the large vessels in their purse seine fleet). The Indonesian purse seine catch recovered (214,605 mt in 2017) apparently due to increased catches by the smaller-scale purse seine component of this fleet, although in recent years (2023-2025), the catch has varied between 99,000 and 161,000 mt (in 2025; the highest catch since 2017). Prior to 2009, the domestic fleets of Indonesia and Philippines accounted for about 13-16% of the WCPFC-CA total purse seine catch. Since then, this proportion has ranged from about 7-17%, and in 2025 represented 14% of the total purse seine tuna catch.

Figure 9 shows annual trends in total tuna catch by set type (left) and total number of sets by set type (right) for the major purse seine fleets. Sets on free-swimming (unassociated) schools of tuna dominate during recent years (64% of all sets for these fleets in 2025, although it should be noted that this category includes considerable unsuccessful [zero-catch] sets). The proportion of sets on drifting FADs increased notably in 2025 (32%) relative to 2024 (17%), potentially due to a combination of oceanic conditions and the reduction in the FAD closure period in 2024. The reliance on drifting FAD sets in recent years is understood to be related to the El Niño conditions. The number and proportion of sets on natural logs and anchored FADs (~1-3% and ~1% since 2020, respectively) were clearly the lowest in the fishery for the major fleets and reflects a move away from this type of fishing, in line with the improvements in technology/efficiency involving drifting FAD use. Associated set types, particularly drifting FAD sets, generally account for a higher average catch per set than unassociated sets, so the percentage of catch for drifting FADs (46% in 2025; Figure 9 – left [red]) tends to be higher than the percentage of sets for drifting FADs (for 2025 = 32%; Figure 9 – right [red]). However, the catch from unassociated schools in 2025 was 50% of the total catch but taken from 64% of the total sets.

For the US fleet, between 80-96% of all sets were conducted on drifting FAD since 2021, with 93% of the purse seine effort focused on drifting FADs in 2025. These numbers continue to highlight the reliance on this fishing strategy in the eastern areas of the tropical WCPO (Figure 9 – right). Table 4 in WCPFC Secretariat and SPC-OFP (2026) provides a more detailed breakdown of catch and effort by set type in 2000-2025 using available logsheet and observer data.

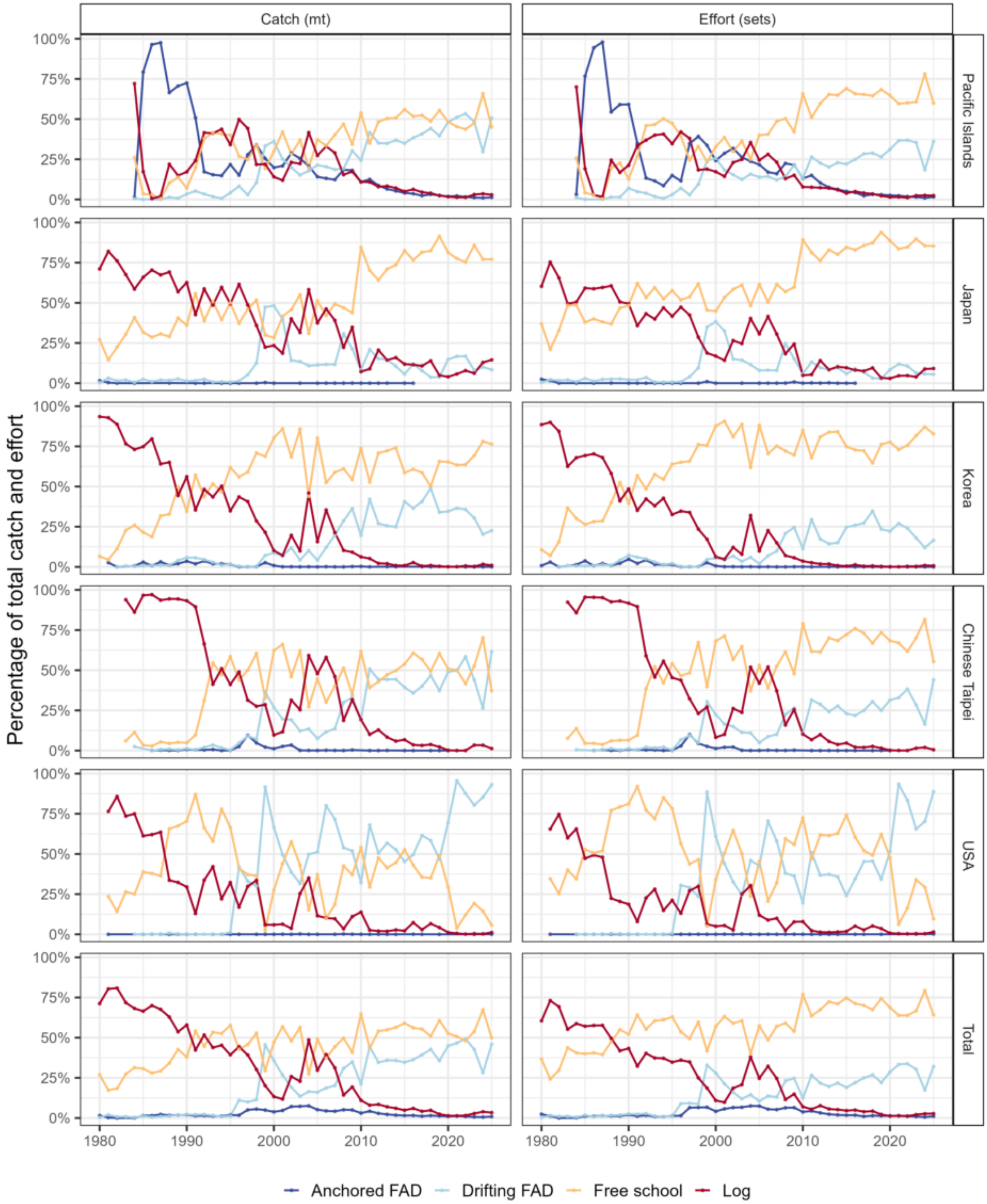

Figure 9: Time series showing the percentage of total catch (left) and total sets (right), by school type for the major purse seine fleets operating in the WCPFC–CA, and the combined total from those fleets

Environmental conditions

The purse seine catch/effort distribution in tropical areas of the WCPFC–CA is strongly influenced by El Niño–Southern Oscillation Index (ENSO) events (Figure 10). Figure 11 (left) demonstrates the effect of ENSO events on the spatial distribution of the purse seine activity, with fishing effort typically expanding further to the east during El Niño years and contracting to western areas during La Niña periods.

The WCPFC–CA has primarily experienced La Niña conditions since the end of 2020, excepting the latter half of 2023 which was characterized by El Niño. Although, it appears La Niña conditions mostly prevailed through 2025, we have transitioned into a more neutral phase mid-2026 with forecasts suggesting a switch to potentially strong El Niño conditions over the coming year.

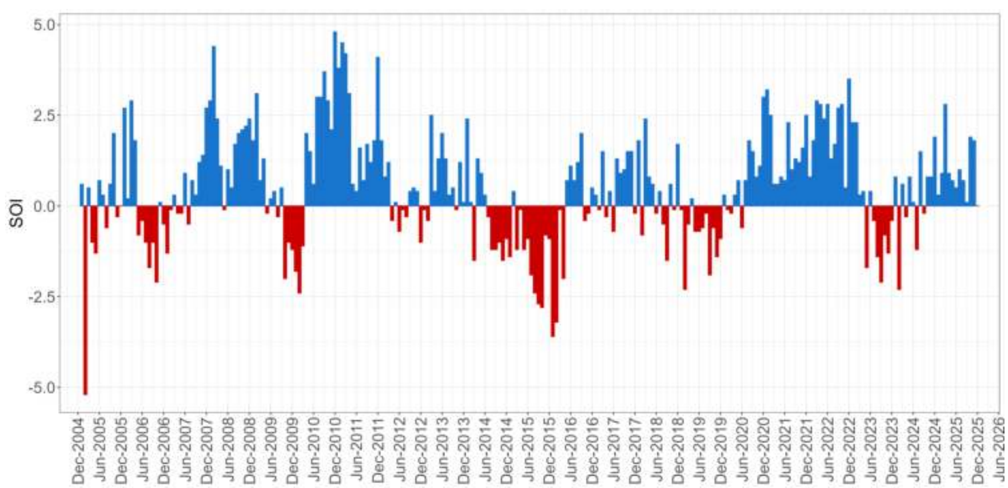

Figure 10: Trends in the El Niño Southern Oscillation Index (SOI), 2005-2026 (blue - La Niña; red - El Niño); data from https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/data/indices/soi

Distribution of fishing effort

Despite the FAD closure for certain periods in each year since 2010, drifting FAD sets remain an important fishing strategy (Figure 11), particularly to the east of 160°E. The La Niña conditions experienced from 2020-2022 and most notably in 2024, resulted in a general westward shift of fishing effort, with most of the effort in PNG, FSM, Solomon Islands (west of 160°E) during 2022 and 2024. The transition to El Niño in 2023 is evidenced by the expansion of the warm pool towards the east along with an eastward expansion of fishing effort. The fishing strategy in 2024 shows an increase in free-school sets, as compared to 2023, especially in the eastern WCPO, and a notable westward concentration of fishing effort. In 2025, a modest westward contraction of the warm pool is suggested by the average sea surface temperatures, and although the spatial distribution is similar to 2024, there was much greater reliance on drifting FAD sets in 2025 as compared to the year prior.

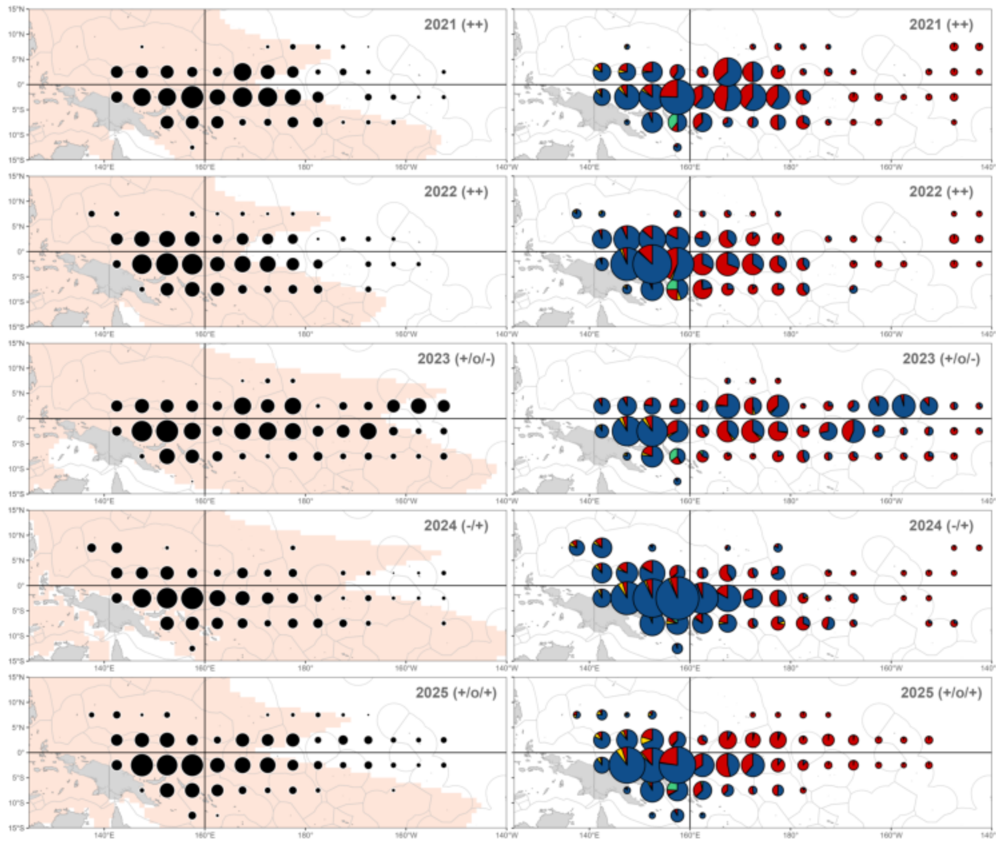

Figure 11: Distribution of purse seine effort (days fishing – left; sets by set type – right), 2020–2025 (blue – unassociated; yellow – log; red – drifting FAD; green – anchored FAD). Pink shading represents the extent of average sea surface temperature > 28.5° ENSO trends are denoted by '+': La Niña; '-': El Niño; 'o': transitional period[^The boundaries shown on this map, and all others within this document, are for the purposes of illustration only and are not the expression of any opinion on maritime disputes or the delimitation of maritime claims.]

Figure 12 shows the distribution of purse seine effort for the five major purse seine fleets during 2024 and 2025. There is a notable contraction of effort in the western region in 2024 that largely remains into 2025, likely related to the persistent La Niña. This shift toward the west is noticeable in all fleets, excepting the US. The US fleet have tended to fish in the more eastern areas in recent years, mainly in the eastern high seas areas adjacent to the Phoenix and Line Islands EEZs, and to the north of the Cook Islands and French Polynesia EEZs. The difference in areas fished by the non-Pacific Islands' fleets (Figure 12) is generally related to the areas they have access to and perhaps also related to fishing strategy (e.g., use of traditional fishing grounds in FSM, PNG and the Solomon Islands by the Japan fleet). In 2024, PNG incentivised fishing in their waters through reduced licensing fees, further attracting effort to the western waters of the WCPO.

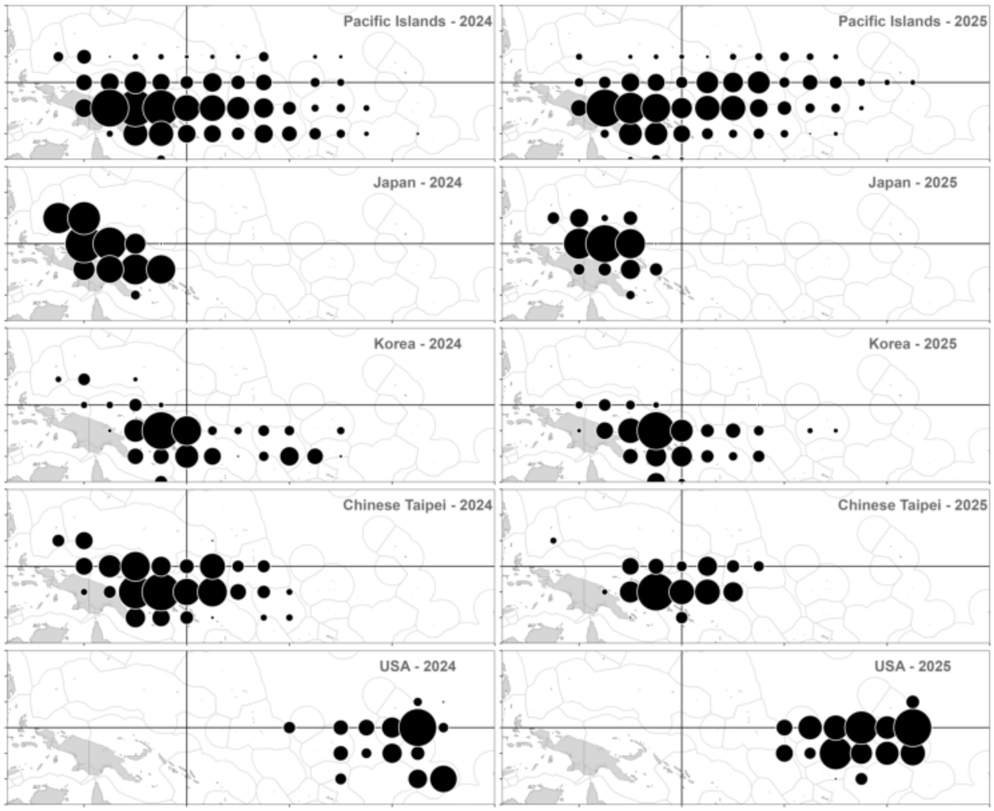

Figure 12: Distribution of purse seine effort by (from top to bottom) the Pacific Islands, Japanese, Korean, Chinese Taipei, and US purse seine fleets during 2024 (left) and 2025 right); lines for the equator (0° latitude) and 160°E longitude included.

Catch per unit effort

Figure 13 shows the annual time series of nominal CPUE by set type and fleet for skipjack (left) and yellowfin (right). These trends are not standardised for environmental factors or factors that may relate to the efficiency of the fleets, e.g., technological improvements and increased vessel power, so must be interpreted with caution. Recent reviews of the available logsheet data used to determine nominal CPUE highlight an apparent change in reporting behaviour, with a clear increase in the reporting of transit days (over days searching); since transit days are not included as purse seine effort (and days searching are included), this change will inevitably result in a positive bias in the nominal CPUE data presented herein (see also Vidal et al., 2024).

Purse seine skipjack CPUE in 2025 generally declined compared to catch rates in 2024, which represented some of the highest catch rates of the time series, due to a combination of environmental conditions and potentially strong recruitment, as seen in 2019. Drifting FAD CPUE has generally increased over much of the time series, but has declined in more recent years, most notably for yellowfin and bigeye, with increasing variability among the fleets. The log set CPUE shows increasingly high variability, largely due to the relative infrequency of this set type in recent years.

Over the entire time series, the trend for skipjack CPUE has generally been increasing, although, as noted, these figures present nominal CPUE and do not consider the increase in fishing efficiency (often referred to as 'effort creep'; see also Hamer et al. (2026)). A possible indicator of an increase in fishing efficiency is the gradual reduction in average trip length over time, which is apparent in the linear trend of VMS trip length. There is considerable temporal variability in trip length and CPUE, with some of the highest values of CPUE and shortest trip lengths observed towards the end of 2023 and into the early part of 2024, potentially influenced by the concentration of effort in the western regions of the WCPO (Figure 15). Over the past year, catch rates appear to have declined while trip lengths have simultaneously increased, particularly outside the FAD closure period.

Yellowfin purse seine CPUE shows strong inter-annual variability, lacking directional trends in catch rates, except for dFADs where there is a recent declining trend in CPUE. Unassociated-set yellowfin CPUE appears influenced by ENSO variation in the WCPFC–CA, with CPUE generally higher during El Niño episodes, including in 2023 with the transition to El Niño conditions. This is believed to be related to increased catchability of yellowfin tuna due to a shallower surface mixed layer during these periods. In 2025, with persistent La Niña conditions, yellowfin catch rates generally declined, although there is some apparent inter-fleet variability. Associated (log and drifting FAD) sets generally yield higher catch rates (mt/day) for skipjack than unassociated sets, while unassociated sets sometimes yield a higher catch rate for yellowfin than associated sets. The higher yellowfin CPUE from free-schools occurs when 'pure' schools of large, adult yellowfin are more available to the gear in the more eastern areas of the tropical WCPFC-CA, and so account for a larger catch (by weight) than the (mostly) juvenile yellowfin encountered in associated sets.

The purse seine yellowfin CPUE for free-schools by the US fleet which rebounded in 2022 and 2023 from the very low levels experienced in both 2020 and 2021, was once again one of the lowest catch rates of the time series. The US fleet is active in the eastern areas compared to the other 'main' fleets shown in these CPUE trends (refer to Figure 12). The yellowfin tuna free-school CPUE in 2024 was slightly higher for fleets as compared to 2025. Figure 17 shows that for unassociated sets, the 'pure' schools of large, adult yellowfin were largely absent in the east during 2024 and 2025, perhaps related to the prevailing La Niña conditions and/or different fishing strategies related to market demands, noting potential limitations of the observer data available at this time.

Yellowfin tuna contributed approximately 20% to the total 2025 tuna purse seine catch (Vidal and Heather, 2026). Catch rates on drifting FADs in 2025 decreased slightly compared to 2024, however, there was a marked increase in dFAD effort in 2025, relative to free school sets (Figure 13). The long-term time series for yellowfin CPUE shows more inter-annual variability and overall, a flatter trend than the skipjack tuna CPUE. It is unknown whether these trends reflect an increasing ability to target skipjack tuna at the expense of yellowfin, or potentially reflect a change in yellowfin abundance, impacts of management, or market demands, for example.

The difference in the time of day that sets are undertaken is thought to be one of the main reasons why bigeye tuna are rarely taken in unassociated schools compared to log and drifting FAD schools, which have catch rates of this species an order of magnitude higher (Figure 14). The CPUE time series for bigeye tuna since 2000 varies greatly by fleet and set type with no clear pattern evident, but with drifting FADs accounting for the highest catches, albeit with substantial variability. The bigeye tuna CPUE levels in 2025 were higher overall compared to the previous couple years, perhaps due to increased focus on FAD sets during 2025 (Figure 11). The bigeye tuna CPUE for drifting FADs for the US fleet has been notably higher in recent years, no doubt related to this fleet's move further east, to areas adjacent to the Eastern Pacific tropical fishery which is acknowledged to have higher proportions of bigeye tuna in their catches.

Figure 15 shows the inverse relationship between monthly CPUE (total tuna catch (mt) per day) and average trip length estimates (from logsheets and VMS); logsheet trip length tends to fluctuate in synchrony with CPUE, with shorter trips corresponding to higher CPUE. Average trip length from VMS data generally compares well to average trip length from logsheet data, but during periods when logsheet coverage is low, estimates from these two sources tend to diverge since available logsheets may not be representative. The FAD closure period each year (commencing in 2010) generally coincides with a decline in total tuna CPUE, with longer trips and apparent difficulties obtaining consistent catches from free-school sets. The drop in CPUE from late 2016 into the first 6-8 months of 2017 may simply be due to a return to conditions prior to the most recent El Niño of 2014–2016. The pattern of high CPUE in the months immediately following the FAD closure periods is understood to be mainly due to the build-up of unexploited biomass which then becomes available through FADs, although in 2022, the fishery had an increase in CPUE before the FAD closure period (that is, from months May-June 2022). The catch rates in 2025 appear to have declined from the records high catches in 2024, with a corresponding increase in trip length, presumably to compensate (Figure 20).

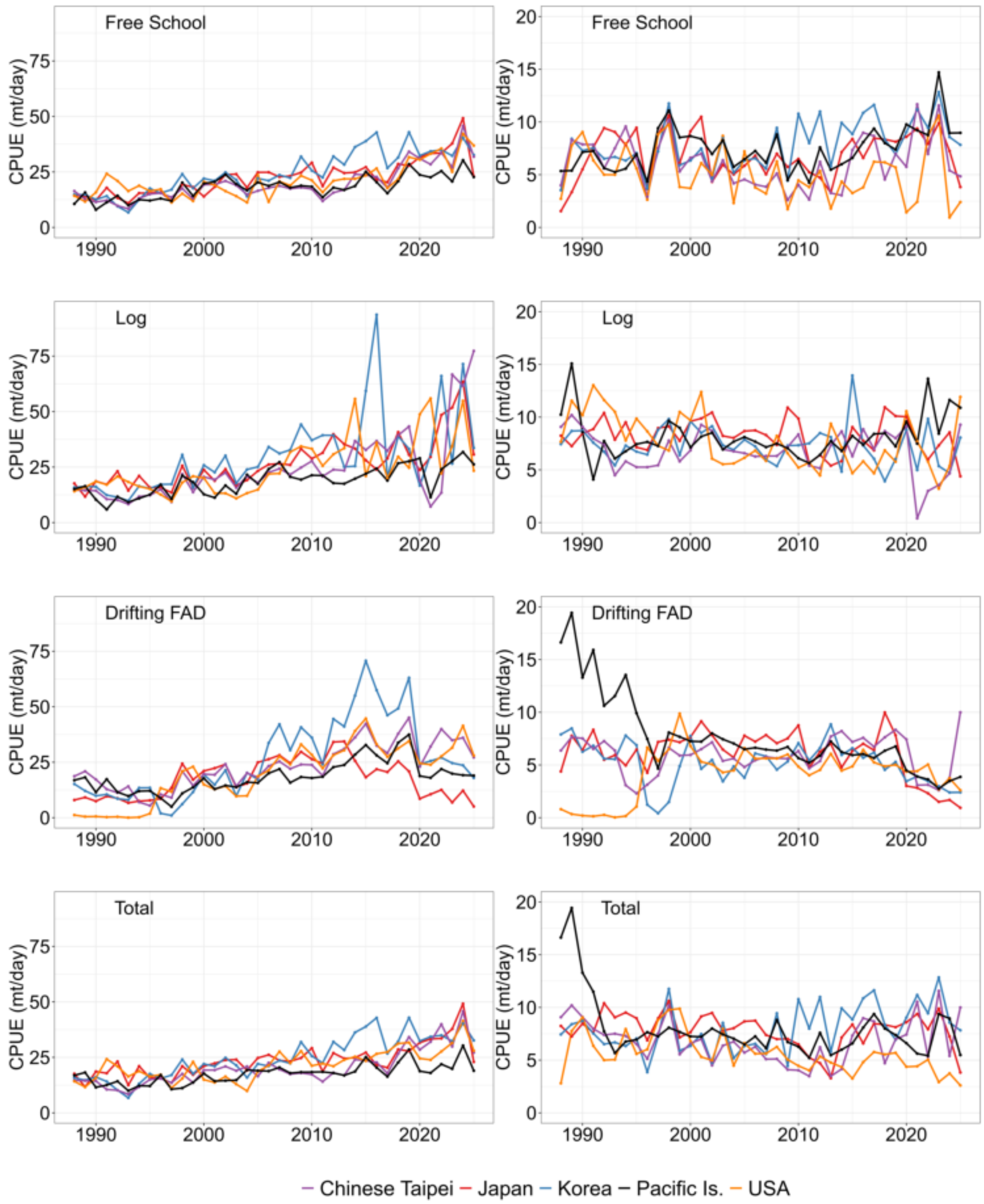

Figure 13: Skipjack tuna CPUE (mt per day-left) and yellowfin tuna CPUE (mt per day-right) by set-type, and all set types combined, for selected purse seine fleets fishing in the tropical WCPFC-CA. Effort and CPUE were partitioned by set type according to the proportions of total sets attributed to each set type. The black line represents the Pacific Islands purse seine fleets combined.

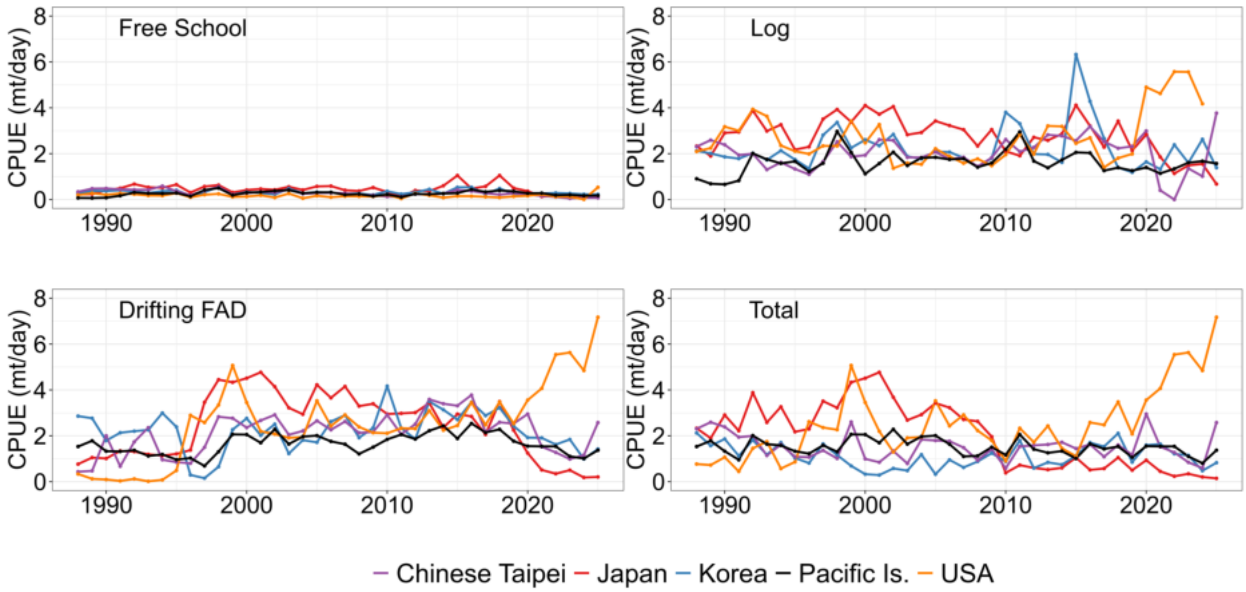

Figure 14: Estimated bigeye tuna CPUE (mt per day) by major set-type categories (free-school, log and drifting FAD sets) and all set types combined for Japanese, Korean, Chinese-Taipei and US purse seiners fishing in the tropical WCP–CA. Effort and CPUE were partitioned by set type according to the proportions of total sets attributed to each set type. The black line represents the Pacific Islands purse seine fleets combined.

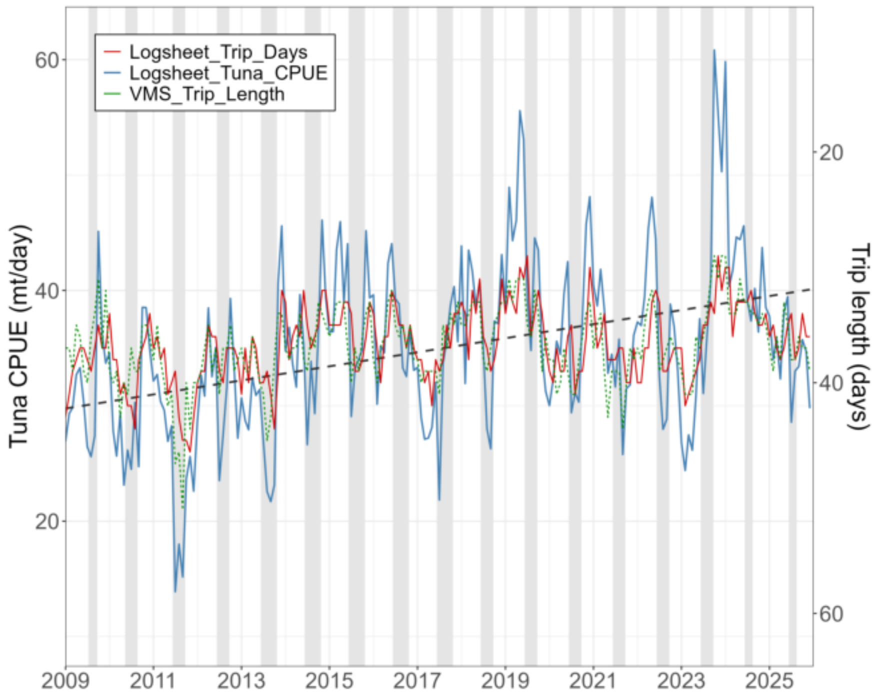

Figure 15: Monthly purse seine tuna CPUE (mt/day) and average trip length (VMS days), 2009–2025. Dashed, black line represents the linear trend on VMS trip length. VMS trip length axis (right) is reversed/inverted. For 2020 - 2023, only the full-fishery, mandatory FAD closure period (i.e., July-Sept for 2020-2023; July - 15 August for 2024 and 2025) is shown and acknowledges that flag states must choose an additional two (2020-2023) or one-month (2024, 2025) FAD closure period as per the requirements in CMM 2018-01, 2020-01, 2021-01, 2023-01, and 2025-02.

Species and size composition of the catch

Figure 16, Figure 17 show the species and size composition of the purse seine catch for 2024 and 2025, by set type and broad area of the tropical fishery. Points of interest in the comparison of these graphs include:

1. Larger tuna caught in the associated set-type categories in both 2024 and 2025 for the tropical area east of 170°E, dominated by skipjack, with greater proportions of yellowfin tuna coming from the associated sets;
2. Similar size range of skipjack tuna in the area west of 170°E from unassociated sets in 2024 compared with 2025, which appears to be the same for the eastern region;
3. Smaller skipjack and yellowfin from associated sets in the western region as compared to those encountered in the region east of 170°E;
4. A higher proportion of the bigeye tuna in associated sets east of 170°E (compared to the west);
5. The absence of large yellowfin tuna in the unassociated set catch in the area east of 170°E in 2024, compared to 2025 (although large yellowfin catch in 2025 was relatively low as well). The lack of large yellowfin tuna in the unassociated-set catch in this eastern area during 2024

could be due to a combination of factors, for example, fewer unassociated sets conducted in this area (see Figure 11 – bottom right) and the lack of size data from observers in this area.

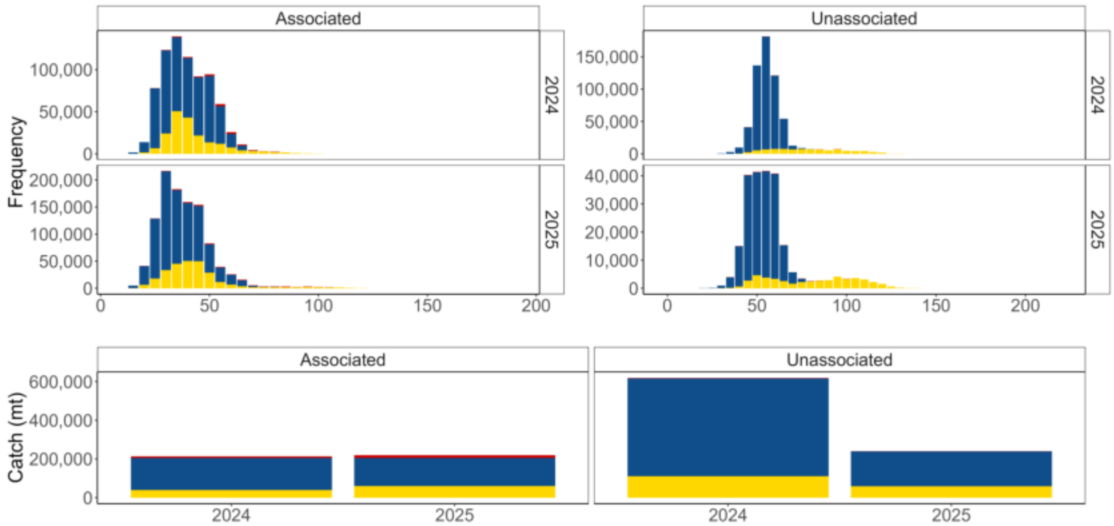

Figure 16: Species composition (mt: y-axis) of the 2024 and 2025 purse seine catch, by set type category and 5cm size categories (x-axis) for the tropical fishery, west of 170°E (skipjack – blue; yellowfin – yellow; bigeye – red)

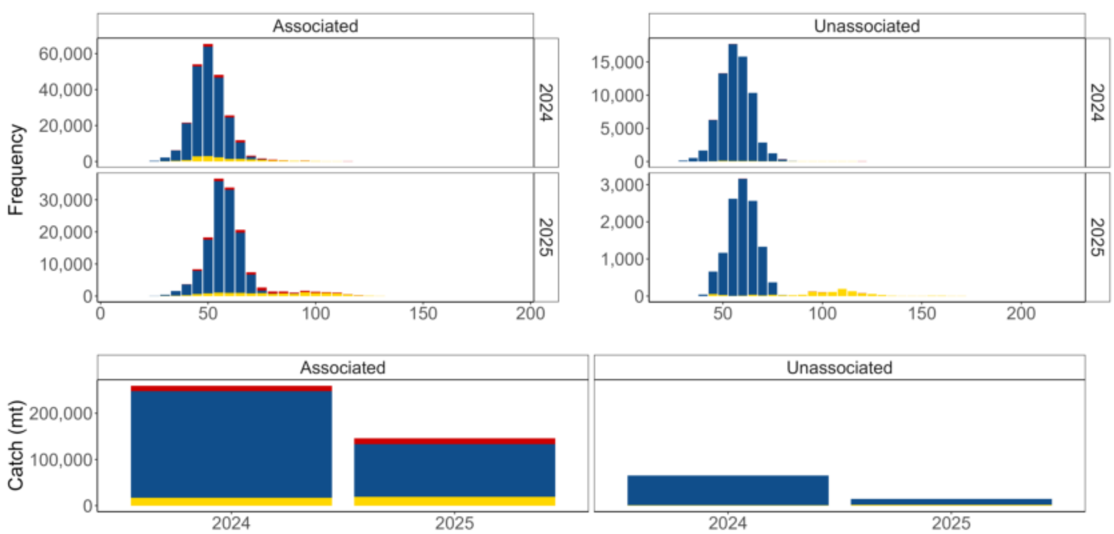

Figure 17: Species composition (mt: y-axis) of the 2024 and 2025 purse seine catch, by set type category and 5cm size categories (x-axis) for the tropical fishery, east of 170°E (skipjack – blue; yellowfin – yellow; bigeye – red)

Seasonality

Figure 18, Figure 19 show the seasonal average CPUE for skipjack and yellowfin tuna in the purse seine fishery for the period 2021–2025, respectively. Figure 20 shows the distribution of effort by quarter for the period 2021-2024 in comparison to effort by quarter in 2025. From 2021-2024, there is very little seasonal signal in skipjack CPUE, showing slightly higher variability in catch rates from about October-January. In 2025, catch rates were generally below the mean CPUE from 2021-2024, but most notably from July-December.

For yellowfin tuna, the patterns in catch rates from 2021-2024 show a slight increasing trend through the year, with high variability from June-September, potentially due in part to the FAD closure period and increased reliance on free-school sets. In 2025, catch rates were fairly stable throughout the year ranging between approximately 4-6 mt/day (Figure 19). The mean CPUE from previous years was generally higher than 2025 catch rates from June-December, potentially. Figure 20 shows that during quarter 2-4 of 2024, the catches of yellowfin are concentrated in the western region of the WCPO, near the boundary of the warm pool, with reduced catches in the central region.

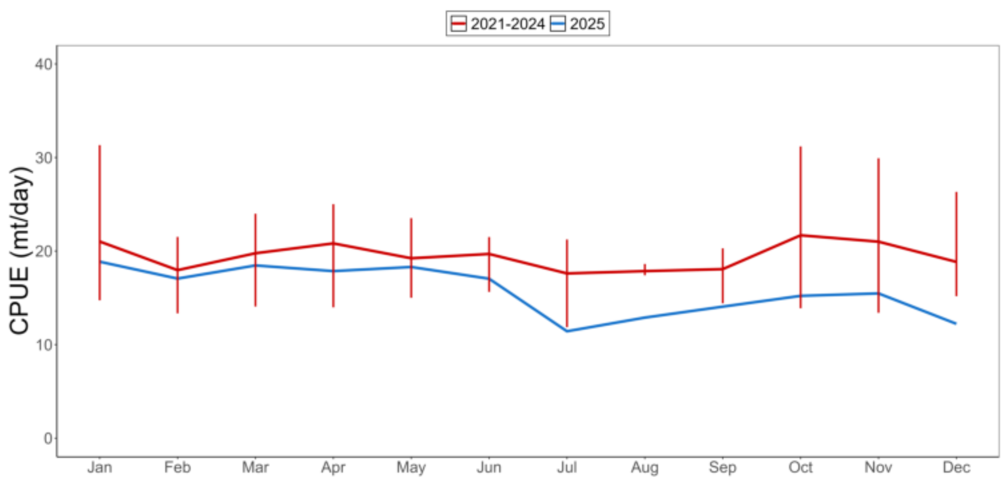

Figure 18: Average monthly skipjack tuna CPUE (mt per day) for purse seiners fishing in the tropical WCPFC–CA, 2021-2025 (red line represents the period 2021-2024 blue line represents 2025; the red bars represent the range (i.e., minimum and maximum) of monthly values for the period 2021-2024

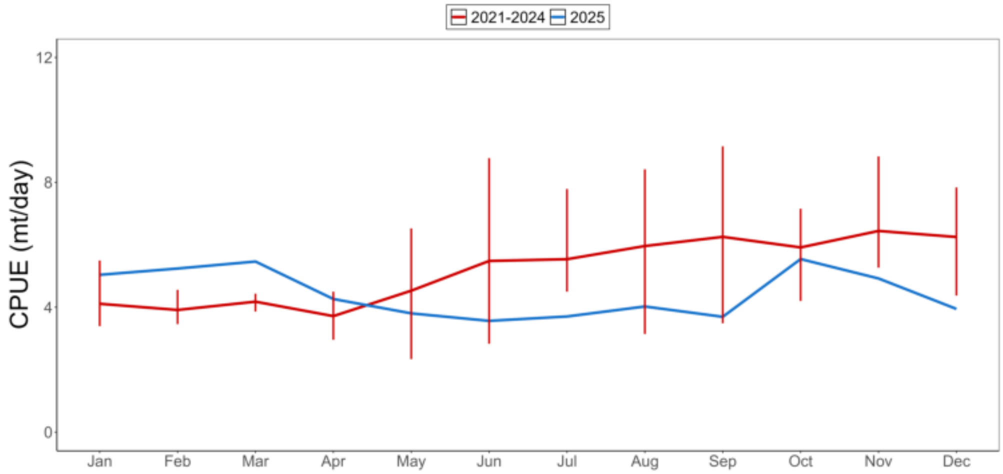

Figure 19: Average monthly yellowfin tuna CPUE (mt per day) for purse seiners fishing in the tropical WCPFC-CA, 2021-2025 (red line represents the period 2021-2024; blue line represents 2025; the red bars represent the range (i.e., minimum and maximum) of monthly values for the period 2021-2024

The quarterly extent of the warm pool (i.e., surface water >28.5°C on average) in 2025 is compared to the average for 2021-2024 (Figure 20). During the beginning of 2025, conditions briefly shifted toward El Niño, during which time there is an expansion of the warm pool eastward from 5°S-20°S. Gradually La Niña conditions prevailed through the remainder of 2025 which led to a westward contraction of the warm pool once again. In 2026, conditions have shift toward a more neutral phase, but forecasts suggest the region may be experiencing a strong Niño event in the year ahead.

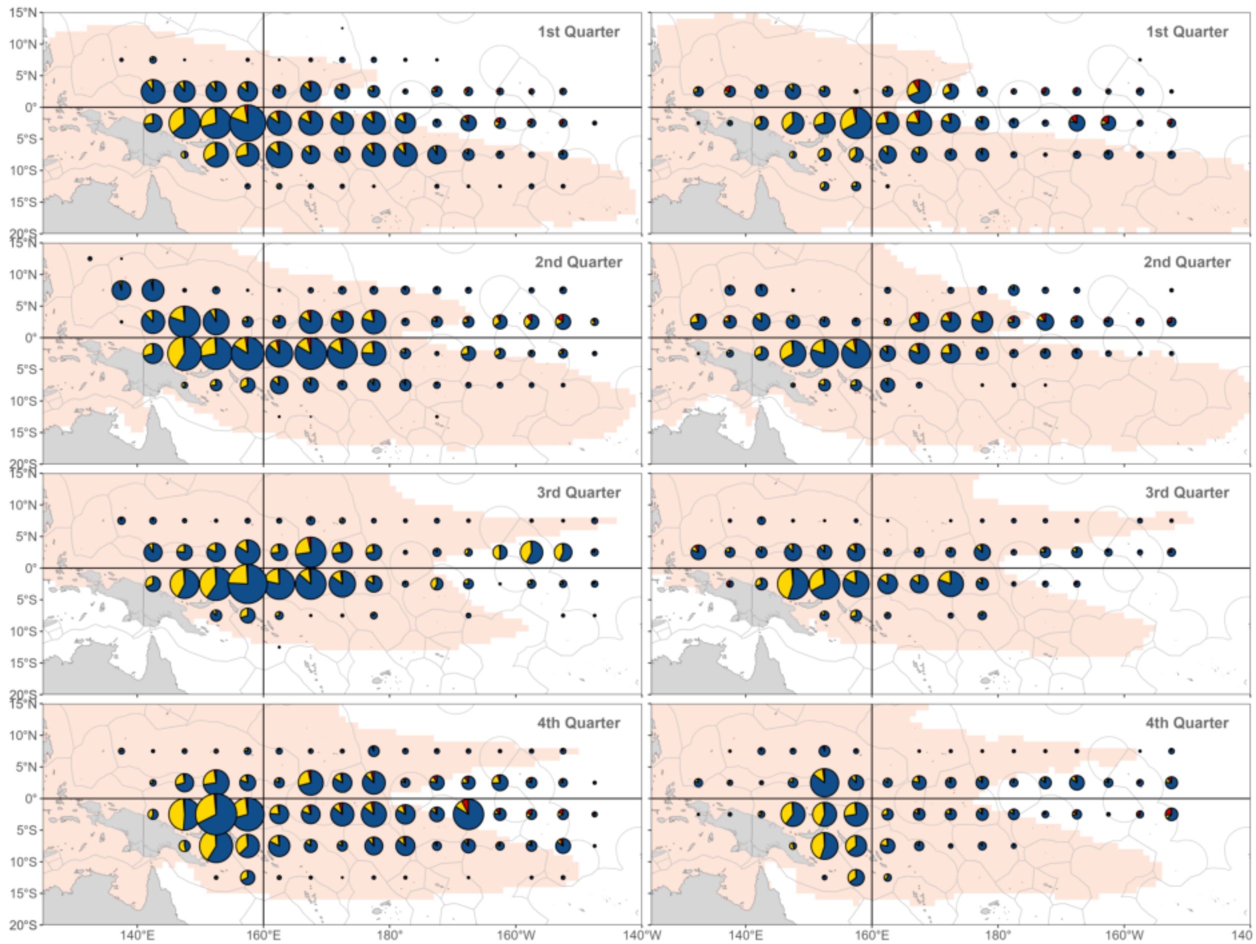

Figure 20: Quarterly distribution of purse seine catch by species for 2021-2024 (left) and 2025 (right; blue - skipjack; yellow - yellowfin; red - bigeye). Pink/light brown shading represents the extent of average sea surface temperature >28.5°C by quarter for the period 2021-2024 (left) and 2025 (right).

Prices, catch value, and overall economic conditions

Prices

Skipjack

In recent years, tuna prices have generally trended upward, following a notable surge in 2022. Prices remained relatively stable in 2021, with Thai import prices rising modestly by 1% to $1,379/mt, while Yaizu purse seine–caught skipjack prices (ex-vessel) dipped marginally by less than 1% to ¥156/kg ($1,423/mt). A significant price spike occurred in 2022, with Thai import prices climbing 19% to $1,644/mt and Yaizu prices jumping sharply by 44% to ¥225/kg ($1,710/mt). This upward momentum continued into 2023, as Thai import prices rose a further 8% to $1,773/mt and Yaizu prices increased by 20% to ¥270/kg ($1,923/mt). However, 2024 brought notable declines in both markets: Thai import prices fell 14% to $1,523/mt, while Yaizu prices dropped 18% to ¥222/kg

($1,466/mt). Following these downturns, both markets rebounded in 2025, with Thai import prices rising 8% to $1,641/mt and Yaizu prices edging up 2% to ¥227/kg ($1,519/mt).

In real terms, after adjusting for inflation, the 2025 Thai import and Yaizu purse seine–caught skipjack prices (in USD) were 17% and 26% below their respective 20-year averages. For the period up to May 2026, Thai skipjack import prices averaged $1,631/mt, while Yaizu prices averaged approximately $1,717/mt.

In 2024, reports from the Bangkok market indicated that skipjack prices (4-7.5 lbs, C&F) decreased from $1,400/mt to $1,300/mt during the first quarter, then rose to $1,580/mt by the end of the second quarter, holding at that level through early in the third quarter before declining to $1,400/mt by the end of that quarter. In the fourth quarter, prices began to climb, reaching $1,500/mt and continuing upward to $1,540/mt by the end of 2024. This upward trend extended into early 2025, with prices rising further to $1,740/mt by the end of the first quarter. A modest decline followed in the second quarter, with prices falling to $1,500/mt by the end of June. The second half of 2025 saw a gradual increase, with prices reaching $1,670/mt by October before dropping to $1,470/mt at the end of the year. In 2026, prices held steady around $1,500/mt before surging to $2,000/mt by the end of the first quarter as fuel prices rose following the commencement of the conflict in the Middle East. However, this upward trend reversed in the second quarter, with prices falling to $1,700/mt by the end of June though still remaining high compared to the same period in 2025 as fuel prices came off their earlier highs.

The Bangkok skipjack price index (4-7.5 lbs, C&F) stood at 119 in 2025, below the FAO Food Price Index of 127. This represented a 9% increase from the previous year, when the skipjack index had also lagged behind the FAO Food Price Index. By June 2025, however, the skipjack index had risen to 131overtaking the FAO Food Price Index, which sat at 128.

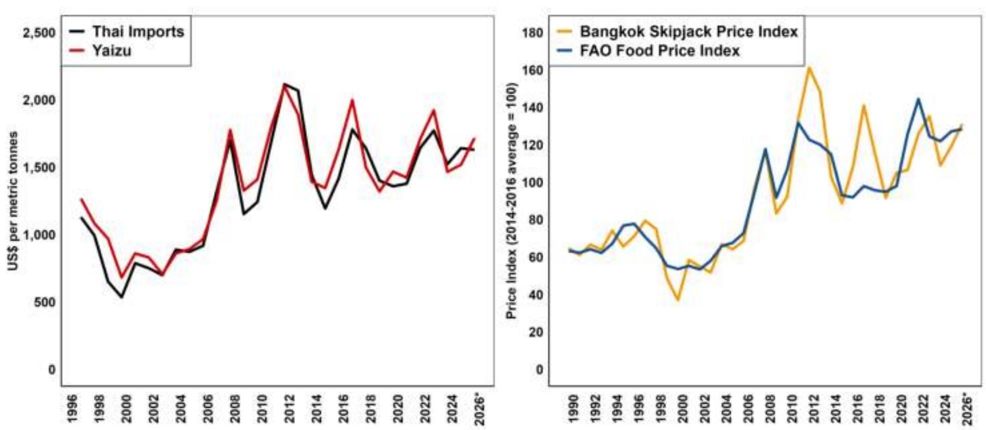

Figure 21: Annual skipjack prices, Thai imports (c&f) and Yaizu (ex-vessel) (LHS). Figure 3.8.2 FAO Food Price Index and Bangkok 4-7.5lbs skipjack price (c&f) index (RHS). Note: 2026* refers to January-May 2026 in the left plot and January-June 2026 in the right plot.

Yellowfin

Thai yellowfin tuna import prices (C&F) averaged $2,036/mt in 2025, up 3% from the previous year. Meanwhile, Yaizu ex-vessel prices for purse seine–caught yellowfin increased 1% to ¥331/kg ($2,209/mt). Despite these gains, real-term prices remained well below historical averages-16% below the 20-year average for Thai imports and 32% below the long-term average for Yaizu.

By May 2026, yellowfin prices had weakened: Thai imports averaged $1,905/mt, a 6% decline from the same period in 2025, while Yaizu prices edged down 1% to ¥326/kg ($2,062/mt). Volumes also took a hit, with Thai yellowfin imports dropping 22% during the first five months of 2026 compared to the same period in 2025.

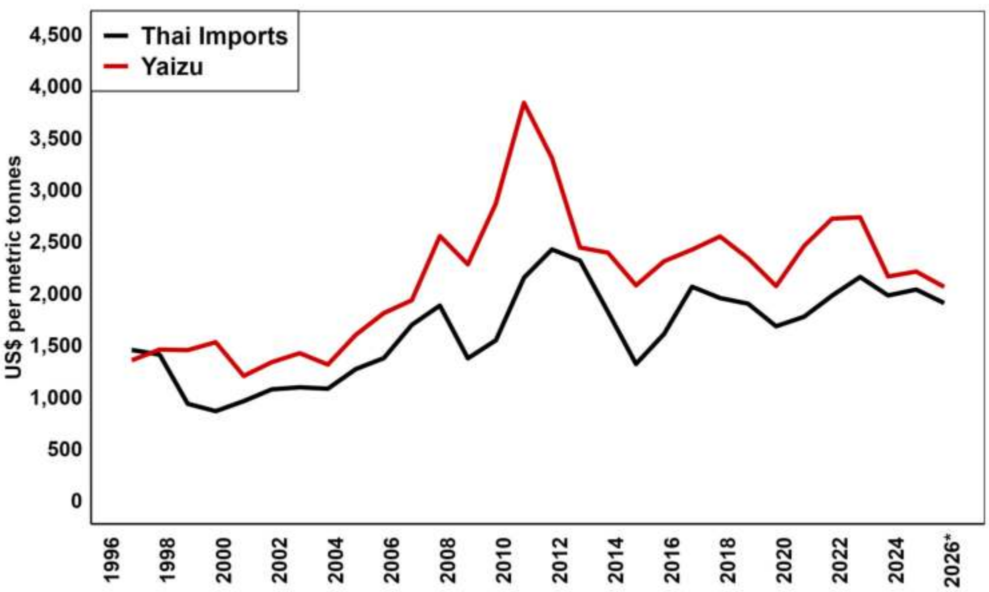

Figure 22: Annual yellowfin prices, Thai imports (c&f) and Yaizu (ex-vessel). Note: 2026* refers to January–May 2026 for Thai import price and January–May 2026 for Yaizu prices.

Catch value

In 2025, the estimated delivered value of the purse seine tuna catch in the WCP-CA region stood at $3.1 billion, an 11% decline ($365 million) from 2024. This marks a drop of roughly 24% (nearly $1 billion) from the peak levels of 2012 and 2013, when values surpassed $4 billion on the back of elevated prices for canning-grade raw material. Despite the decline, values have remained above $3 billion in recent years, with the 2025 figure comparable to that of 2022.

The value of the skipjack catch declined by 18%, falling from $2.72 billion in 2024 to $2.23 billion in 2025, and accounted for 73% of the total purse seine tuna catch value. This decline was primarily driven by a 17% drop in overall purse seine catch volume compared to the previous year, despite an 8% increase in the purse seine–caught skipjack price. In contrast, the value of the yellowfin catch rose by 9% to $728 million in 2025, representing 24% of the total purse seine catch value. This growth was supported by both a 6% increase in yellowfin catch volume and a 3% rise in the Thai import price for yellowfin. Meanwhile, bigeye tuna catch value surged by 120% to $104 million, while albacore catch value increased by 46% to $5 million in 2025. These gains were primarily driven by higher catch volumes for both species.

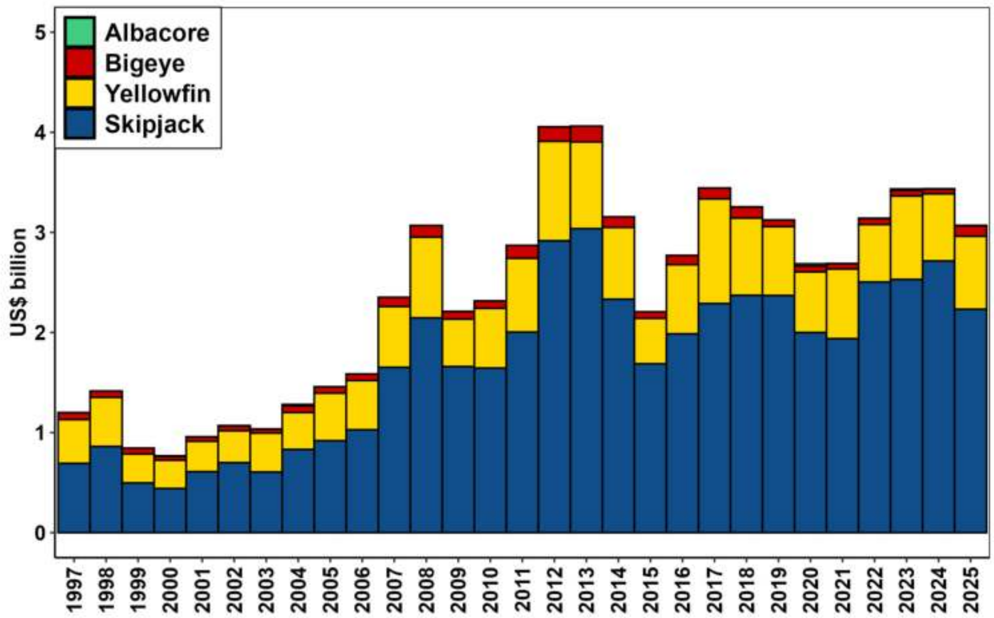

Figure 23: Value of the WCPFC-CA purse seine fishery tuna catch by species

Economic Conditions in the tropical purse seine fishery

Economic condition indexes for the major WCPFC-CA tuna fisheries have been presented to the Scientific Committee (SC) over several years. These indexes evaluate the economic conditions in a fishery based on key factors such as relative fish price, fishing costs (excluding license and access fee payments), and catch rates over the past 20 years (from 2005 to 2024).

The data from these components is combined into a single index value, expressed relative to the average value over the preceding 20 years, which is set at 100. This index provides a relative measure of changes in economic conditions over time. Values below 100 indicate below-average economic conditions in the fishery, while values above 100 indicate relatively favorable economic conditions[^Full details of the methodology used to derive the economic conditions indexes presented can be found in Skirtun, M and Reid, C. 2018, Analyses and projections for economic condition in WCPO fisheries, WCPFC-SC14-2018 ST- IP-06, Busan, Republic of Korea, August 8-16.]. It is important to note that these indexes pertain to the fishery as a whole and not to individual vessels operating within it. While favorable economic conditions suggest the fishery's potential to generate significant profits, the indexes do not specify which parties, such as vessel owners or coastal states, benefit from these profits.

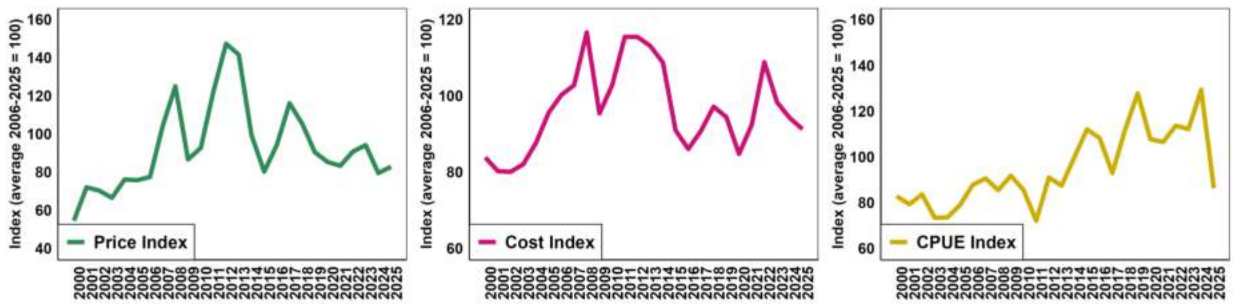

Figure 24: Tropical purse seine fishery economic conditions component indexes

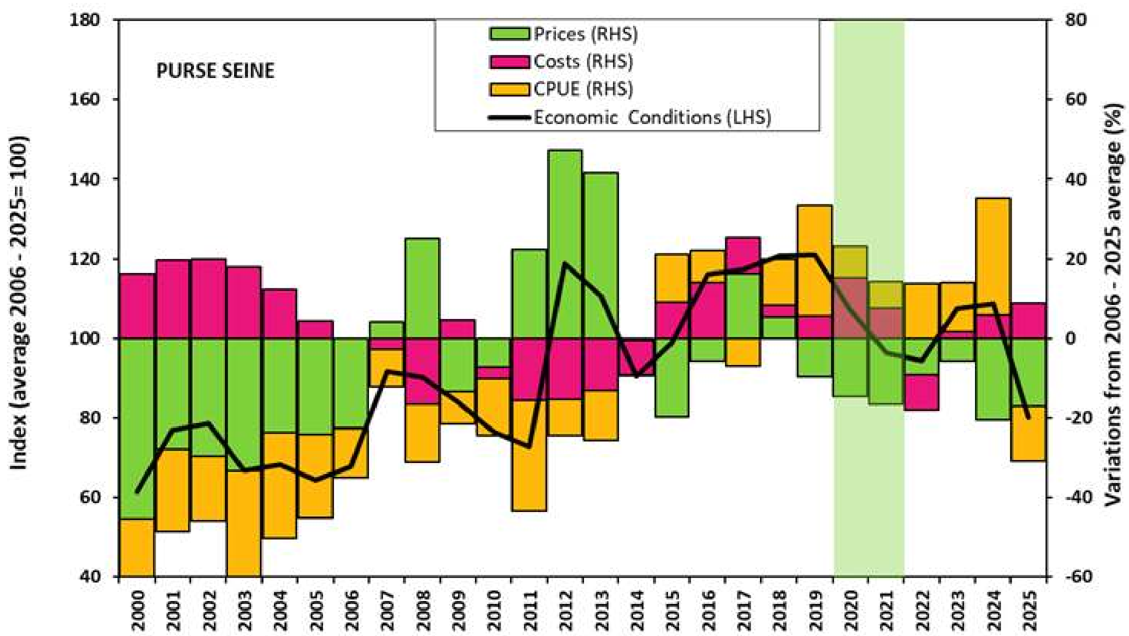

Figure 25: Tropical purse seine fishery economic conditions index (LHS) and variance of component indices against average (2006-2025) conditions (RHS)

The economic conditions index for the tropical purse seine fishery has generally remained above its long-term average since 2012, with the exception of 2014, 2015, 2021–2022, and 2025. The components driving the index have varied considerably in recent years. High catch rates were the primary factor behind elevated readings from 2021 to 2024. The below-average readings in 2021 were attributed to low fish prices, while the 2022 decline was largely due to a sharp spike in Marine Diesel Oil (MDO) costs linked to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. A recovery followed in 2023, supported by rising fish prices, lower fuel costs, and robust catch rates. In 2024, the index climbed to 109-well above the 20-year average driven by strong catches and falling fuel costs, despite subdued fish prices. In contrast, 2025 saw the index plunge to 80, far below average, as a substantial decline in catch rates and fish prices remaining below their 20-year average outweighed the positive effects of cheaper fuel.

WCPFC-CA Pole-and-Line fishery

Historical Overview

The WCPFC-CA pole-and-line fishery has historically had several components:

1. the year-round tropical skipjack fishery, mainly involving the domestic fleets of Indonesia, Solomon Islands and French Polynesia, and the distant water fleet of Japan
2. seasonal sub-tropical skipjack fisheries in the domestic (home) waters of Japan, Australia, Hawaii and Fiji (although no recent activity in the last three fisheries)
3. a seasonal albacore/skipjack fishery east of Japan (largely an extension of the Japanese home-water fishery).

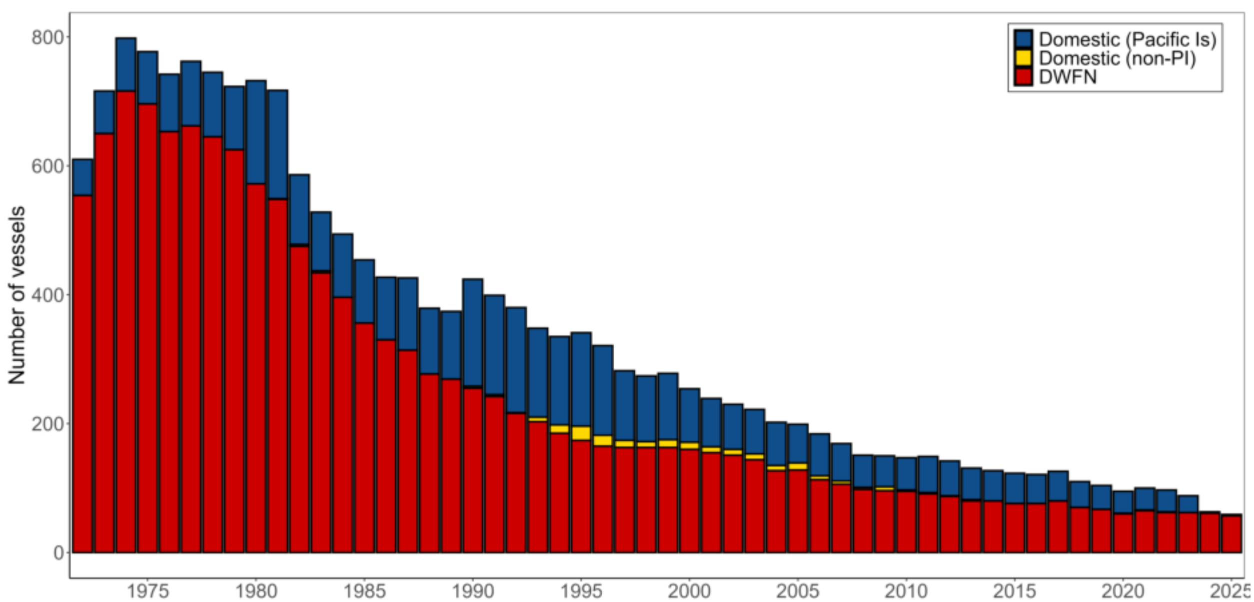

Figure 26: Pole-and-line vessels operating in the WCPFC-CA (excludes pole-and-line vessels from the Japanese Coastal and Indonesian domestic fisheries)

Provisional catch estimates (2025)

The provisional 2025 pole-and-line catch (103,588 mt) remains the lowest annual catch since the early-1960s, due to reduced catches in the Japanese fishery, although we note as in previous years the provisional nature of the estimates at this stage (Figure 27).

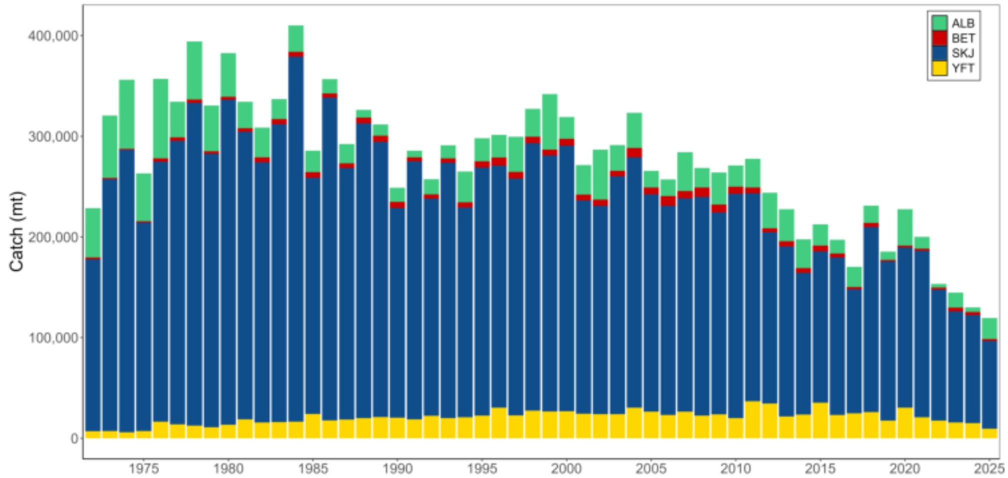

Figure 27: Pole-and-line catch in the WCPFC–CA

Skipjack accounts for the majority of the catch from tropical waters (~70-84% in recent years, but typically more than 85% of the total catch in tropical areas) and albacore (5-16% in recent years, with albacore representing 5% of the catch in 2025) is taken by the Japanese coastal and offshore fleets in the temperate waters of the north Pacific. Yellowfin tuna (recently 9-13%) and a small amount of bigeye tuna (~1-3% in recent years) make up the remainder of the catch. There were two pole-and-line fleets active in the WCPO in 2025 (Japan and Indonesia)[4]. Japanese distant-water and offshore fleets (71,009 mt in 2025), and the Indonesian fleets (35,278 mt in 2025), account for all of the WCPFC–CA 2025 pole-and-line catch. The catches by the Japanese fleets in 2025 are 5% lower than 2024, with a slight reduction in the fleet size (61 vessels in 2024 down to 57 in 2025).

Figure 28 shows the average distribution of pole-and-line effort for the period 1995–2025. Effort in tropical areas is usually year-round and includes domestic fisheries in Indonesia and the Japanese distant-water fishery. The pole-and-line effort in the vicinity of Japan by both offshore and distant-water fleets is seasonal (highest effort and catch occurs in the 2nd and 3rd quarters). There was also some seasonal effort by pole-and-line vessels in Fiji, New Zealand, and Australia during this period. The effort in French Polynesian waters is essentially the bonitier (artisanal) fleet. Effort by the pole-and-line fleet based in Hawaii is not shown in this figure because spatial data are not available.

[4]French Polynesia's pole-and-line fleet has been included here in the past, but after recent discussions, it is understood that their pole-and-line fishery is an artisanal fishery and is more appropriately grouped with the artisanal fishery catches under the gear defined as 'other'.

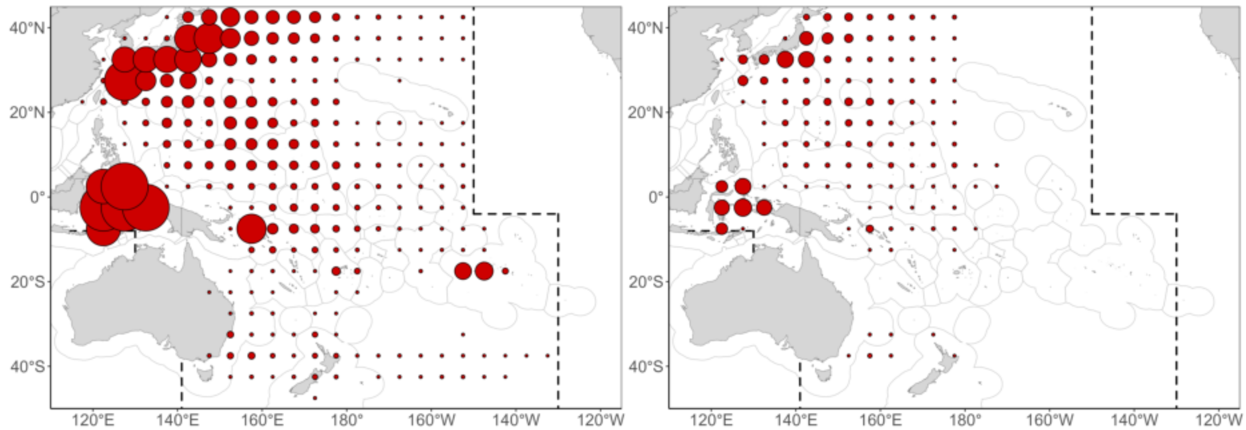

Figure 28: Average distribution of WCPFC–CA pole-and-line effort (1995-2020 - left; 2021-2025 - right)

Prices and catch value

Prices

The pole and line fishery in the WCP-CA region is predominantly operated by fleets from Japan and Indonesia, with smaller catches from the fleets of the Solomon Islands and French Polynesia. The Japanese fleet follows a seasonal pattern in skipjack pole and line fishing, typically targeting southern skipjack from November to June. In contrast, fishing for nearshore albacore and eastern offshore skipjack fishing primarily occur from July to October.

Yaizu prices for pole-and-line caught skipjack averaged $2,267/mt in 2025, a 23% increase from 2024. Skipjack from waters off Japan saw a sharper 43% rise to $2,222/mt (¥333/kg), while those from south of Japan recorded a modest 3% decline to $2,268/mt (¥339/kg). It is worth noting that despite the yen price for off-Japan skipjack climbing from ¥389/kg in 2022 to ¥399/kg in 2023, the dollar-denominated value fell amid a strengthening US dollar. By May 2026, off-Japan skipjack prices had fallen to $1,565/mt (¥247/kg), whereas south-of-Japan prices had recovered to $2,437/mt (¥385/kg) above the levels recorded in the same period of 2025.

In 2025, the volume of pole-and-line caught skipjack landed at Yaizu port from waters off Japan declined significantly by nearly 100% compared to the previous year, plummeting from 17,146 mt to just 169 mt. In contrast, the volume of skipjack caught in waters south of Japan increased by 151% relative to 2024 levels, rising to 27,583 mt.

Catch value

In 2025, the WCP-CA pole-and-line tuna catch delivered an estimated value of $230 million, a 13% increase from the previous year. This growth was largely driven by a significant surge (360%) in albacore catch volume and stronger Thai import prices for albacore. By contrast, skipjack value fell

6% ($10 million) to $150 million, still accounting for 79% of the total. Yellowfin and bigeye values also contracted, declining 11% and 1%, respectively, for a combined loss of roughly $12 million. Despite these declines, a 411% surge in albacore value more than compensated, driving the overall 13% increase. In terms of species shares, yellowfin represented 13%, bigeye 2%, and albacore 6% of the total pole-and-line catch value.

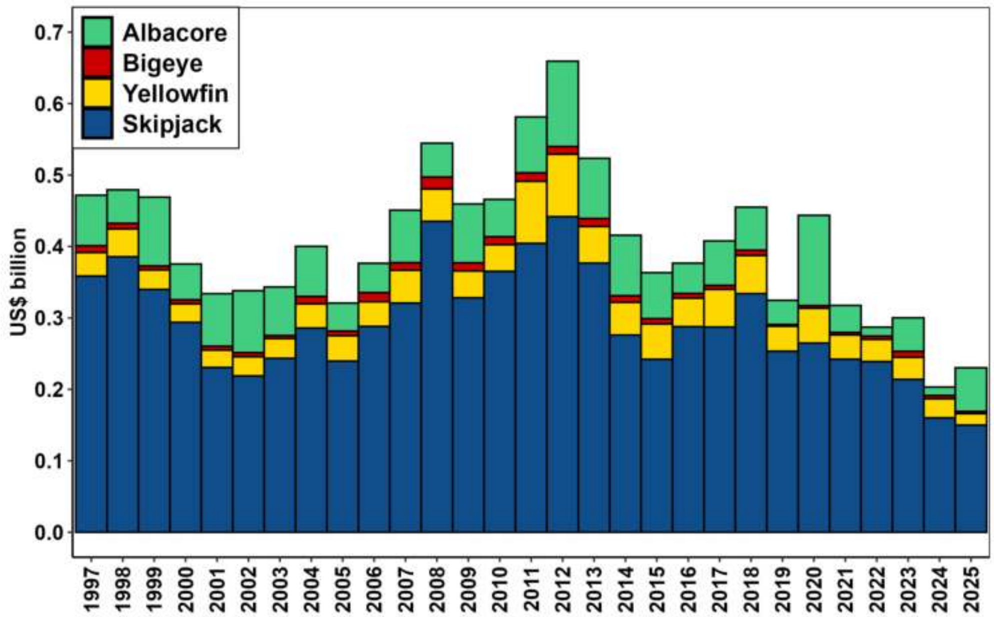

Figure 29: Value of the WCPFC-CA pole and line fishery tuna catch by species

WCPFC-CA Longline fishery

Overview

The longline fishery now accounts for approximately only 8% of the total WCPFC–CA catch (Vidal and Heather, 2026), but rivals the larger purse seine catch in landed value. It provides the longest time series of catch estimates for the WCPFC–CA, with estimates available since the early 1950s. The total number of vessels involved in the fishery has generally fluctuated between 3,000 and 6,000 for the period 1970–2004 (Figure 30), although for some distant-water fleets, vessels operating in areas beyond the WCPFC–CA could not be separated out, and more representative vessel numbers for WCPFC–CA have only become available in recent years[5]. Total longline vessel numbers have slowly declined over the past 20 years, but have stabilized over the past 5 years with the provisional estimate of 2,163 vessels in 2025.

[5]Since 2005, more detailed information on fleet/vessel number breakdown has been received through WCPFC reporting requirements and are therefore more representative of WCPFC–CA longline activity.

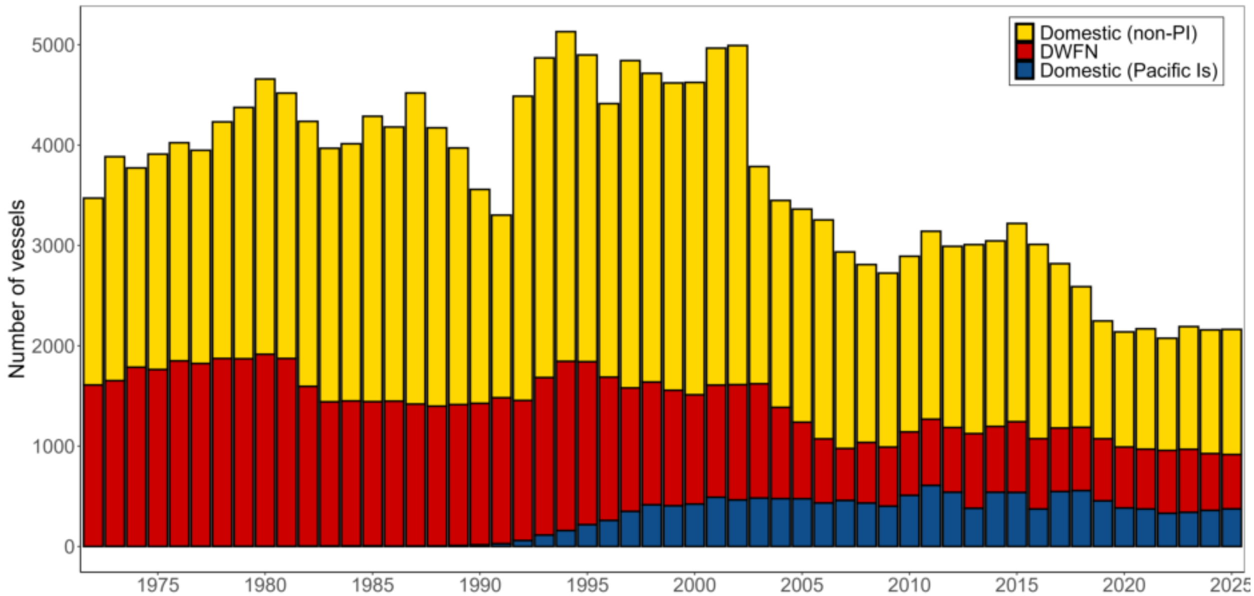

Figure 30: Longline vessels operating in the WCPFC–CA (available data does not make the distinction between foreign 'distant-water' and 'offshore')

The fishery involves two main types of operation:

1. large (typically >250 GRT) distant-water freezer vessels which undertake long voyages (months) and operate over large areas of the region. These vessels may target either tropical (yellowfin, bigeye tuna) or subtropical (albacore tuna) species. Voluntary reduction in vessel numbers by at least one fleet has occurred in recent years;
2. smaller (typically <100 GRT) offshore vessels which are usually domestically-based, undertaking trips of less than one month, with ice or chill capacity, and serving fresh or air-freight sashimi markets, or canneries. There are several foreign offshore fleets based in Pacific Island countries.

The following broad categories of longline fishery, based on type of operation, area fished, and target species, are currently active in the WCPFC–CA:

1. South Pacific offshore albacore fishery comprises Pacific Islands domestic 'offshore' vessels, such as those from American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, New Caledonia, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu; these fleets mainly operate in subtropical waters, with albacore the main species taken. Tuvalu and Wallis and Futuna, joined this category during 2011, although the latter fleet has not fished recently. Vessel numbers have stabilised in recent years, but they may also vary depending on charter arrangements. More information on this fishery is provided in McKechnie et al. (2026).
2. Tropical offshore bigeye/yellowfin-target fishery includes 'offshore' sashimi longliners from Chinese-Taipei, based in Micronesia, Guam, Philippines and Chinese vessels based in Microne-

sia, and domestic fleets based in Indonesia, Micronesian countries, Philippines, PNG, Tonga, the Solomon Islands and Vietnam.

3. Tropical distant-water bigeye/yellowfin-target fishery comprises ‘distant-water’ vessels from Japan, Korea, Chinese-Taipei, China and Vanuatu. These vessels primarily operate in the eastern tropical waters of the WCPFC–CA (and into the EPO), targeting bigeye and yellowfin tuna for the frozen sashimi market.
4. South Pacific distant-water albacore fishery comprises ‘distant-water’ vessels from Chinese-Taipei, China and Vanuatu operating in the south Pacific, generally below 20°S, targeting albacore tuna destined for canneries.
5. Domestic fisheries in the sub-tropical and temperate WCPFC–CA comprise vessels targeting different species within the same fleet depending on market, season and/or area. These fleets include the domestic fisheries of Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Hawaii. For example, the Hawaiian longline fleet has a component that targets swordfish and another that targets bigeye tuna.
6. South Pacific distant-water swordfish fishery is a relatively new fishery and comprises ‘distant-water’ vessels from Spain and Portugal (one vessel started fishing in 2011).
7. North Pacific distant-water albacore and swordfish fisheries mainly comprise ‘distant-water’ vessels from Japan (swordfish and albacore), Chinese-Taipei (albacore only) and Vanuatu (albacore only).

Additionally, small vessels in Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam are typically using handline gear in recent years. Handline fishing is often around the numerous arrays of anchored FADs in home waters, generally at night, with some using intense lights to attract prey for the tuna (these types of vessels are not included in Figure 30). The commercial handline fleets target large yellowfin tuna and comprise the majority of their overall catch (> 90%). The WCPFC-CA large-fish (yellowfin target) handline fisheries in south-east Asia countries took approximately 176,314 mt of tunas in 2025 (see the *Large-fish Handline Fishery* section).

The WCPFC–CA longline tuna catch steadily increased from the early years of the fishery (i.e., the early 1950s) to 1980 (230,625 mt), but declined to 162,111 mt in 1984 (Figure 31). Since then, catches steadily increased over the next 15 years until the late 1990s, when catch levels were again similar to 1980. Annual catches in the longline fishery from 2000 to approximately 2018 were amongst the highest ever. In recent years, catches have generally trended downward; and the 2025 catch is one the lowest from the past couple decades (218,014 mt). In addition to changes in catch volume, the composition of the catch in recent years (e.g., ALB–36%; BET–24%; YFT–37% in 2025) differs from the period of the late 1970s and early 1980s, when yellowfin tuna contributed a higher proportion of catch (e.g., ALB–18%; BET–27%; YFT–54% in 1980).

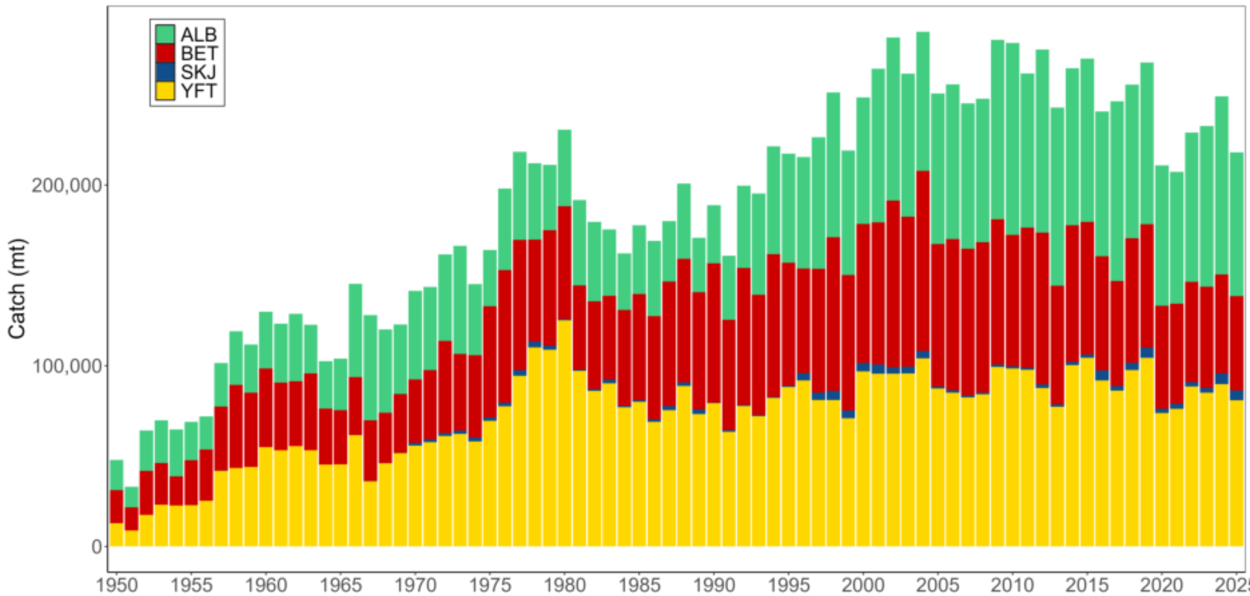

Figure 31: Longline catch (mt) of target tunas in the WCPFC–CA

Provisional estimates of catch, effort, and fleet size 2025

The provisional WCPFC–CA longline catch (218.014 mt) for 2025 remains lower than the recent ten-year average. The prevailing La Niña conditions that characterized much of the past five years may also have contributed to changes in the catch by species throughout the extent of the longline fishery.

The WCPFC–CA albacore longline catch (79,517 mt – 36%) for 2025 was about 19,000 mt lower than the 2024 catch, and 26,624 mt lower than the record of 106,141 mt attained in 2010. The provisional bigeye catch (52,145 mt – 24%) for 2025 was lower than the 2024 catch level and is the lowest catch reported since 1983, and well below on the bigeye catch levels experienced in the 2000s (ranging between 76,000-100,000 mt). The yellowfin catch for 2025 (80.928 mt – 37%), was lower than the previous two years but approximately the average level for the past five years, and in fact, catches have been relatively stable since the early 1980s.

A significant change in the WCPFC–CA longline fishery over the past two decades has been the growth of the Pacific Islands domestic albacore fishery, which has risen from taking 33% of the total South Pacific albacore longline catch in 1998 to accounting for around 50-60% of the catch in recent years (57% in 2025). The combined national fleets (including chartered vessels) mainly active in the Pacific Islands domestic albacore fishery have numbered more than 500 (mainly small 'offshore') vessels in some years over the past decade with catches at a similar level to the distant-water longline vessels active in the southern WCPFC–CA.

The distant-water fleet dynamics have continued to evolve in recent years, with catches down from record levels in the mid-2000s initially due to a reduction in vessel numbers, although vessel numbers for some fleets appear to be on the rise again in recent years, but with variation in areas fished and species targeted. The Japanese distant-water and offshore longline fleets have experienced a substantial decline in both bigeye catches (from 20,725 mt in 2004 to 2,702 mt in 2025) and vessel numbers (366 in 2004 to 62 in 2025). The Chinese-Taipei distant-water longline fleet had a peak bigeye tuna catch of 20,992 mt in 2004 but has stabilised at a lower level in recent years, with 10,720 mt taken in 2025 (929 vessels). The Korean distant-water longline fleet experienced some decline in bigeye and yellowfin catches since the period of highest catches 15–20 years ago in line with a reduction in vessel numbers – from 184 vessels active in 2002 reduced to 91 vessels in 2025.

In contrast, the China longline fleet catches of albacore tuna have been amongst the highest in recent years, with a range of 16,000–30,000 mt of albacore tuna in the south WCPFC-CA area over the past five years; their 2025 albacore tuna catch was 16,962 mt, a notable reduction from 2024 (29,750 mt).

With longline fleet size and composition has remained relatively stable over the past 5 years (Figure 30) and remains significantly reduced from the peak levels from 1994-2002. Historically, the longline fleet was targeting yellowfin and bigeye, but over time as the fleet composition shifted toward a greater proportion of Pacific Island fleets, the proportion of albacore in the catches also increased. More detail on individual fleet activities during recent years is available in the WCPFC–SC22 National Fisheries Reports.

Catch per unit effort

Time series of nominal CPUE provide a broad indication of the abundance and availability of target species to the longline gear, and as longline vessels target larger fish, the CPUE time series should be more indicative of adult tuna abundance. However, as is the case with nominal purse seine CPUE, the interpretation of nominal longline CPUE may be confounded by various factors, such as the changes in fishing depth that occurred as longliners progressively switched from primarily yellowfin tuna targeting in the 1960s and early 1970s to bigeye tuna targeting from the late 1970s onwards. Such changes in fishing practices will have changed the effectiveness of longline effort with respect to one species over another, and such changes need to be accounted for if the CPUE time series are to be interpreted as indices of relative abundance.

Nominal CPUE plots are provided in the other papers (see Hare et al., 2026; WCPFC Secretariat and SPC-OFP, 2026), and this paper does not attempt to explain trends in longline CPUE or effective effort, as this is referenced and dealt with more appropriately in specific studies on the subject and CPUE standardisation papers regularly prepared as WCPFC Scientific Committee (SC) papers.

Distribution of fishing effort and catch

Figure 32 shows the distribution of effort by category of fleet for the period 2019–2025. Effort by the large-vessel, distant-water fleets of Japan, China, Korea and Chinese-Taipei account for most effort on the high seas in the eastern WCPFC-CA, noting the reduction in vessel numbers for some fleets over the past two decades. Effort is widespread as sectors of these fleets target bigeye and yellowfin for the frozen sashimi market in central and eastern tropical waters, and albacore for canning in the more temperate waters (see Figure 32).

Activity by the foreign-offshore fleets from Japan, China, and Chinese-Taipei is restricted to tropical waters, targeting bigeye and yellowfin for the fresh sashimi market; these fleets tend to have limited overlap with the distant-water fleets. The substantial 'domestic fleet' effort in the west of the WCPFC-CA is primarily by the Indonesian and Chinese-Taipei domestic fleets targeting yellowfin and bigeye in the lower latitudes, and the Japanese offshore and coastal fleets in their home fishery and adjacent high seas.

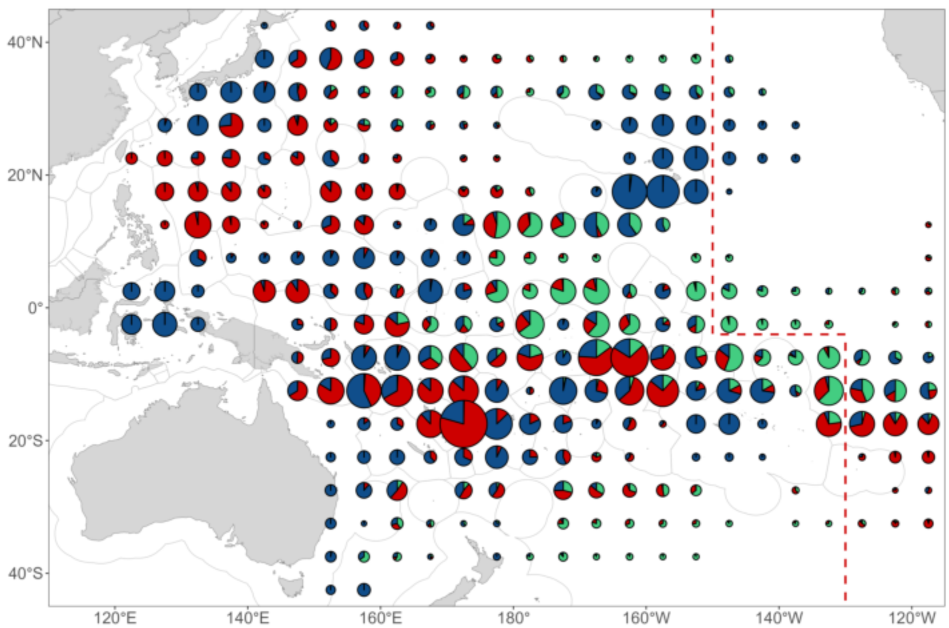

Figure 32: Distribution of longline effort (100s of hooks) by fleet, 2019–2025. Distant-water fleets (green), foreign-offshore fleets (red), and domestic fleets (blue) (Note that distant-water effort for Chinese-Taipei and other fleets targeting albacore for the entire North Pacific are poorly covered)

The growth in Pacific Islands domestic fleets targeting albacore tuna in the South Pacific has been noted; the most prominent fleets in this category are the Cook Islands, Samoa, Fiji, French Polynesia, Solomon Islands (when chartering arrangements are active), and Tonga fleets (Figure 33). More information on this fishery is provided in McKechnie et al. (2026).

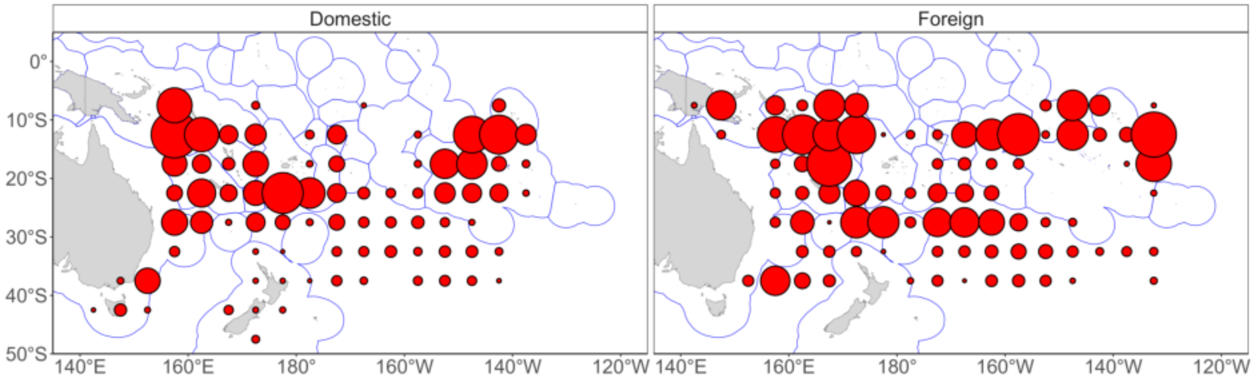

Figure 33: Distribution of effort for South Pacific albacore-target domestic (left) and foreign (right) longline fleets in 2025

Figure 34 shows quarterly species composition by area for the period 2016–2024 and 2025. The majority of the yellowfin catch is taken in tropical areas, especially in the western parts of the region, with smaller amounts in seasonal subtropical fisheries. The majority of the bigeye catch is also taken from tropical areas, but in contrast to yellowfin, mainly in the eastern parts of the WCPFC–CA, adjacent to the traditional EPO bigeye fishing grounds. The albacore catch is mainly taken in subtropical and temperate waters in both hemispheres. In the North Pacific, albacore are primarily taken in the 1st and 4th quarters. In the South Pacific, albacore are taken year round, although in 2025, they tended to be more prevalent in the catch during the 3rd and 4th quarters. Species composition also varies from year to year in line with changes in environmental conditions, particularly in waters where there is some overlap in species targeting, for example, in the latitudinal band from 0°–20°S.

The spatial and temporal longline catches in 2025 (Figure 34 – right) largely reflect the mean long-term distribution (Figure 34 – left). In the first quarter of 2025, relative proportions of bigeye in the catches was generally lower than the longer-term averages, with higher proportions of yellowfin from the equator south in the more central region of the WCPFC-CA. During the second and third quarters of 2025, there was a higher relative abundance of yellowfin in the catches compared to longer term averages, where the proportion of albacore was generally higher in the latitudinal band ranging from 10°S-20°S. There is also a notable decline in longline catches around Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam as in this region many fishers have transitioned to the handline fishery that generally targets large yellowfin but in a less labour intensive and more fuel efficient manner, as compared to longlining.

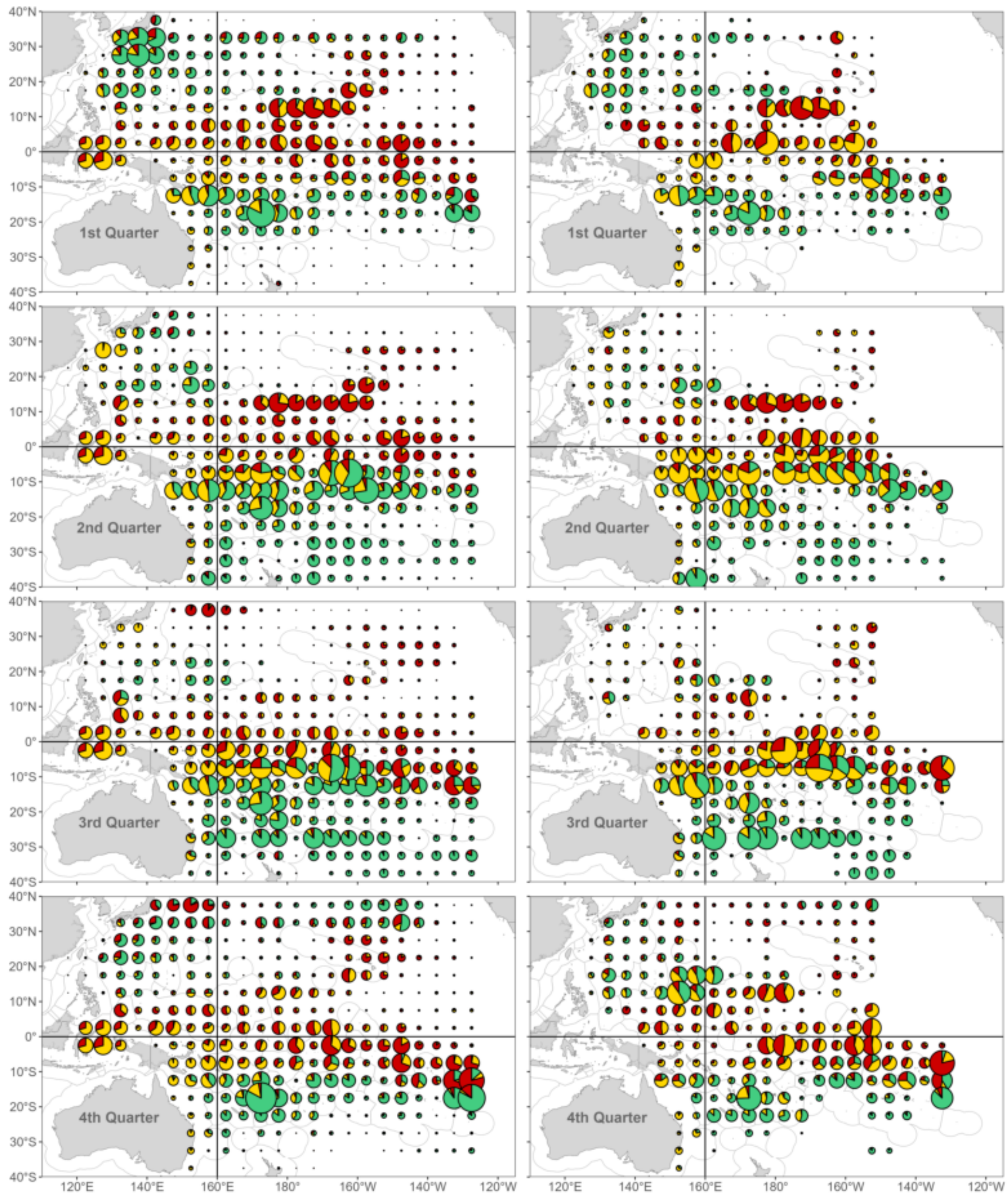

Figure 34: Quarterly distribution of longline tuna catch by species, 2016-2024 (left) and 2025 (right) (yellow - yellowfin; red – bigeye; green – albacore) (Note that catches from some distant-water fleets targeting albacore in the North Pacific may not be fully covered; excludes the Vietnam HL/LL fishery)

Prices and catch value

In this section, we present trends in price data for selected longline fisheries, focusing on yellowfin, bigeye, albacore, swordfish, and striped marlin. These species are marketed in various forms and across different markets.

Yellowfin

In 2025, yellowfin tuna prices in Japanese yen showed mixed movements across major markets compared to the previous year. Prices for longline-caught yellowfin from Oceania rose by 5%, increasing from ¥1,075/kg in 2024 to ¥1,128/kg in 2025. Similarly, prices from Yaizu for longline-caught yellowfin increased by 12% to ¥744/kg, while frozen yellowfin from selected Japanese ports rose by 15% to ¥855/kg. In contrast, the price for fresh yellowfin from selected Japanese ports declined by 15%, falling from ¥1,141/kg in 2024 to ¥974/kg in 2025.

U.S. fresh yellowfin import prices plunged 18% to $8.65/kg in 2025 from the previous year. In dollar terms, fresh product from selected Japanese ports also fell, dropping 14% to $6.51/kg. By contrast, frozen product from selected Japanese ports rose 16% to $5.72/kg, while Yaizu and Oceania prices also increased by 13% to $4.97/kg and 6% to $7.53/kg, respectively.

Fresh yellowfin imports volumes into Japan and the U.S. have experienced significant volatility over the past decade, with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 triggering sharp contractions of 75% and 67%, respectively. Japan's imports continued to struggle in 2021 with a further 39% decline, while U.S. volumes began a gradual recovery. By 2022, both markets showed improvement with the U.S. imports continued their upward trajectory, while Japan's volumes rebounded by 37% from the previous year. However, Japan's imports plummeted again in 2023, falling 66% to approximately 117,000 metric tonnes. A strong recovery followed in 2024, with Japan's imports surging 185% and U.S. volumes rising 68% year-on-year. Despite this rebound, Japan's 2024 import volume remained well below pre-pandemic levels.

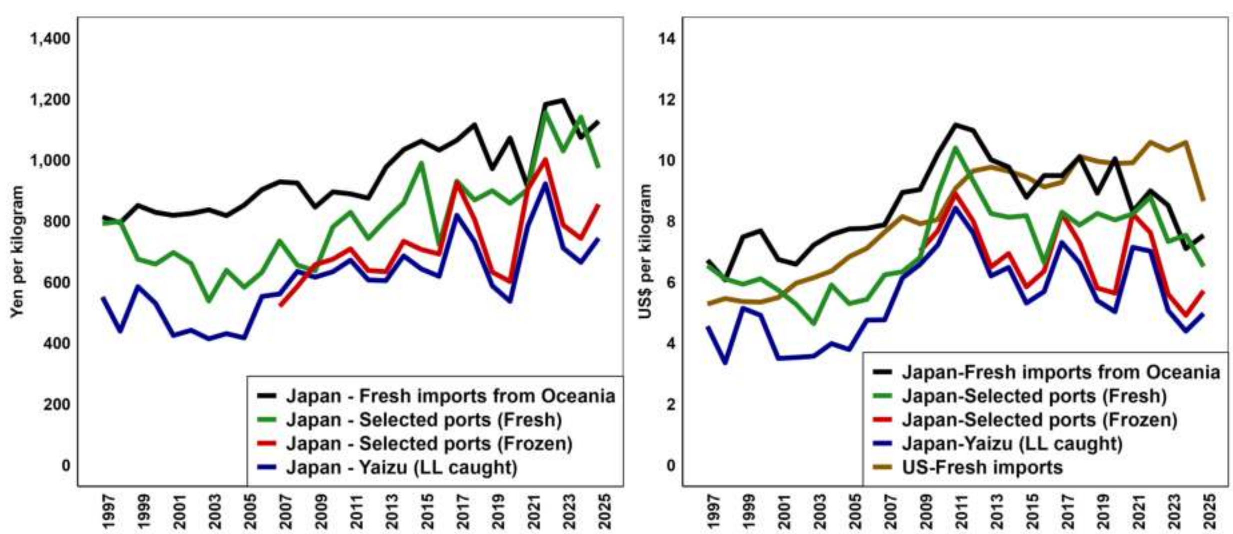

Figure 35: Japan and US Yellowfin in Yen (LHS) and US dollars (RHS). Note: Japan fresh imports from Oceania are c.i.f prices, Yaizu and Japan selected port are ex-vessel prices and US imports are f.a.s prices. Frozen at selected ports excludes purse seine caught landings.

Looking at the most recent data, as of May 2026, Japan's fresh yellowfin imports have increased substantially, with total volumes from January to May reaching 65,744 mt more than three times the 20,405 mt recorded during the same period in 2025. Similarly, U.S. fresh import volumes rose by 63% over the same period, increasing from 337,478 mt (January–May 2025) to 550,585 mt (January–May 2026).

Bigeye

In 2025, bigeye tuna prices in Japanese yen showed mixed movements across major markets. Prices for bigeye from Oceania declined by 9% to ¥1,625/kg, down from ¥1,785/kg in 2024. In contrast, fresh bigeye at selected ports in Japan rose by 8% to ¥1,767/kg from ¥1,640/kg in the previous year. Similarly, frozen bigeye at selected ports increased by 5% to ¥1,016/kg, up from ¥963/kg in 2024. Meanwhile, in the U.S. market, fresh bigeye import prices declined by 19% to $9.42/kg in 2025 from $11.57/kg in 2024.

Import volumes of bigeye tuna into Japan and the U.S. have followed divergent trends since the COVID-19 pandemic. In the U.S., volumes rebounded strongly from the pandemic-driven low in 2020, surging 44% in 2021 and a further 67% in 2022, before a marginal decline of 2% in 2023. The following year saw a modest increase of 3% in 2024, followed by a substantial 37% rise in 2025, reaching 1.6 million mt. In contrast, Japan's fresh bigeye imports continued to contract post-2020, falling by 36% in 2021, a further 32% in 2022, and an additional 20% in 2023. However, a modest recovery emerged in 2024, with imports increasing by 5%, and this upward momentum strengthened in 2025 with a substantial 21% gain to approximately 118,000 mt.

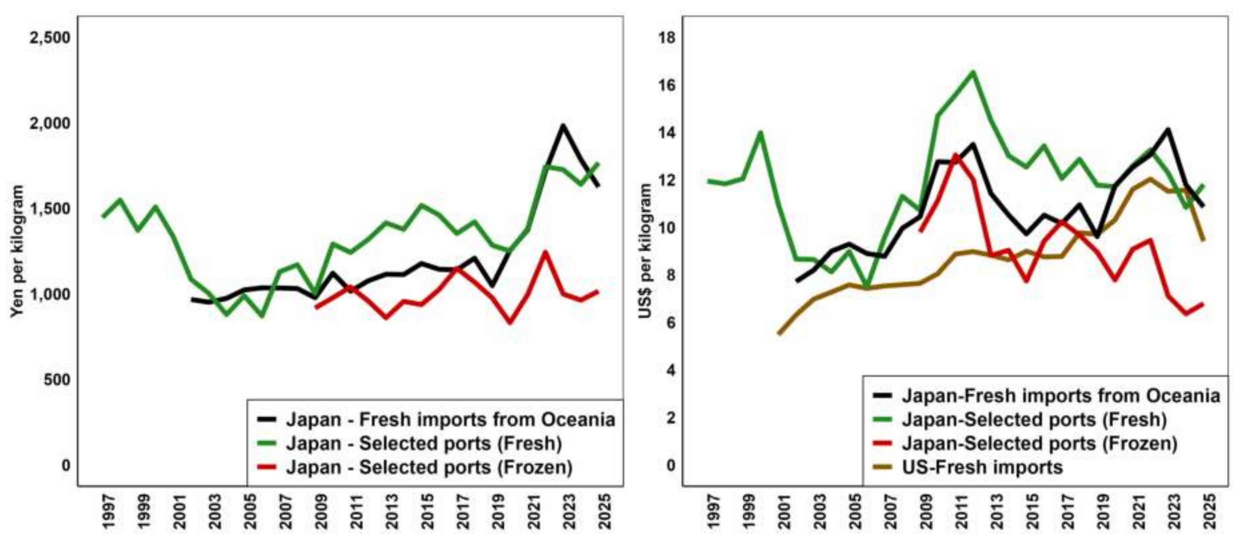

Figure 36: Japan and US bigeye prices in Yen (LHS) and US dollars (RHS). Note: Japan fresh imports from Oceania are c.i.f prices, Japan selected ports are ex-vessel prices and US imports are f.a.s prices. Frozen at selected ports excludes purse seine caught landings.

Albacore

In 2025, U.S. fresh tuna prices declined by 23% to $4.70/kg, following a record high of $6.10/kg in 2024, the first time prices surpassed the $6 mark. In contrast, Thai frozen import prices increased by 11%, rising from $2.64/kg in 2024 to $2.93/kg in 2025. Similarly, fresh prices at selected ports in Japan rose marginally by 3%, from $2.90/kg in 2024 to $2.99/kg in 2025

Thai import volumes experienced a sharp 20% increase in 2020, followed by a significant contraction of 33% in 2021 to approximately 42,000 mt. The downtrend persisted in 2022, with volumes falling a further 19% to 34,000 mt. A gradual recovery took hold from 2023, with volumes rising 3% to 35,000 mt, then 5% in 2024 to 37,000 mt, and a further 4% in 2025 to around 39,000 mt. The upward momentum has carried into 2026, with volumes for January to May increasing by 1% to approximately 16,000 mt compared to the same period in 2025.

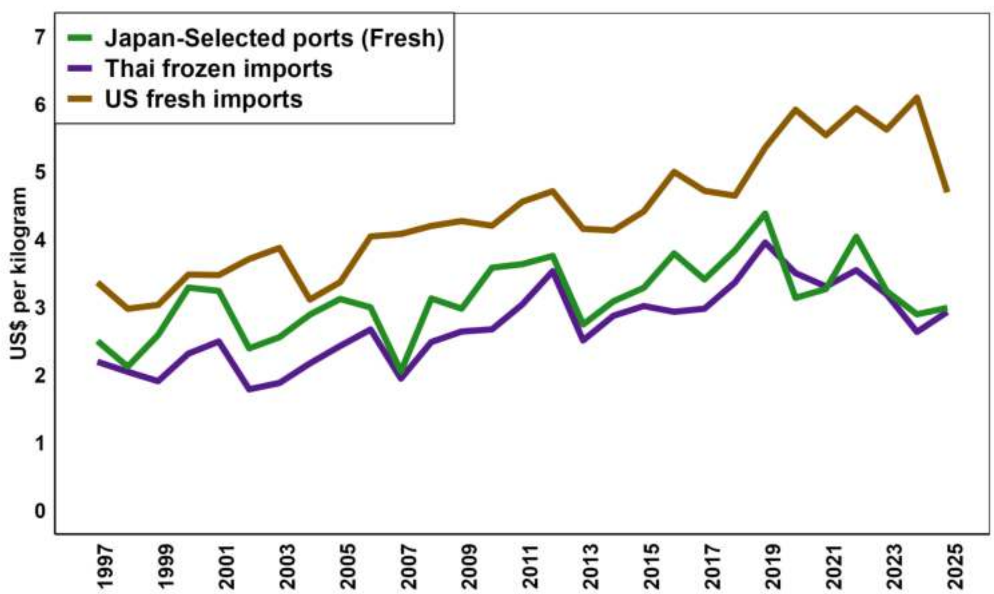

Figure 37: Albacore prices in US dollars. Note: Thai frozen imports are c&f prices, Japan selected ports are ex-vessel prices and US imports are f.a.s prices.

Swordfish and striped marlin

In 2025, prices for both fresh striped marlin and fresh swordfish at selected Japanese ports increased, rising by 14% to ¥796/kg and by 9% to ¥1,328/kg, respectively, compared to the previous year. In contrast, fresh swordfish prices in the U.S. declined by 5%, averaging $8.32/kg in 2025.

In U.S. dollar terms, prices for fresh striped marlin at selected Japanese ports increased by 16% in 2025, reaching $5.32/kg. Similarly, fresh swordfish prices in Japan rose by 10% to $8.87/kg in 2025. Notably, these increases were steeper than their corresponding yen-denominated values, largely due to the appreciation of the Japanese yen against the U.S. dollar (with the exchange rate moving from 151.4 JPY/USD in 2024 to 149.7 JPY/USD in 2025).

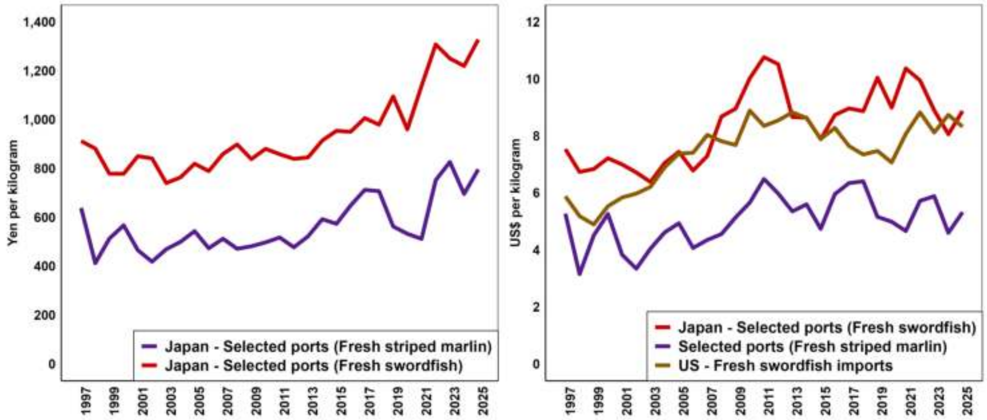

Figure 38: Japan and US swordfish and striped marlin prices in Yen (LHS) and US dollars (RHS). Note: Japan selected ports are ex-vessel prices and US imports are f.a.s prices.

Catch value

In 2025, the WCPFC longline fishery generated an estimated $1.18 billion in catch value, representing 22% of the total WCPO tuna catch value of $5.4 billion. This marks a 9% increase from the previous year, equivalent to an increase of around $94 million, largely driven by rising prices for longline-caught tuna

In 2025, catch values rose for most major target species, with the notable exceptions of albacore and non-target skipjack. Albacore value plummeted by 17% ($46 million) year-over-year, driven primarily by a 26% contraction in catch, which more than offset an 11% price increase. Conversely, yellowfin and bigeye both posted strong gains, up $85 million (+20%) and $56 million (+14%), respectively. These increases were underpinned by a 13% surge in Yaizu longline yellowfin prices and a 7% rise in frozen bigeye prices at selected Japanese ports, alongside respective catch expansions of 13% and 20%. Notably, Thai albacore import prices climbed 11%, though this was insufficient to counterbalance the catch volume shortfall.

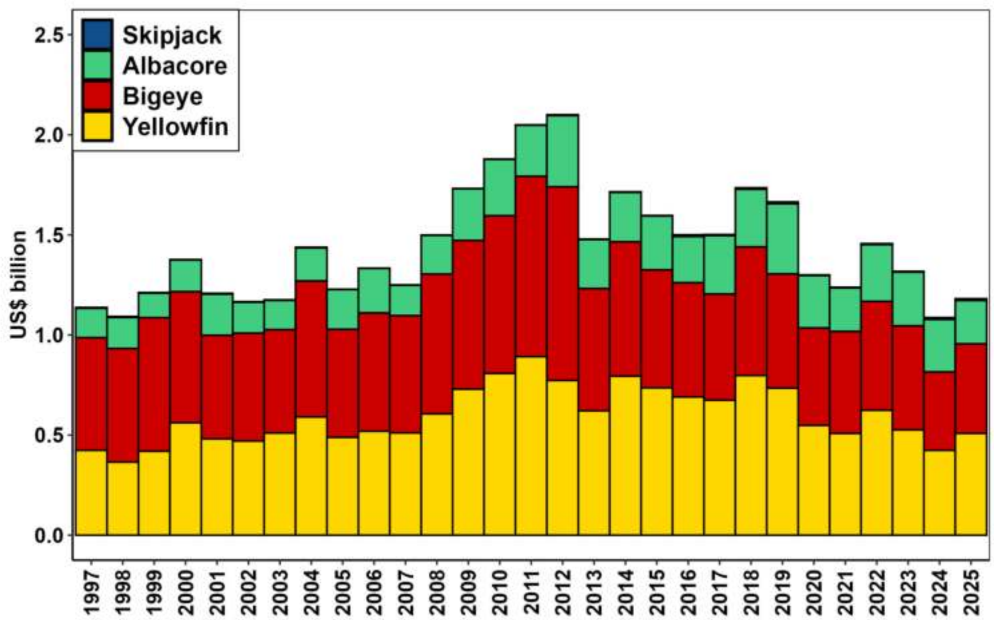

Figure 39: Value of the WCPFC-CA longline fishery tuna catch by species

Economic conditions

The analysis of economic conditions within the longline fishery covers two distinct regions: the southern longline fishery, located south of 10°S in the WCPFC Convention Area (WCPFC-CA), and the tropical longline fishery, which includes the area between 10°N and 10°S in the WCPFC-CA, excluding the waters of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

It is important to note a significant caveat regarding the longline fisheries in 2020 and 2021. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cost structure may have been underestimated in the economic conditions index. This is because the index's fishing cost does not account for changes beyond fuel costs, such as shipping, air freight, and imported equipment and gear, which were all affected by the pandemic. Therefore, when interpreting the index figures for 2020 and 2021 (as shown in the shaded graphs of Figure 41 and Figure 42), caution is advised.

Southern Longline

Since 2010, the southern longline fishery index has consistently remained below its long-term average. Fish prices peaked in 2011 and 2012, yet economic conditions from 2011 to 2014 were particularly strained, weighed down by low catch rates and elevated fuel costs. A marked turnaround followed between 2014 and 2017, as improving catch rates and falling fuel prices coupled with fish prices hovering near the long-term average drove a substantial improvement in economic conditions, with the index exceeding the 20-year average from 2015 to 2017.

The recovery proved short-lived, as falling catch rates dragged the index downward in the years that followed even with high fish prices in 2018 and lower fuel costs in 2019. Conditions worsened markedly in 2020 and 2021, when a steep decline in catch rates, exacerbated by COVID-19-related disruptions to operations and supply chains, drove the index to its lowest point since 2013. A strong rebound arrived in 2022, with improved catch rates lifting the index close to its 20-year average, despite soaring fuel costs linked to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. That positive trend moderated in 2023, as economic conditions eased somewhat due to reduced catch rates, even as fuel costs continued to decline. In 2024, however, the index improved to 86, largely driven by high catch rates and lower fuel prices, which together offset the drag from persistently low fish prices. Yet in 2025, the index fell further below average to 79, weighed down by a decline in catch rates and continued low fish prices, despite a modest reduction in fuel costs from the previous year.

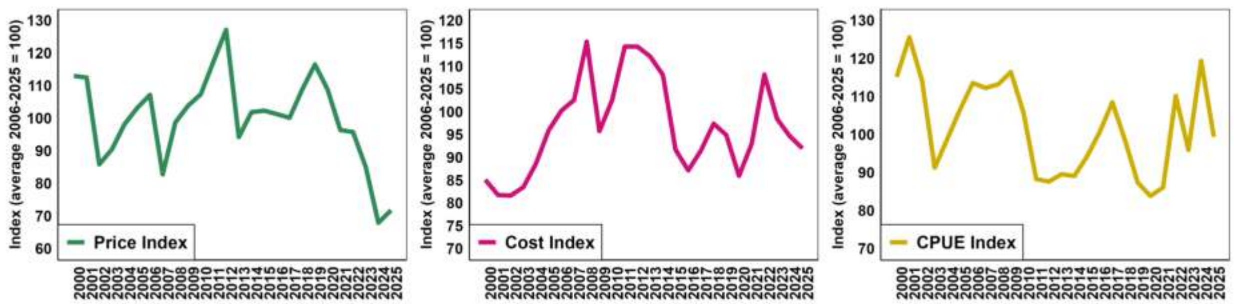

Figure 40: Southern longline fishery economic conditions component indexes

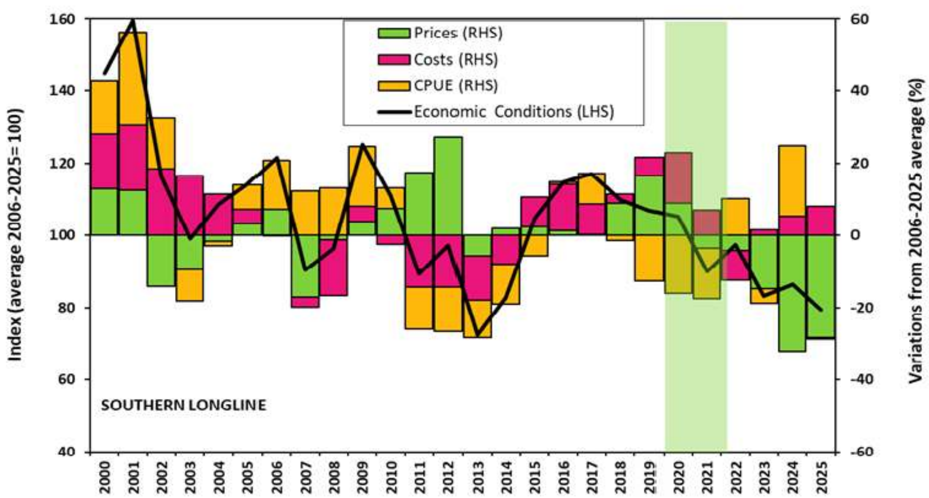

Figure 41: Southern longline economic conditions index (LHS) and variance of component indices against average (2006-2025) conditions (RHS)

Tropical longline

A downturn in 2017 and 2018 saw the economic index slip below its 20-year long-term average, weighed down by rising fuel costs and declining catch rates. Conditions steadied between 2019 and 2020, however, with the index holding near the average despite ongoing pressures including falling fish prices and reduced catch rates in 2020. This relative stability was underpinned by a sharp decline in fuel prices, a knock-on effect of the global economic slowdown triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021 and 2022, the economic index remained below the 20-year average, reflecting ongoing challenges particularly the impact of rising fuel prices. The decline in 2022 underscored the severity of these pressures. In 2023, the index edged down further to 92, remaining below the 20-year average and reflecting persistent economic pressures. Despite higher catch rates, there were offset by low fish prices and ongoing high costs. Although further gains in catch rates and continued declines in fuel prices, the index fell sharply in 2024 to its lowest level since 2013, primarily driven by a significant drop in fish prices. In 2025, the economic index fell further to 74, remaining well below the 20-year average. This decline was largely driven by a drop in catch rates and low fish prices, which together offset any potential gains from lower fuel costs.

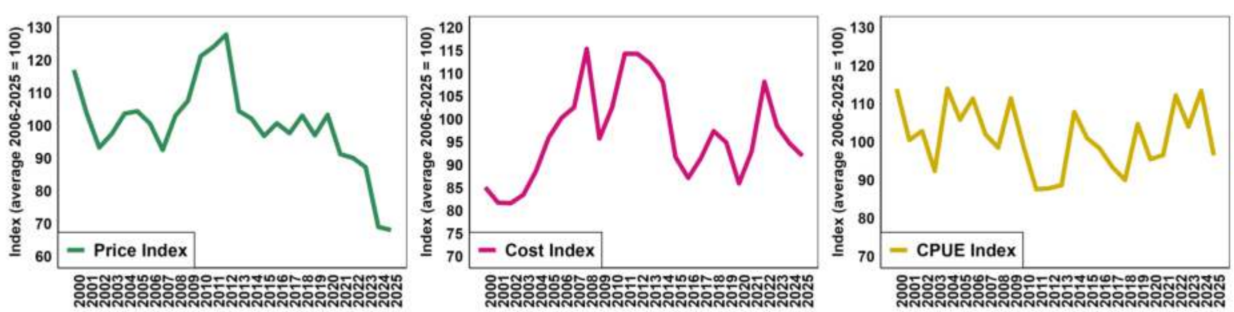

Figure 42: Tropical longline fishery economic conditions component indexes

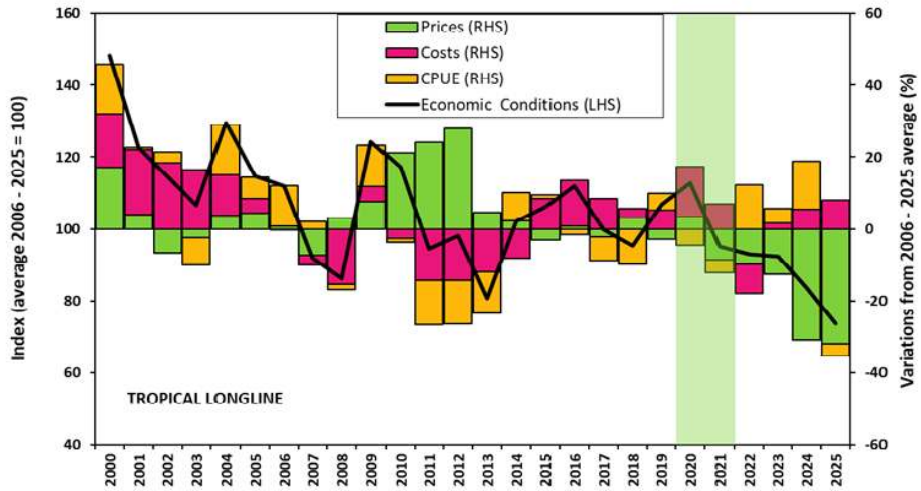

Figure 43: Tropical longline economic conditions index (LHS) and variance of component indices against average (2006-2025) conditions (RHS)

South Pacific Troll fishery

Overview

The South Pacific troll fishery is based in the coastal waters of New Zealand, and along the Subtropical Convergence Zone (STCZ, east of New Zealand waters located near 40°S; Figure 45). The fleets of New Zealand and the United States have historically accounted for the great majority of the catch that consists almost exclusively of albacore tuna.

The fishery expanded following the development of the STCZ fishery after 1986, with the highest catch attained in 1989 (8,370 mt). Over the past decade, catches have declined to range from 1,000-5,000 mt. The level of effort expended by the troll fleets each year can be driven by the price conditions for the product, and by expectations concerning likely fishing success.

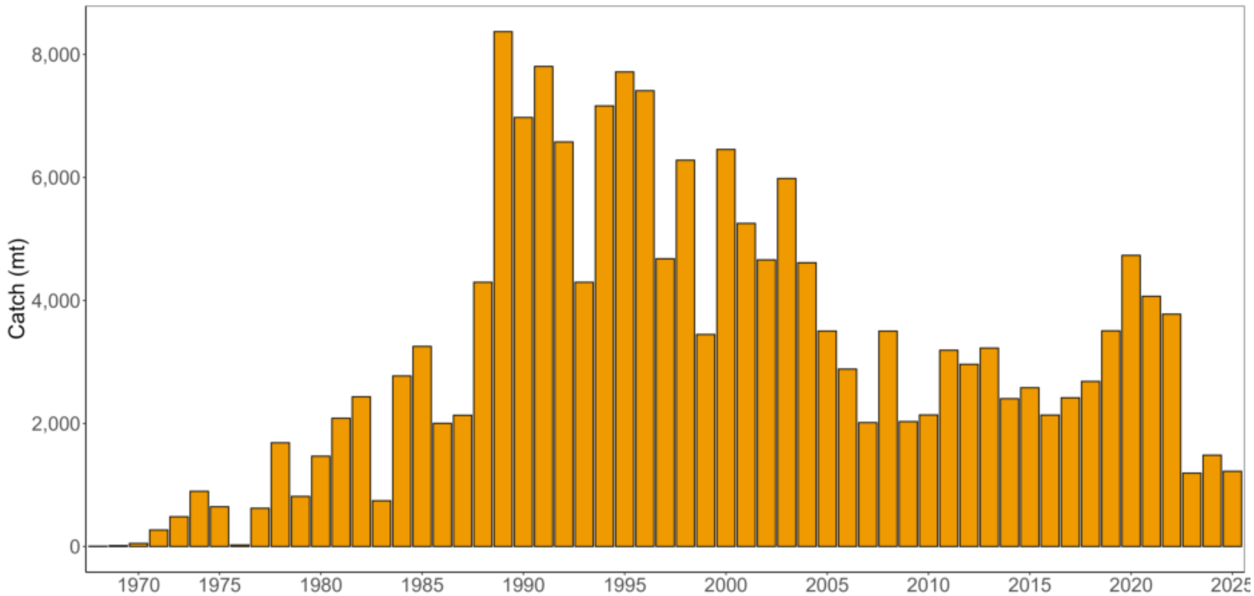

Figure 44: Troll catch (mt) of albacore in the south Pacific Ocean

Provisional estimates of catch, effort, and fleet size (2025)

The 2025 South Pacific troll albacore catch (1,223 mt) was the third lowest catch level since the 1980s (744 mt were reported in 1983), largely owing to a contraction in NZ's troll fleet operating in the region. The New Zealand troll fleet (74 vessels catching 1,068 mt in 2025) and the United States troll fleet (4 vessels catching 155 mt in 2025) accounted for all of the 2024 albacore troll catch, although minor contributions have also come from the Canada, Cook Islands and French Polynesia fleets when their fleets were active in this fishery.

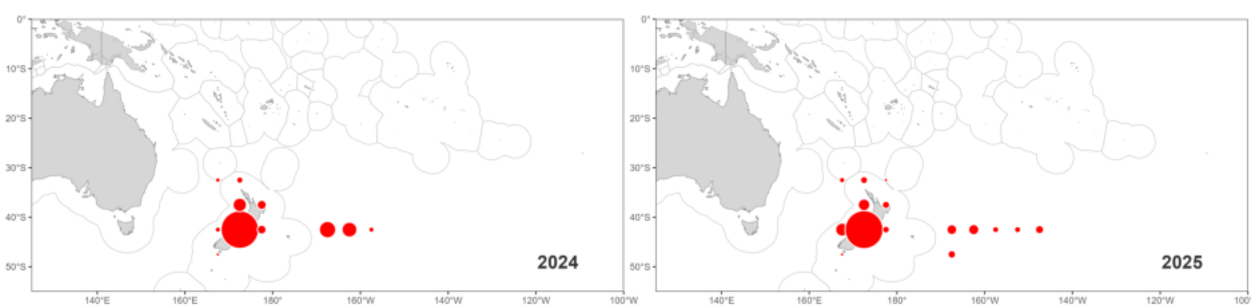

Figure 45: Distribution of South Pacific troll effort (days) during 2024 (left) and 2025 (right)

Other fisheries

There are a number of other, mainly small-scale, fisheries in the WCPFC–CA that target the key tuna species, including handline gear that primarily targets large yellowfin tuna, small-scale troll/hook-and-line fisheries, small-scale gillnet and a range of other artisanal gears. The following sections attempt to provide some information on some of these 'other' fisheries.

A description of most of these fisheries is provided in Scientific Committee papers from 2021: MOMAF and SPC-OFP (2021a,b); NRFDI, et al. (2021); SPC-OFP (2021).

Large-fish Handline fishery

Large-fish handline fisheries exist in the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Hawaii, where the target is essentially large yellowfin tuna (and also bigeye tuna in the case of Hawaii). In the Philippines and Indonesia, this fishery can be comprised of both small craft and larger vessels (>24m or >20 GRT). The larger vessels can have several small associated one-person boats (called pakura in the Philippines) used to fish in the vicinity of the larger vessel. The vessels that target large yellowfin tuna with the handline gear are also referred to as 'pump boats' in the Philippines. The general characteristics that distinguish the vessels targeting small-fish with the 'hook-and-line' gear to those targeting large yellowfin tuna in the Philippines and Indonesia is that the latter fishery is conducted at night, at a depth typically greater than 50 metres with larger hooks. However, this distinction is not always clear, for example, there are instances when small craft can target both large yellowfin at night and small tunas during the day within a single fishing trip. Large yellowfin tuna dominates the catch from this gear type in the Philippines and Indonesia (typically $\geq$ 95% of the total catch) and the catches are landed locally where it is processed and available for export or the high-end local markets.

Over the past two decades, annual catch estimates from the large-fish handline fishery have been in the range of 20,000–57,000 mt (Figure 46), although the estimates prior to 2013 are acknowledged to exclude the catches from the Indonesian fishery. Estimates for Indonesia were compiled for the period 2013–2016, but were again lacking from 2017 onward, and only represent carried over values for this fishery since this time. In 2024, the catch of handline increased dramatically (223,839 mt). This catch was nearly five times that of the 2023 catch (45,881 mt). This large increase was largely influenced by a change in the reporting by Indonesia as well as a combination of factors including Vietnam reporting catches from their handline fishery, whereas in the past these were reported as longline, increased fishing capacity in the Philippines due to government subsidized vessels, and generally good fishing conditions in the western region of the WCPFC. With respect to Indonesia's reporting, historically their catches of large-fish handline and small-fish hook-and-line were submitted as a combined catch, and assumptions about the size structure, based on limited sampling and an understanding of the fishery, were applied to split the catch into the two gear types. In 2025, following a dedicated handline workshop in 2024, Indonesia was able to split its handline catches and the resulting catch proportions were notable different from years prior. This large shift from small-fish to large-fish handline catches is not understood to be a dramatic change in the fishery, but instead a reporting artifact, and work is ongoing to resolve the hisorical time series. In 2025, the large-fish handline catch was 176,314 mt, of which approximately 62% was yellowfin tuna (see (Vidal et al., 2026b) for more details on this topic).

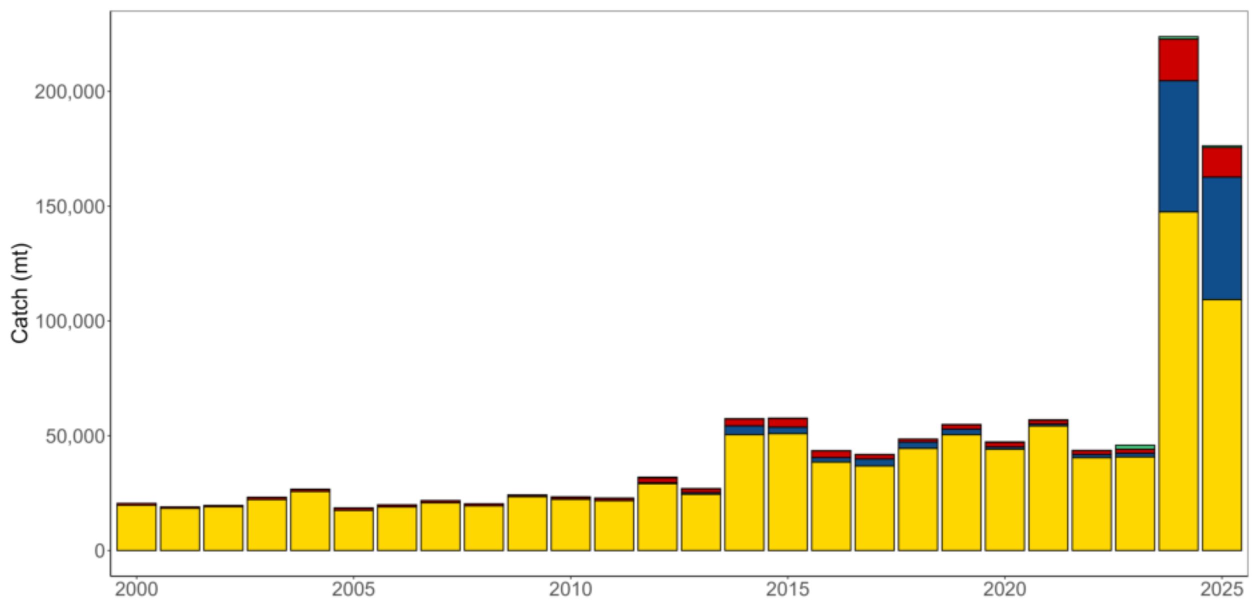

Figure 46: WCPFC–CA large-fish handline catch (mt) by species (albacore - green; bigeye - red; skipjack - blue; yellowfin - yellow)

Small-scale troll and hook-and-line fishery

The small-scale troll and hook-and-line fishery comprises small craft that, due to their size and concerns on safety, conduct trips that do not usually exceed one day and are restricted to coastal waters, rarely venturing beyond territorial seas and/or archipelagic waters (where relevant). The method of fishing is varied and includes trolling, and surface fishing in the vicinity of FADs with one or multiple hooks per line. Small skipjack and yellowfin tuna are the main species taken in this fishery and most coastal states in the tropical and sub-tropical WCPFC-CA have vessels in this fishery, with the highest catches reported from the Indonesia and the Philippines domestic fisheries, followed by Kiribati, Japan, French Polynesia and smaller amounts from several Pacific Island countries (catches from some countries, while only minor, have yet to be compiled and provided to the WCPFC). The catches from this fishery are typically for subsistence or sold at local markets.

Over the past two decades annual catch estimates from the small-scale troll and hook-and-line fishery have been in the range of 170,000–300,000 mt (Figure 47), although the trends in some years may be a result of the lack of resources to compile or confirm estimates, rather than changes in the fishery. The increasing trend over the past decade are likely related to improvements in estimates in some fisheries. The large reduction in catches from this fishery starting in 2024 is directly related to the reporting of Indonesia handline catches, in that where large increase are observed in Figure 46, those catches have effectively been removed from the small-fish hook-and-line catches in Figure 47. The provisional 2025 catch estimate (234,235 mt) is more comparable to the catches from around 2008-2014, as opposed to the most recent few years. The species composition tends to fluctuate with some years having a high proportion of small yellowfin tuna (e.g., in recent years (2018-2023), the catch of small yellowfin tuna was estimated to have been at least 50% of the total tuna catch for this fishery). Again, the reporting has changed significantly in 2024 and 2025, which has resulted in less yellowfin catch, and a higher proportion of skipjack. The change in species composition may also be influenced by the increased reporting of artisanal tuna catches by Pacific Island countries in recent years.

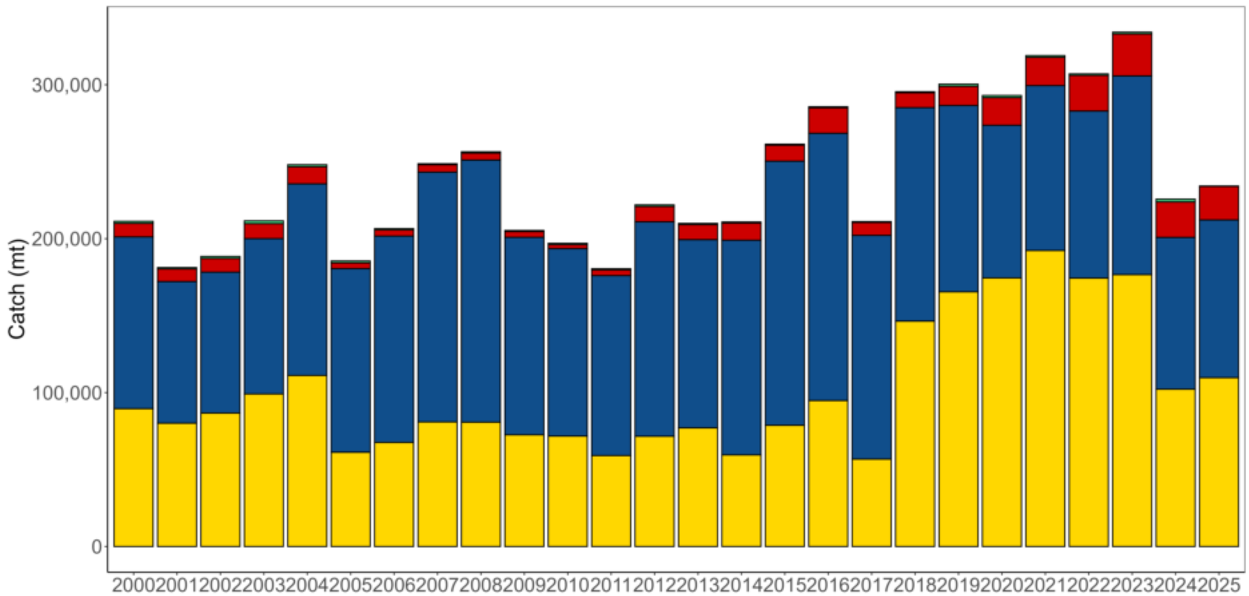

Figure 47: WCPFC–CA troll/hook-and-line catch (mt) by species (bigeye - red; skipjack - blue; yellowfin - yellow)

Small-scale gillnet fishery

The main small-scale gillnet fisheries operate in coastal waters of Vietnam and Indonesia, with smaller catches from this gear in Japan and in the archipelagic waters of the Philippines. This fishery targets skipjack tuna but also takes small amounts of other pelagic species.

The available annual catch estimates (Figure 48) are only representative of Vietnam, Philippines and Japan fisheries until 2013, at which point Indonesia first separated out the gillnet catch by species from their 'other/unclassified gear'. The decline in catches from 2016 is largely due to a reduction in the Vietnam gillnet fishery, whereas the increase since 2023 is largely attributed to increased reporting on Indonesia's gillnet fishery. The 2025 catch estimate is 31,270 mt (11,124 mt when excluding Indonesia, which aligns with previous reporting in this paper for the gillnet fishery).The inclusion of Indonesia's catches in the time series has also resulted in an increase in bigeye composition in the most recent three years.

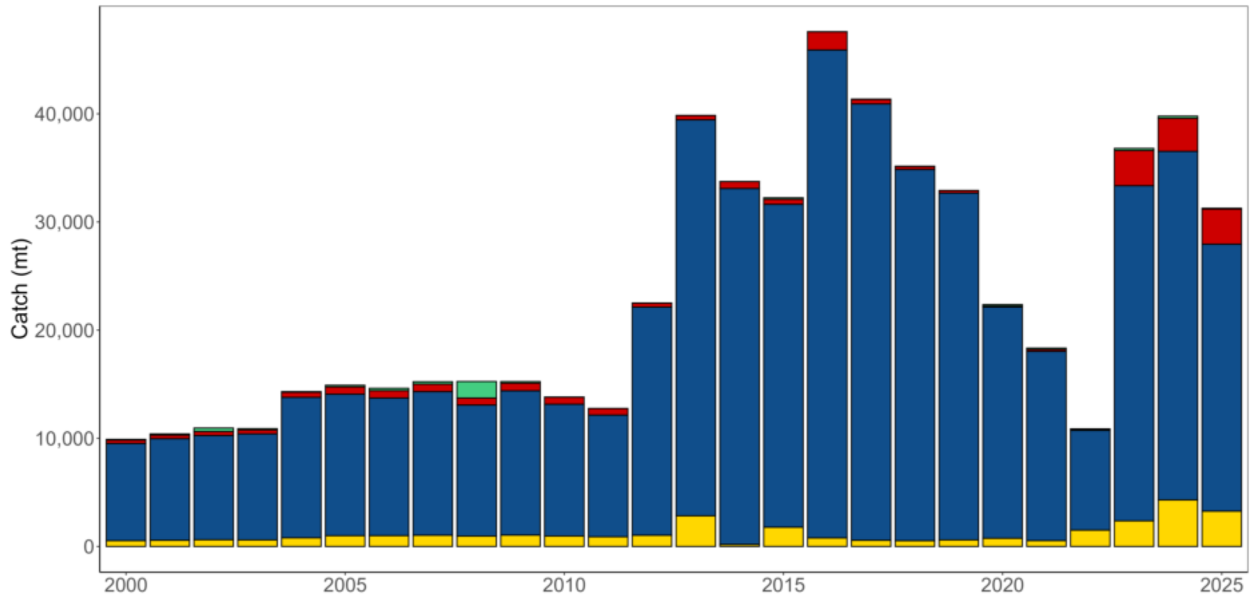

Figure 48: WCP–CA small-scale gillnet catch (mt) by species (albacore - green; bigeye - red; skipjack - blue; yellowfin - yellow)

Summary of catch by species

Skipjack

Total skipjack catches in the WCPFC–CA have increased steadily since 1960, more than doubling during the 1980s, and continuing to increase in subsequent years. Annual catches have consistently exceeded 1.5 million mt over the last decade, and 2024 produced a record catch at just under 2.1 million mt (Figure 49). Pole-and-line fleets, primarily Japanese, initially dominated the fishery, with the catch peaking at 380,000 mt in 1984. The relative importance of the pole-and-line fishery, however, has declined over the years primarily due to economic constraints. The skipjack catch increased during the 1980s due to growth in the international purse seine fleet, combined with increased catches by domestic fleets from Philippines and Indonesia (which have made up around 10% of the total skipjack catch in WCPFC–CA).

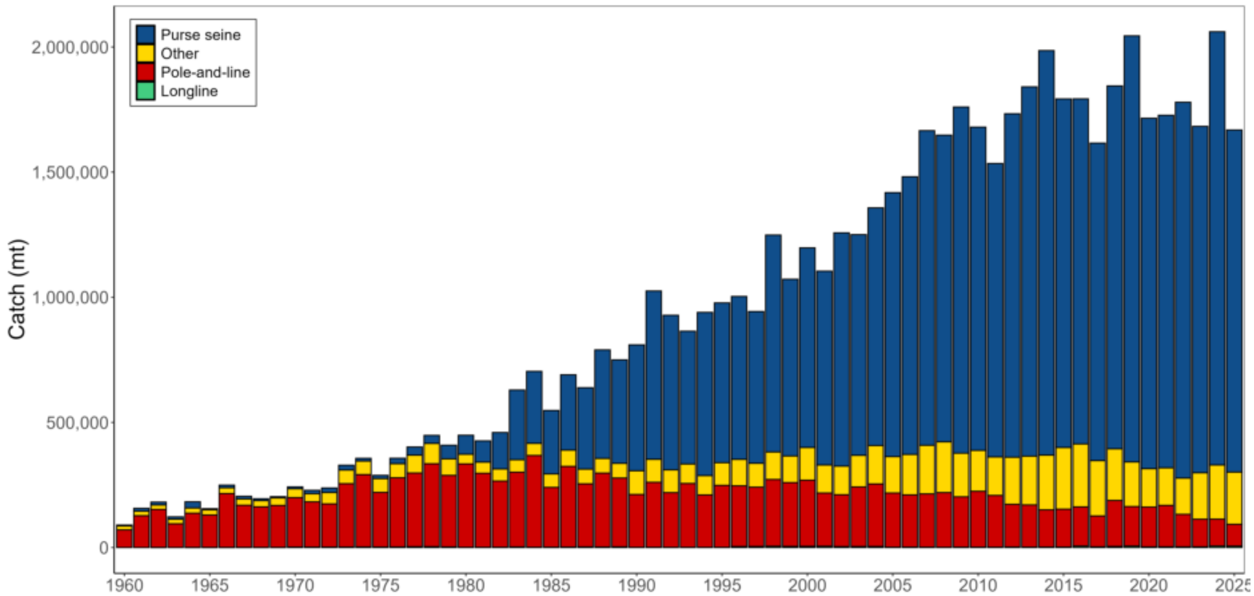

Figure 49: WCPFC–CA skipjack catch (mt) by gear

The 2025 WCPFC–CA skipjack catch of 1,668,409 mt was approximately 400,000 mt less than the catch in 2024. Catch in the purse seine fishery for 2025 (1,367,099 mt – 82%), noting that the trend in purse seine skipjack catch typically drives the trends in overall skipjack catch, and often total tuna catch for the WCPFC-CA. The pole-and-line catch for 2025 (87,286 mt – 5%) was the lowest catches since 1960, with reductions in both the Japanese and the Indonesian catches (noting 2025 estimates for this fishery are provisional). The various 'artisanal' gears in the domestic fisheries including Indonesia, Philippines and Japan took 154,810 mt in 2025 (9% of the total catch). The longline fishery also produced a relatively large skipjack catch in 2025 of 5,424 mt, which is minor for total skipjack catches (<1% of the total catch).

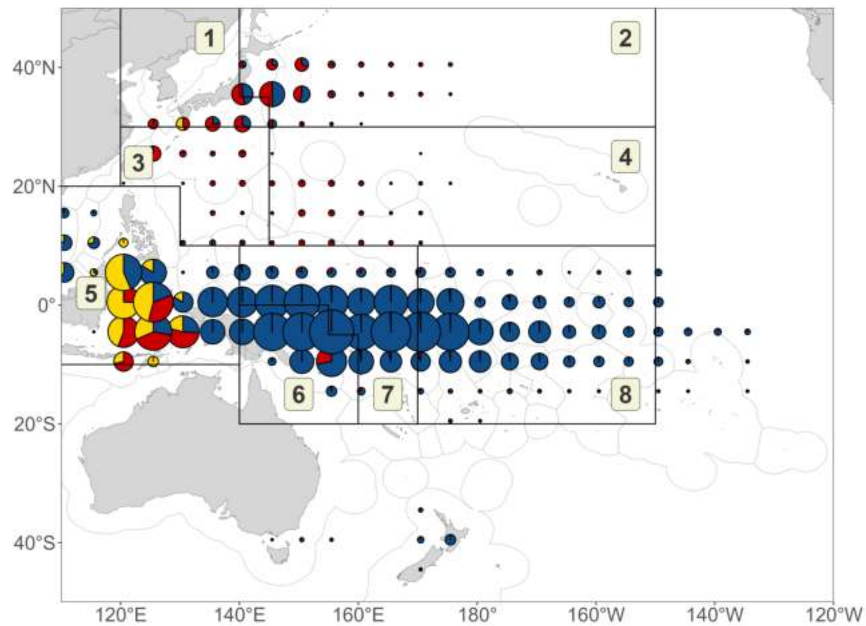

Figure 50: Distribution of skipjack tuna catch by gear, 1990-2025 (pole-and-line - red; purse seine - blue; other fisheries - yellow). The eight-region spatial stratification used in stock assessment is shown. Cells shown where the catch total is greater than or equal to 5000 mt.

The majority of the skipjack catch is taken in equatorial areas, and most of the remainder is taken in the seasonal domestic (home-water) fishery of Japan, with seasonal catches in the NZ fishery (Figure 50). The domestic fisheries in Indonesia (purse seine, pole-and-line and unclassified gears) and the Philippines (e.g., ring-net and purse seine) account for the majority of the skipjack catch in the western equatorial portion of the WCP–CA. As mentioned in the section *WCPFC-CA Purse Seine Fishery*, the spatial distribution of skipjack catch by purse seine vessels in the central and eastern equatorial areas is influenced by the prevailing ENSO conditions.

The Philippines and Indonesia domestic fisheries (archipelagic waters) generally account for most of the skipjack catch in the 20–40 cm size range (Figure 51), although associated purse seine catch also contribute to this range (e.g., in 2025). Most of the WCPFC–CA skipjack catch (by weight) is in the range 40–70 cm (corresponding to 1–2+ year-old fish – Figure 52); however the distribution across the sizes was relatively flat in 2025, suggesting comparable catch in weight from approximately 30-65 cm. Medium-large (60–70 cm) skipjack typically make up the greater proportion of the catch from unassociated, free swimming school sets. In 2023, a substantial portion of the free-school catch was made up of fish in the 70-80 cm range, which had not been observed for several years, whereas in 2024 and 2025, most of the free-school catch ranged between 50-70 cm. The overall purse seine skipjack size distribution in 2025 from associated sets (light blue) shows a broad distribution across size classes from about 25 to 65 cm. The skipjack size distributions in the Philippine/Indonesia archipelagic fisheries have been relatively constant for a number of years (Figure 51 – yellow).

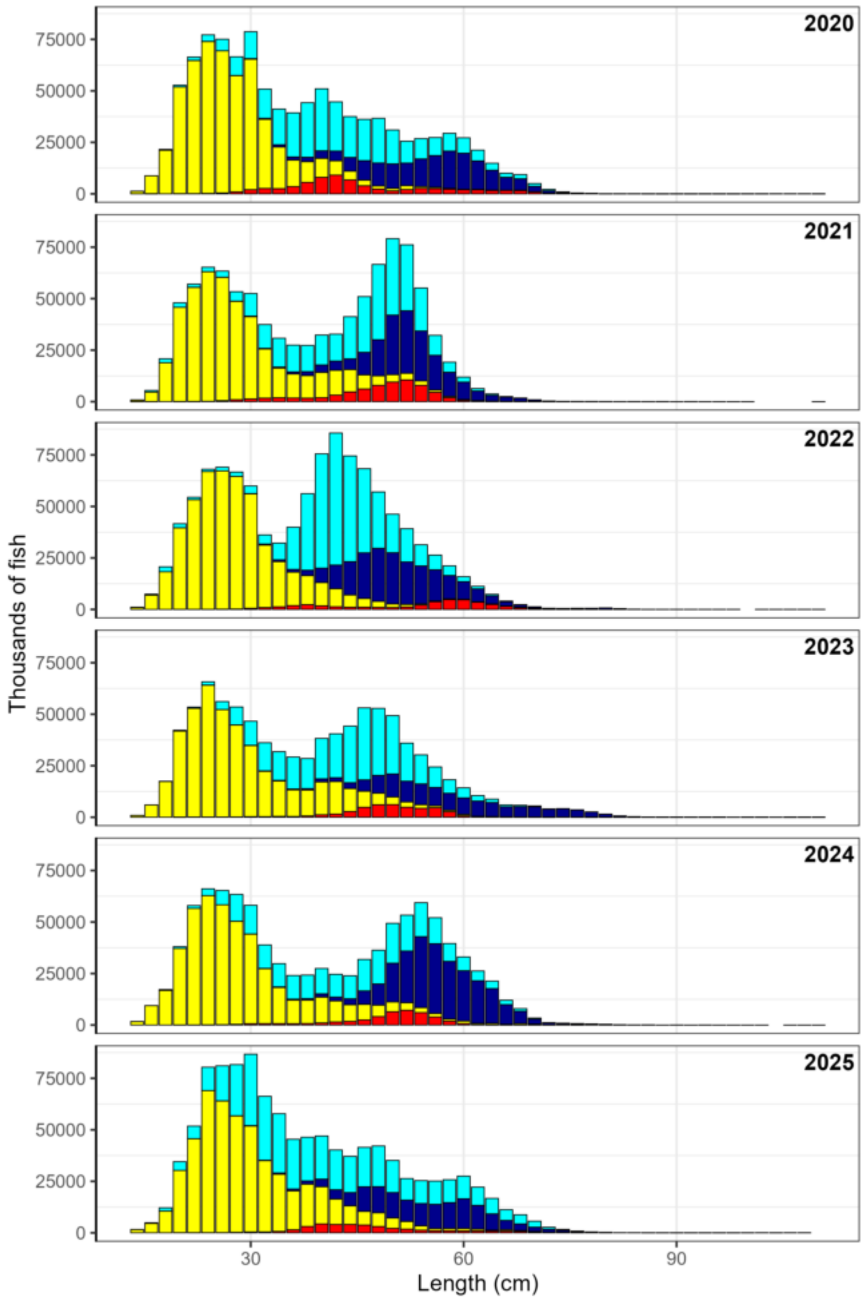

Figure 51: Annual catches (no. of fish) of skipjack tuna in the WCPO by size (2 cm intervals) and gear type, 2020-2025 (red – pole-and-line; yellow – Philippine-Indonesia archipelagic fisheries; light blue – purse seine associated; dark blue – purse seine unassociated)

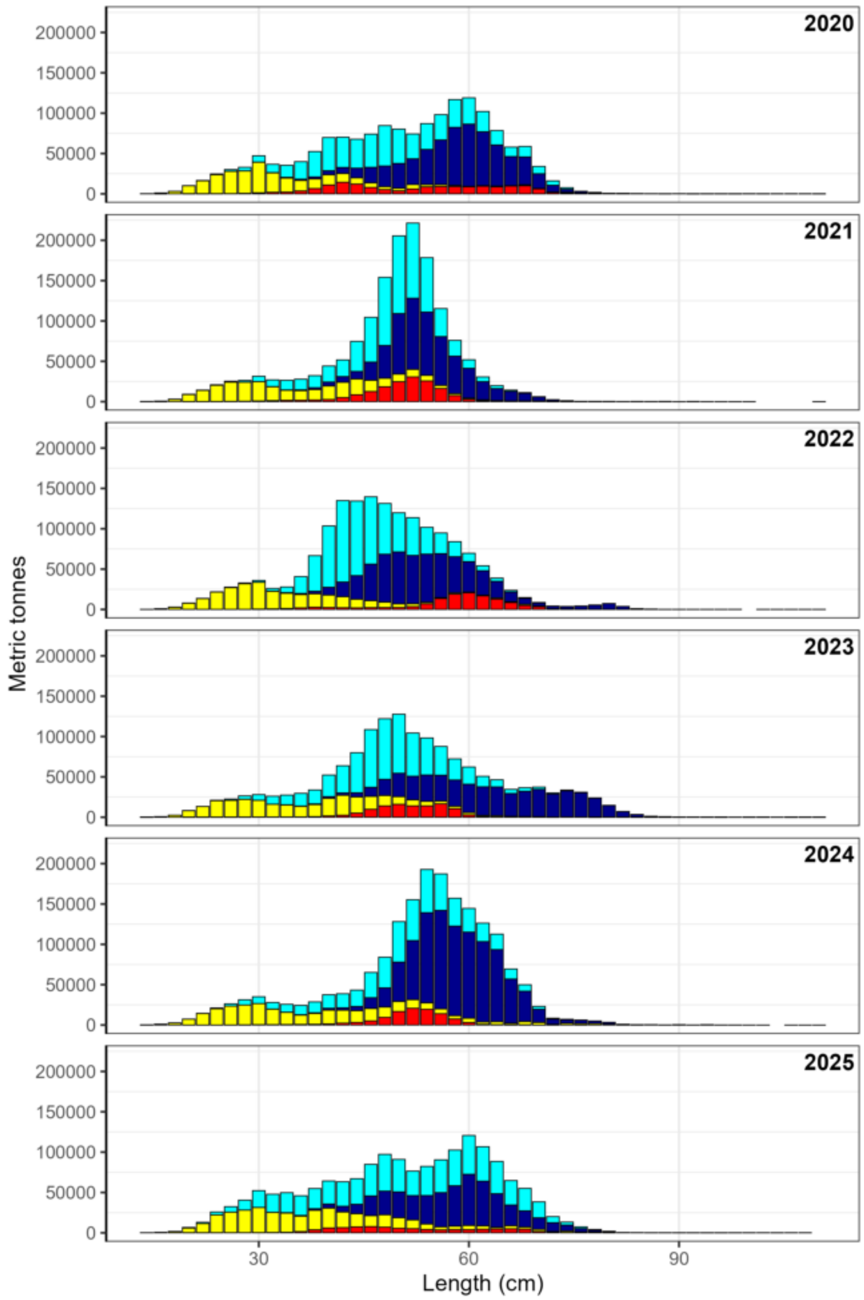

Figure 52: Annual catches (mt) of skipjack tuna in the WCPO by size (2 cm intervals) and gear type, 2020-2025 (red – pole-and-line; yellow – Philippine-Indonesia archipelagic fisheries; light blue – purse seine associated; dark blue – purse seine unassociated)

Yellowfin

The total yellowfin tuna catch in the WCPFC–CA has slowly increased over time but since 1998, jumped to a new level with annual catches regularly exceeding 500,000 mt (Figure 53), mainly due to increased catches in the purse seine fishery. The 2025 yellowfin catch (677,123 mt) was about 55,000 mt below the 2024 catch level and about 30,000 mt below the recent 10-year average

(~708,150 mt). The relatively high yellowfin tuna catches since 2018 are related to some extent to high catch levels from 'other' fisheries. Catches in the 'other' category are largely composed of yellowfin taken by various assorted gears (e.g., troll, ring-net, bagnet, gillnet, large-fish handline, small-fish hook-and-line and seine net) in the domestic fisheries of the Philippines and eastern Indonesia; the provisional 2025 estimate for this combined 'other' category is 230,617 mt (34% of the total yellowfin catch).

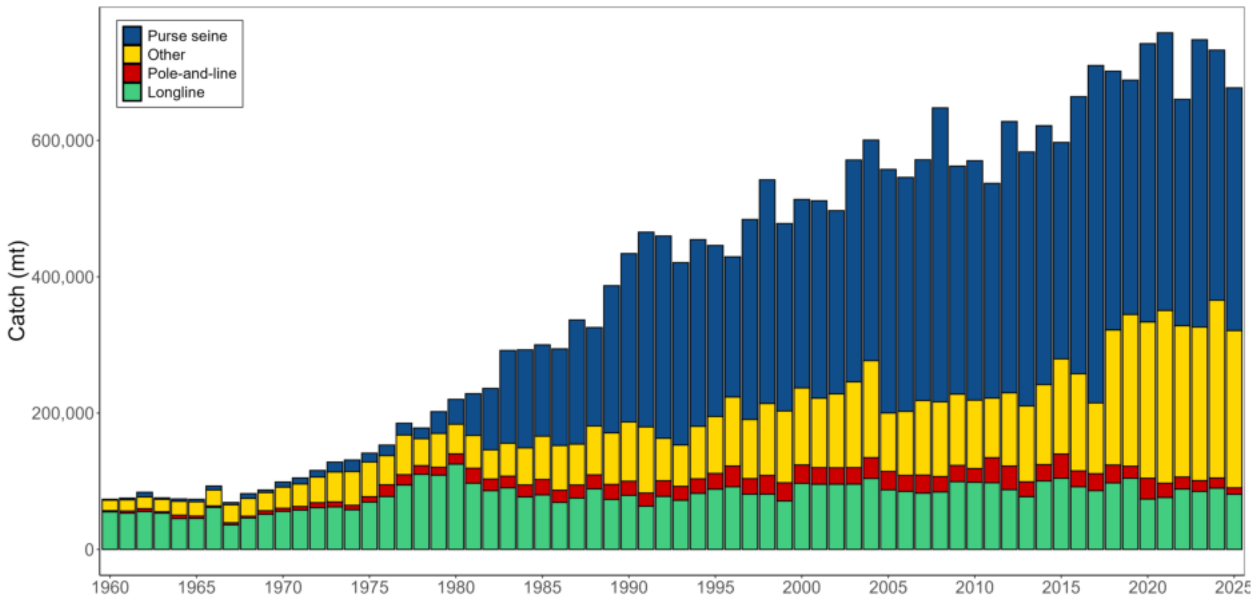

Figure 53: WCPFC–CA yellowfin catch (mt) by gear

The WCPFC–CA longline catch for 2025 (80,928 mt–12%) was a slight decrease compared to 2024, and among the lowest yellowfin catches over the past two decades. Since the late 1990s, the purse seine catch of yellowfin tuna (356,144 mt in 2025 – 53%) has accounted for about 3-5 times the longline yellowfin tuna catch.

The pole-and-line fisheries took only 9,434 mt during 2025 (~1.5% of the total yellowfin catch), which was about a 37% descrease from the 2024 catch level, and the lowest since 1975. Figure 54 shows the distribution of yellowfin catch by gear type for the period 1990–2025. As with skipjack, the great majority of the catch is taken in equatorial areas by large purse seine vessels, and a variety of gear types in the Indonesia and Philippine fisheries.

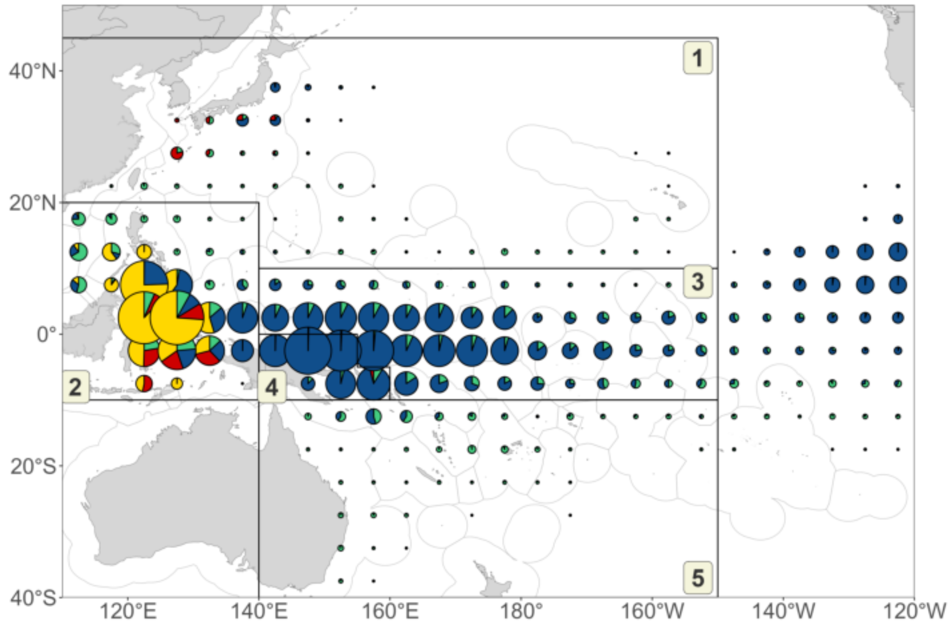

Figure 54: Distribution of yellowfin tuna catch by gear, 1990-2025 (longline - green; pole-and-line - red; purse seine - blue; other fisheries - yellow). The five-region spatial stratification used in stock assessment is shown. Cells shown where the catch total is greater than or equal to 2000 mt.

The domestic surface fisheries of the Philippines and Indonesia (archipelagic waters) take large numbers of small yellowfin in the 20–50 cm range (Figure 55), and their deep-water handline fisheries take smaller quantities of large yellowfin tuna ($>$ 110 cm; noting the large-fish handline is not sampled as well due to logistical challenges). In the purse seine fishery, smaller yellowfin are caught in log and FAD sets than in unassociated sets. A major portion of the purse seine catch is typically adult ($>$ 100 cm) yellowfin tuna, to the extent that the purse seine catch (by weight) of adult yellowfin tuna is usually higher than the longline catch. Most of the catch of large yellowfin tuna in the size range 120–150 cm from the purse seine unassociated sets is typically taken in the eastern tropical WCPFC-CA. The proportion of fish >130cm from unassociated sets during 2024 and 2025 decreased from 2023, likely due to the westward concentration of fishing effort, showing a broader distribution of size classes in the catch (down to 50 cm; Figure 56). The bimodal distribution (in catch weight) from the Philippine and Indonesia archipelagic fisheries highlights the different fishing modes and the importance of these fisheries for yellowfin removals. Section *Species and size composition of the catch* also provides some insights into the distribution of purse seine yellowfin catch by area and size.

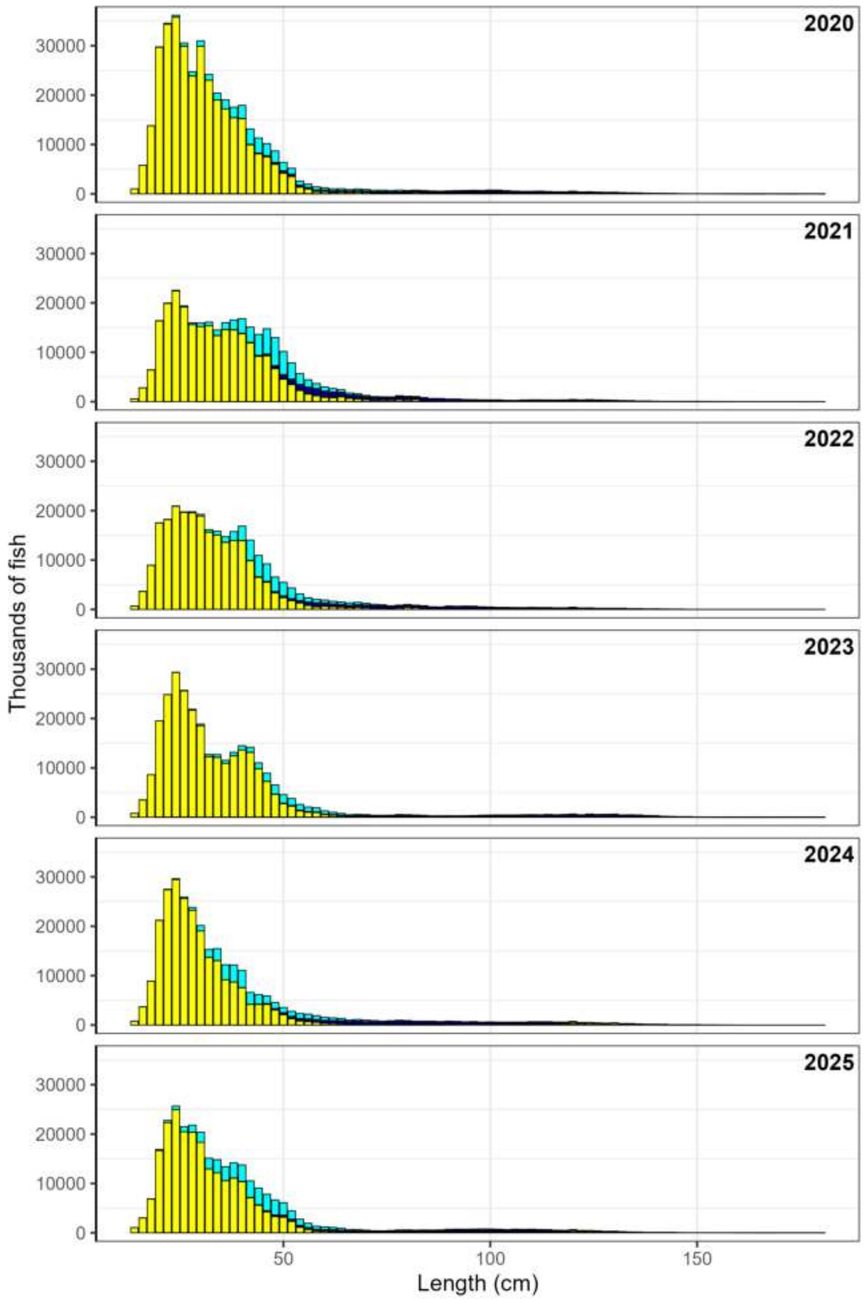

Figure 55: Annual catches (no. of fish) of yellowfin tuna in the WCPO by size (2 cm intervals) and gear type, 2020-2025 (green – longline; yellow – Philippine-Indonesia archipelagic fisheries; light blue – purse seine associated; dark blue – purse seine unassociated)

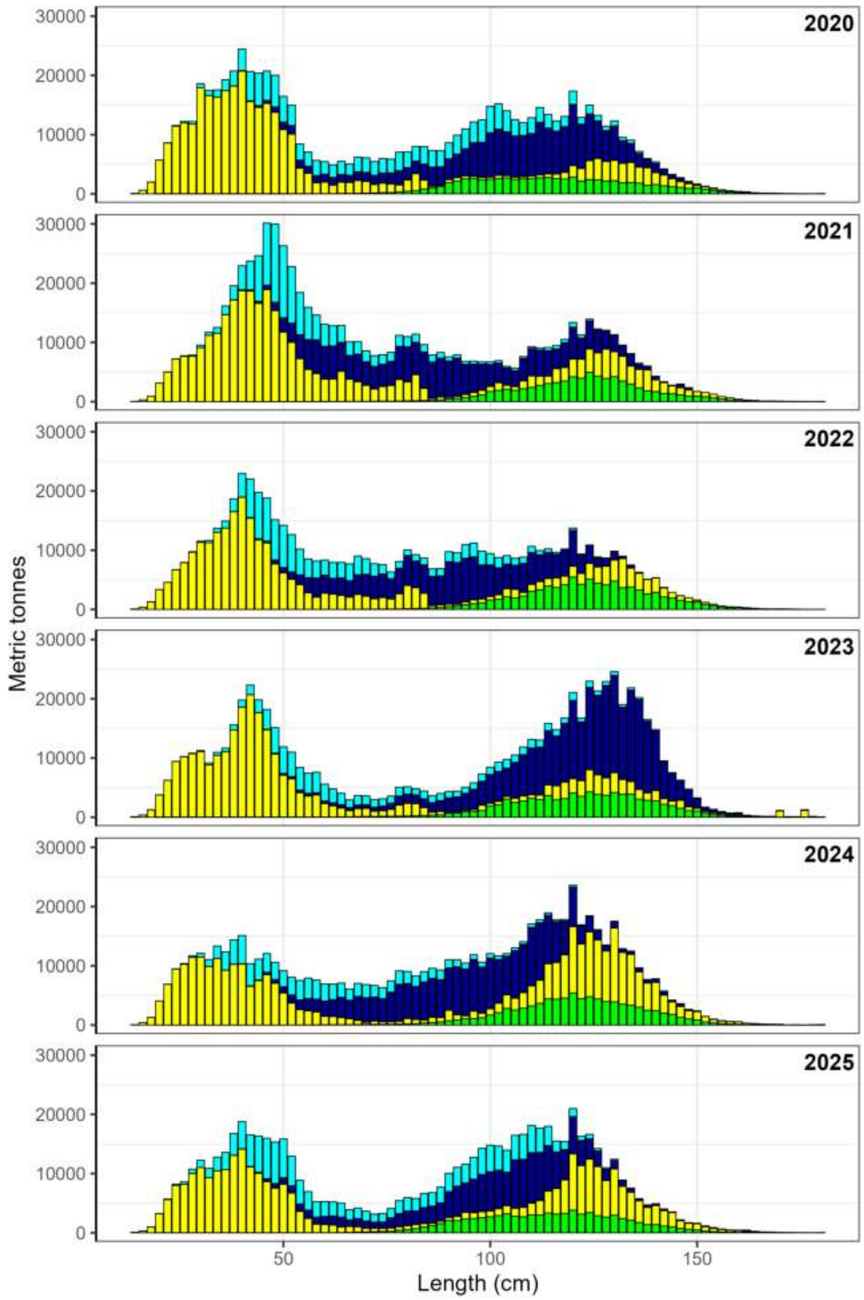

Figure 56: Annual catches (mt) of yellowfin tuna in the WCPO by size (2 cm intervals) and gear type, 2020-2025 (green – longline; yellow – Philippine-Indonesia archipelagic fisheries; light blue – purse seine associated; dark blue – purse seine unassociated)

Bigeye

The provisional WCPFC-CA bigeye catch (155,864 mt) for 2025 is slightly higher than the ctaches of the past 5 years. The provisional WCPFC-CA longline bigeye catch (52,145 mt) was about 2,500 mt lower than the 2024 catch; catches have been remarkably stable for the past five years (Figure 57). The WCPFC-CA purse seine bigeye catch has exceeded the longline catch for most of the past ten years; and 2025 was no exception. The purse seine and longline fisheries have accounted for an average of 85% of the total WCPFC-CA bigeye catch from about 2010 to 2020, a percentage that has decreased in recent years (74% in 2025) due to the bigeye catches reported from 'other' gears in the Indonesia/Philippine/Vietnam regions of the western WCPO (Figure 58).

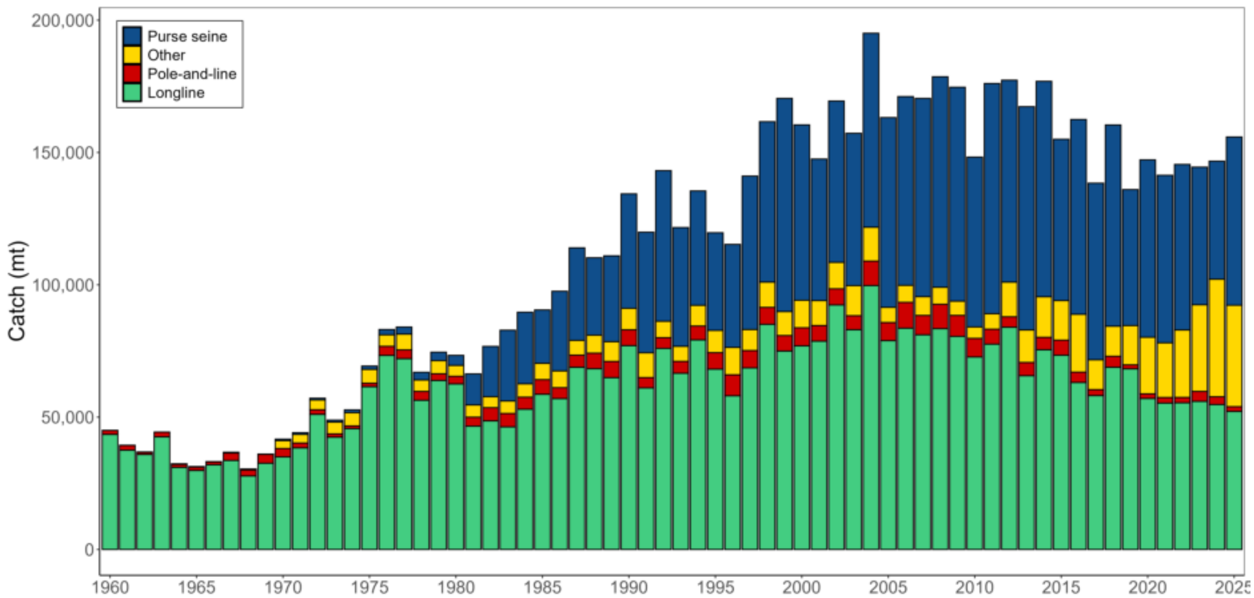

Figure 57: WCPFC–CA bigeye catch (mt) by gear

The WCPFC–CA pole-and-line fishery has generally accounted for between 1,000–5,000 mt (1- 4%) of bigeye catch annually over the past decade (1,815 mt in 2025). The 'other' category, representing various gears (including troll) in the Philippine, Indonesia[6], Vietnam and Japanese domestic fisheries has generally fluctuated between an estimated 11,000–26,000 mt (7–15% of the total WCPFC–CA bigeye catch) over the past decade; however, in 2025 these catches climbed to 38,325 mt (25% of the bigeye catch) representing the second highest catch of the time series.

Figure 58 shows the spatial distribution of bigeye catch in the Pacific for the period 1990–2025. The majority of the WCPFC–CA catch is taken in equatorial areas, both by purse seine and longline, but with some longline catch in sub-tropical areas (e.g., east of Japan and off the east coast of Australia). In the equatorial areas, much of the longline catch is taken in the central Pacific, adjoining the important traditional bigeye longline area in the eastern Pacific.

[6] Bigeye tuna estimates in the Indonesian troll fishery were provided for the first time for 2013 but have subsequently (since 2017) been included in the 'other' category.

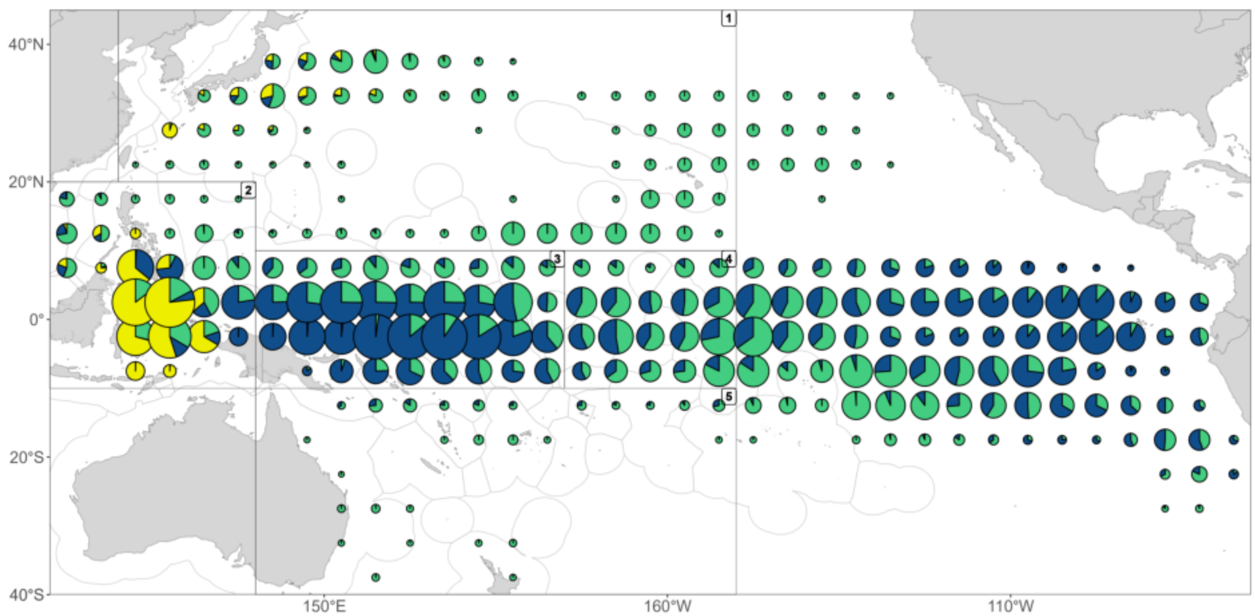

Figure 58: Distribution of bigeye tuna catch, 1990-2025. The five-region spatial stratification used in stock assessment for the WCPFC–CA is shown (longline - green; purse seine - blue; other fisheries - yellow). Cells shown where the catch total is greater than or equal to 2000 mt.

As with skipjack and yellowfin tuna, the domestic surface fisheries of the Philippines and Indonesia (archipelagic waters) take relatively large numbers of small bigeye in the range 20–60 cm (Figure 59). The longline fishery and associated purse seine sets clearly account for most of the catch (by weight) in the WCPFC-CA (Figure 60). Unlike large yellowfin tuna, large bigeye tuna are very rarely taken in the WCPO free-school purse seine fishery and only a relatively small amount come from the handline fishery in the Philippines. Bigeye tuna sampled in the longline fishery are predominantly adult fish with a mean size of ~130 cm FL (range 80-170+ cm FL). Associated sets account for nearly all the bigeye catch in the WCPFC–CA purse seine fishery with considerable variation in the sizes from year to year, but the majority of associated-set bigeye tuna are generally in the range of 45–75 cm.

The 2025 bigeye size classes are dominated by small fish 35-50 cm from the Indonesia/Philippine archipelagic fisheries (Figure 59), whereas catches from the associated purse seine fishery were estimate be far fewer, albeit spanning a much broader size range (~30-100 cm).

Figure 60 for 2025 and years prior generally show three distinct modes in the size data (i) one around 30-50 cm for the Indonesia/Philippine domestic fisheries; (ii) a second mode shifting between approximately 50-100 cm from associated purse seine sets; and (iii) the larger size classes from longline catches in the range of 80-170 cm. In the most recent years, there are larger fish coming from the Indonesia/Philippine category; these catches are generally harvested from the large-fish handline fishery. Size data from the free-school purse seine fishery were few in number from 2025 and spread across a broad size range.

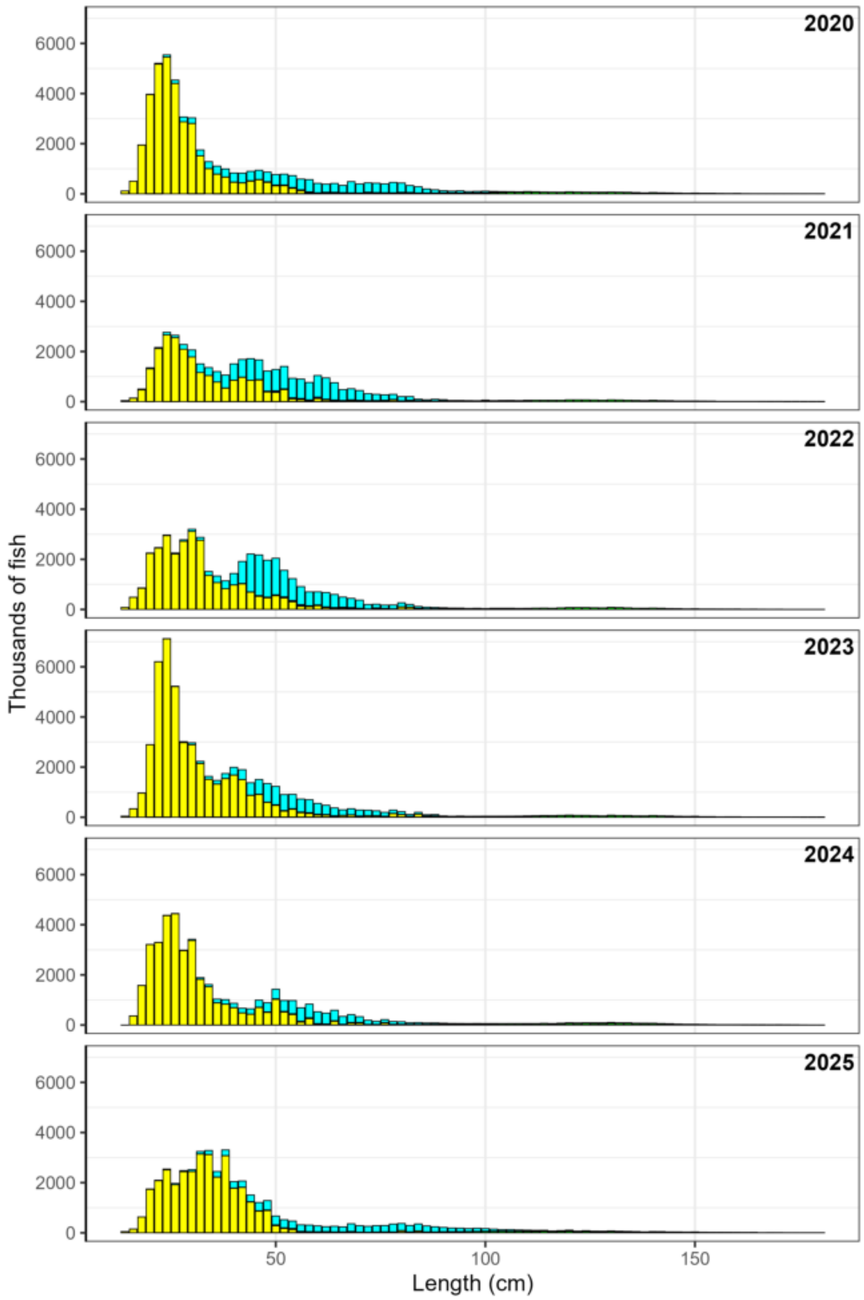

Figure 59: Annual catches (no. of fish) of bigeye tuna in the WCPO by size (2 cm intervals) and gear type, 2020-2025 (green – longline; yellow – Philippine-Indonesia archipelagic fisheries; light blue – purse seine associated; dark blue – purse seine unassociated)

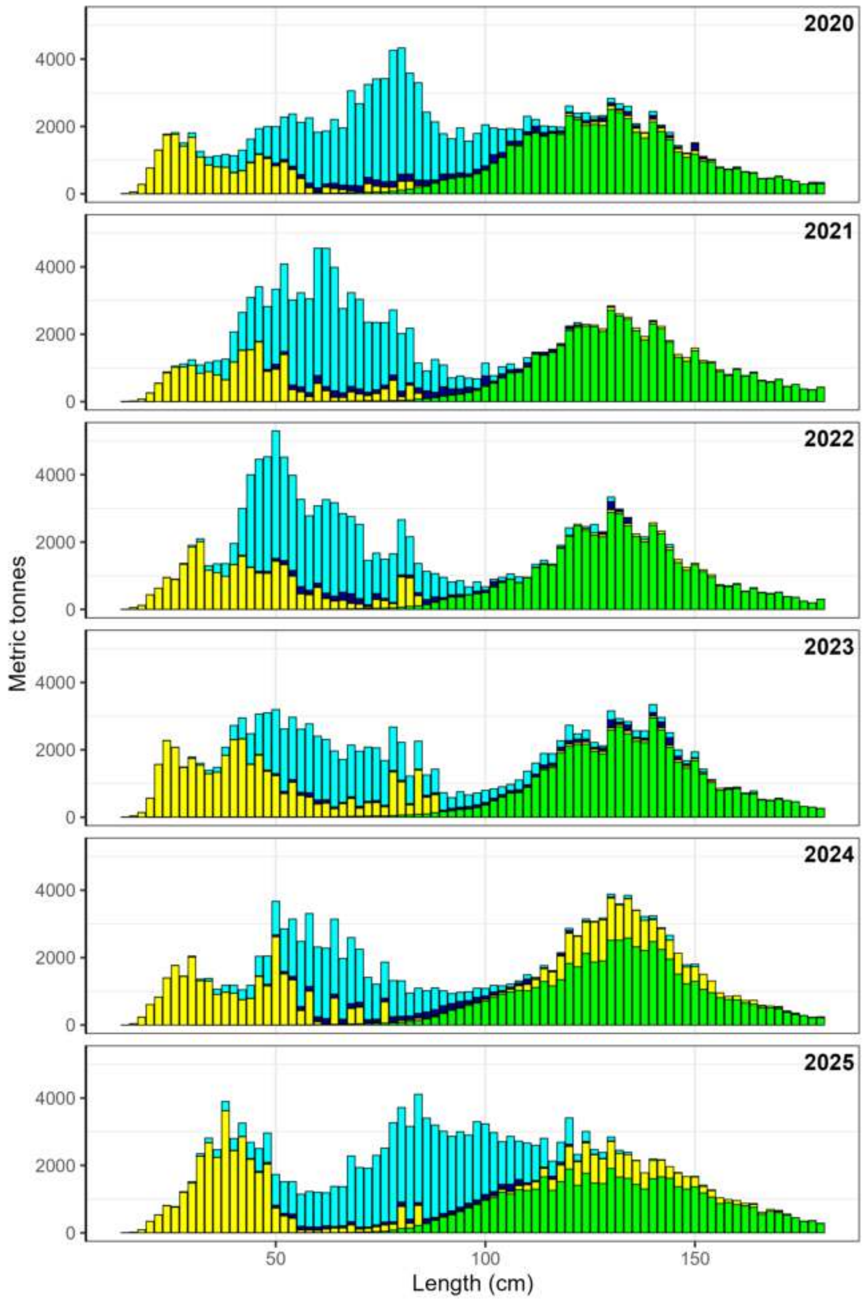

Figure 60: Annual catches (mt) of bigeye tuna in the WCPO by size (2 cm intervals) and gear type, 2020-2025 (green – longline; yellow – Philippine-Indonesia archipelagic fisheries; light blue – purse seine associated; dark blue – purse seine unassociated)

Albacore

Prior to 2001, South Pacific albacore catches were generally in the range 25,000–50,000 mt, with a significant peak in 1989 (49,076 mt) when driftnet fishing was in existence. Since 2001, catches have greatly exceeded this range. The provisional South Pacific albacore catch in 2025 (62,228 mt) does not yet account for the catches from the Eastern Pacific Ocean, and therefore these catches will likely increase once all data have been consolidated[7]. South Pacific albacore catches have trended downward in recent years (since approximately 2012; acknowledging that overall catch levels are notably higher than the historical period), but with high inter-annual variability, as catch levels in 2017 and 2022 were some of the highest catch records of the time series (94,499 and 90,979 mt, respectively).

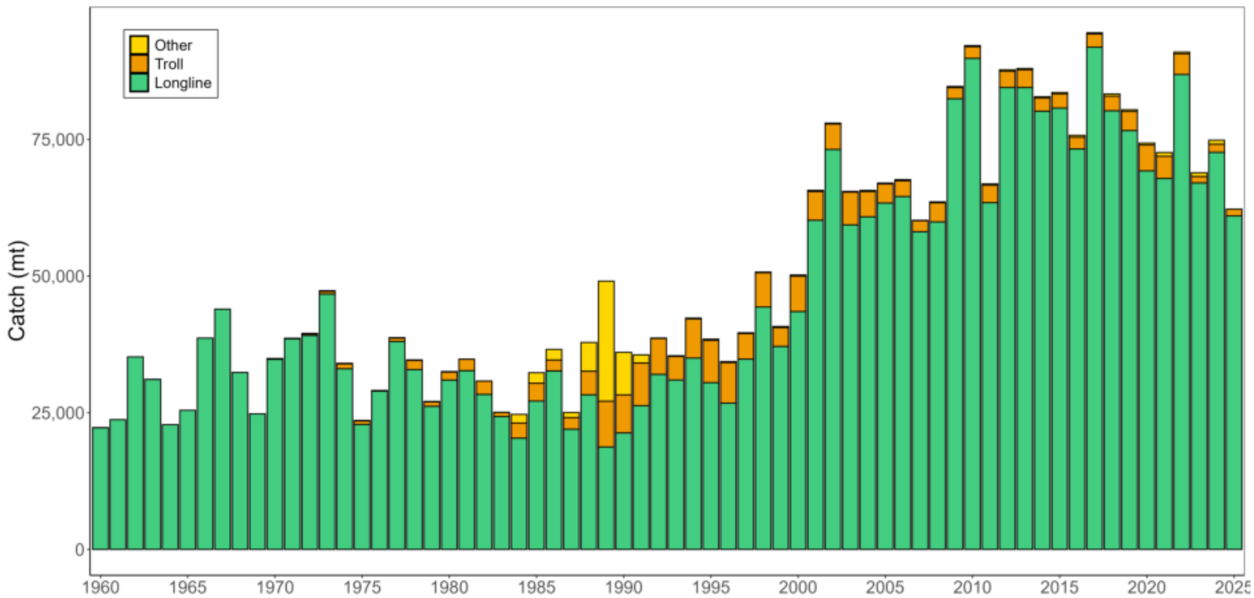

Figure 61: South Pacific albacore catch (mt) by gear ('Other' is primarily represented by catches from the driftnet fishery)

In the post-driftnet era, longline has accounted for most of the South Pacific albacore catch (> 75% in the 1990s, but > 90% in recent years). The annual South Pacific albacore troll catch (with a season spanning November–April) dropped from a range between 4,000–8,000 mt during the 1990s, to a range of 1,000–5,000 mt (Figure 44) with 2025 catches (1,223 mt) slightly lower than 2024, but still representing one of the lowest catches since 1980. The provisional WCPFC–CA albacore catch for 2025 (87,549 mt) was a decrease of about 33,000 mt from 2024 and around 60,500 mt lower than the record (148,051 mt in 2002). The WCPFC–CA albacore catch (which includes catches from fisheries in the North Pacific Ocean west of 150°W) typically contributes around 80%–90% of the Pacific catch of albacore (provisional Pacific Ocean albacore tuna catch for 2025 is 105,469 mt).

The longline catch of albacore is distributed over a large area of the South Pacific (Figure 62) but concentrated in the west. The Chinese-Taipei distant-water longline fleet catch is taken in all regions, while the Pacific Island domestic longline fleets catches are restricted to the latitudes 10°–25°S. Troll catches are distributed in New Zealand's coastal waters, mainly off the South Island, and along

[7]This catch figures comes from WCPFC-CCM reported annual catch estimates for albacore for the south Pacific, and not the sum of the aggregate catch and effort data that includes the data provisioned by the IATTC.

the Sub-tropical Convergence Zone (STCZ). Less than 20% of the overall South Pacific albacore catch is usually taken east of 150°W.

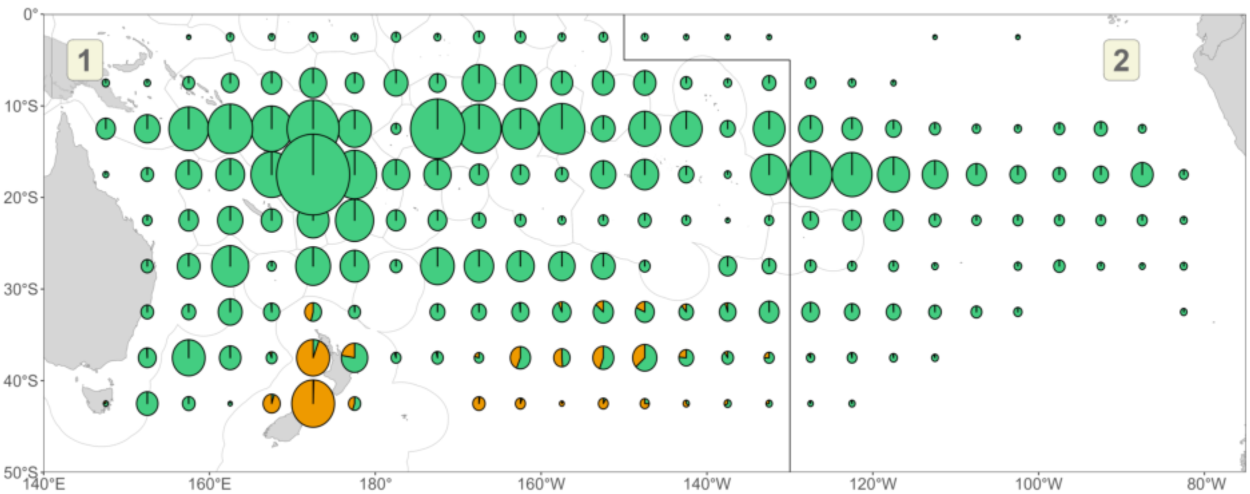

Figure 62: Distribution of South Pacific albacore tuna catch, 1988-2025. The two-region spatial stratification used in stock assessment is shown (longline - green; troll - orange). 2025 data for the EPO have not yet been incorporated.

The longline fishery takes adult albacore in the narrow size range of 90–105 cm and the troll fishery take juvenile fish in the range of 45–80cm (Figure 63, Figure 64). Juvenile albacore also appear in the longline catch from time-to-time (e.g., fish in the range 60–70 cm sampled from the longline catch). The size distribution in the South Pacific albacore catch for recent years shows a clear mode in each year of small albacore from the troll fishery, around 60 cm (in 2024; similar to 2022) and 45 cm in 2023. Similarly for longline, a single mode of larger fish (95-105 cm modes) is common, and has been relatively stable in recent years.

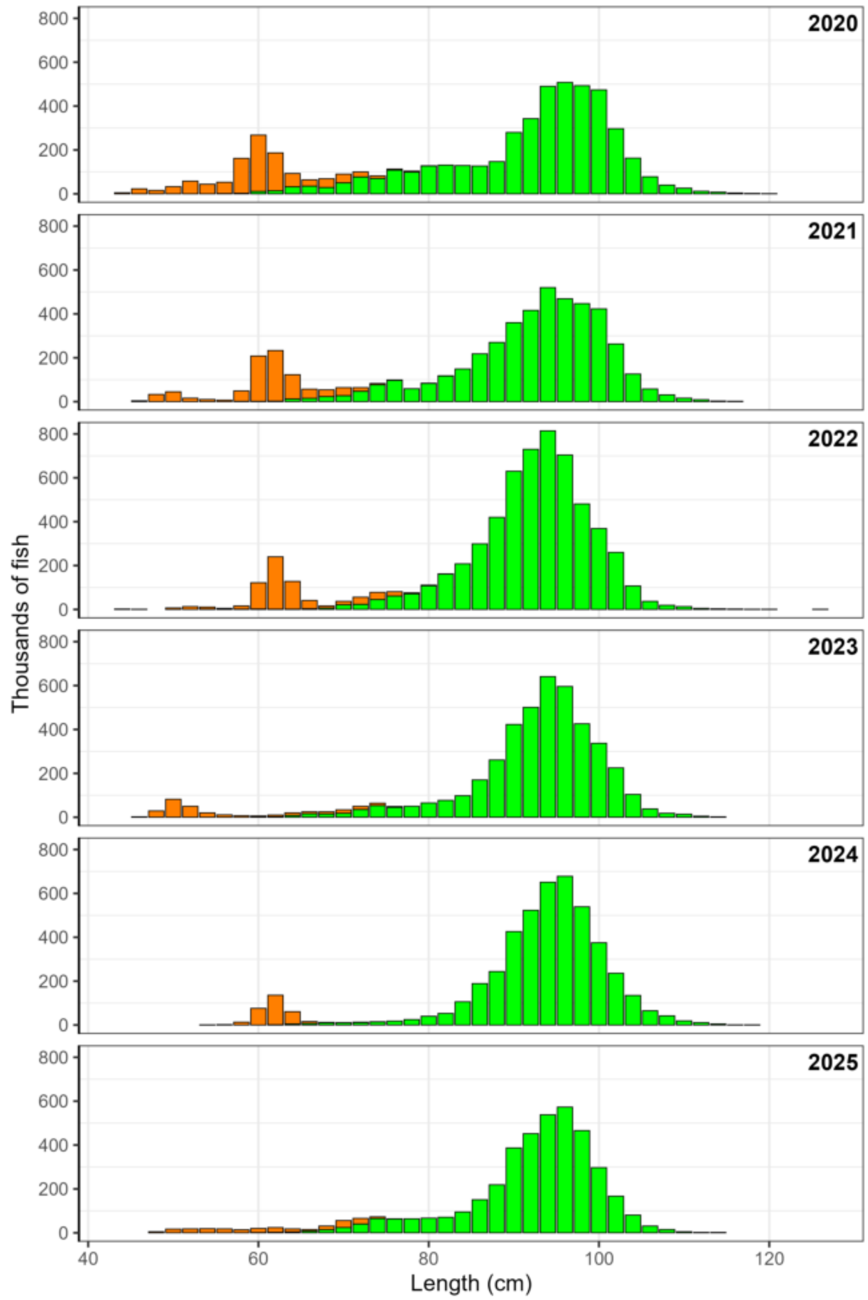

Figure 63: Annual catches (no. of fish) of albacore tuna in the South Pacific Ocean by size (2 cm intervals) and gear type, 2020-2025 (green – longline; orange – troll)

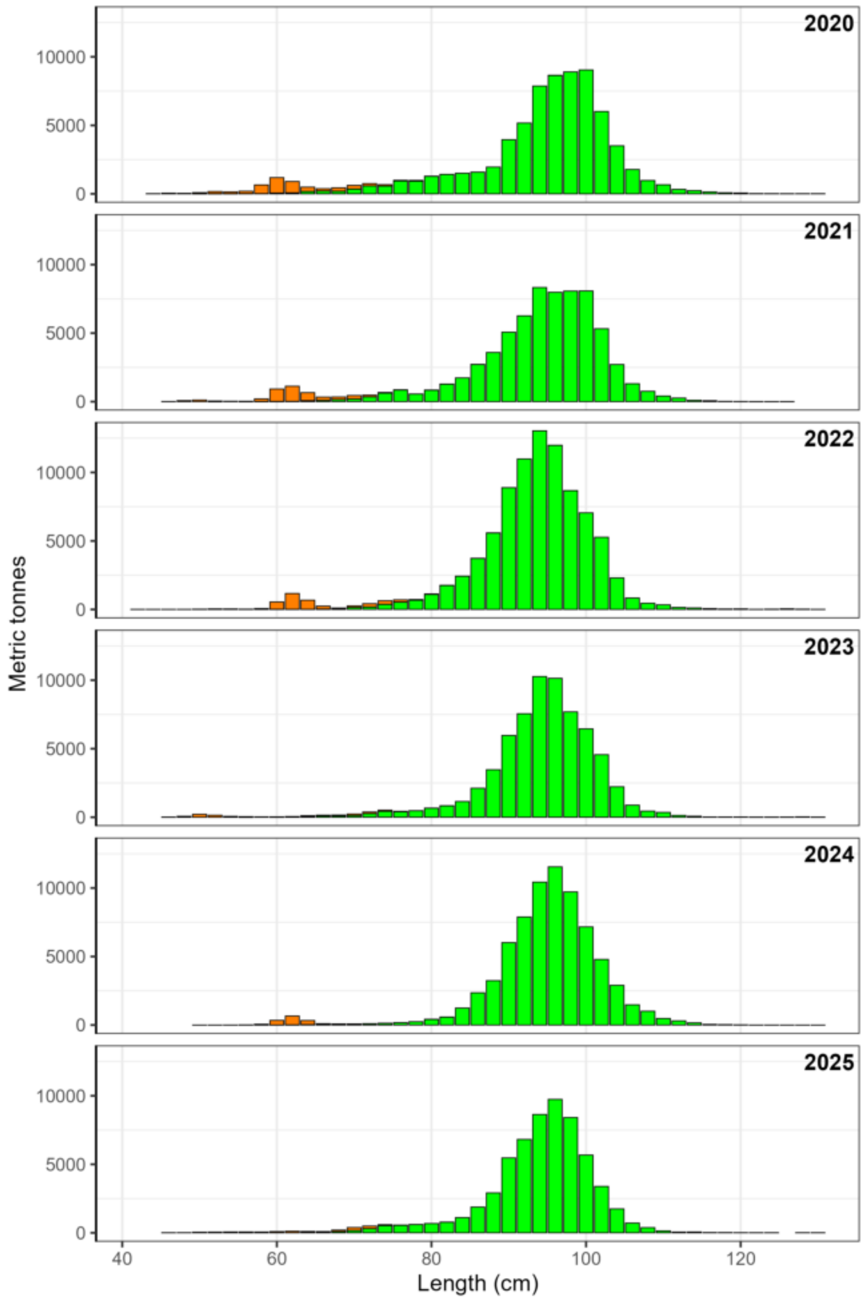

Figure 64: Annual catches (mt) of albacore tuna in the South Pacific Ocean by size (2 cm intervals) and gear type, 2020-2025 (green – longline; orange – troll)

North Pacific albacore

Albacore tuna are mainly taken by the longline, pole-and-line and troll gears in the north Pacific Ocean, with minor catches by purse seine; albacore tuna was also the target of the driftnet fishery in the 1980s. Annual catches of North Pacific albacore have fluctuated since the 1950s, with peak periods in the 1970s and then again in the late 1990s into the early 2000s (Figure 65). In recent years, catches have been lower, due to declines in the pole-and-line and longline catches. There remains some uncertainty around the availability and quality of estimates for some fleets and gears, and these estimates have yet to be reconciled with estimates from the ISC and the IATTC. The North Pacific albacore catch for 2025 (provisional 43,241 mt) has continued to decline, and at this stage is the second lowest since the beginning of the time series in 1950 (Figure 65).

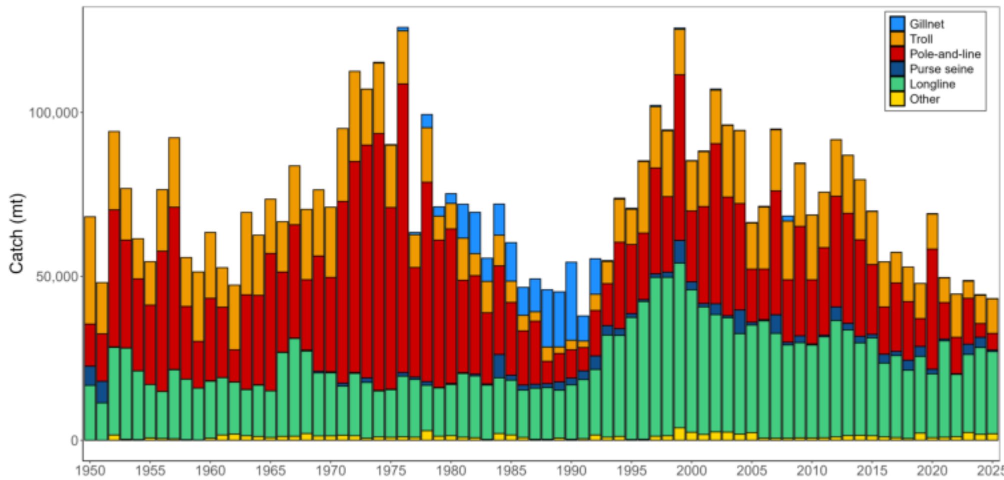

Figure 65: North Pacific albacore catch (mt) by gear

Pacific bluefin

Bluefin tuna are mainly taken by purse seine gear in the North Pacific Ocean with minor catches from the longline, troll and by other small-scale gears in Japan waters; there have also been significant historic catches from the troll and pole-and-line gears. Annual catches of Pacific bluefin tuna have fluctuated since the 1970s, with peak periods in the early 1980s and for certain years in the mid-late 1990s and into the first decade of 2000s (Figure 66). Catches declined over the period 2012–2015 but have increased in recent years. There remains some uncertainty around the availability and quality of estimates for some fleets and gears, and these estimates have yet to be reconciled with estimates from the ISC and the IATTC. The provisional Pacific bluefin tuna catch (11,328 mt) for 2025. which was the lowest catch of the last five years (Figure 66).

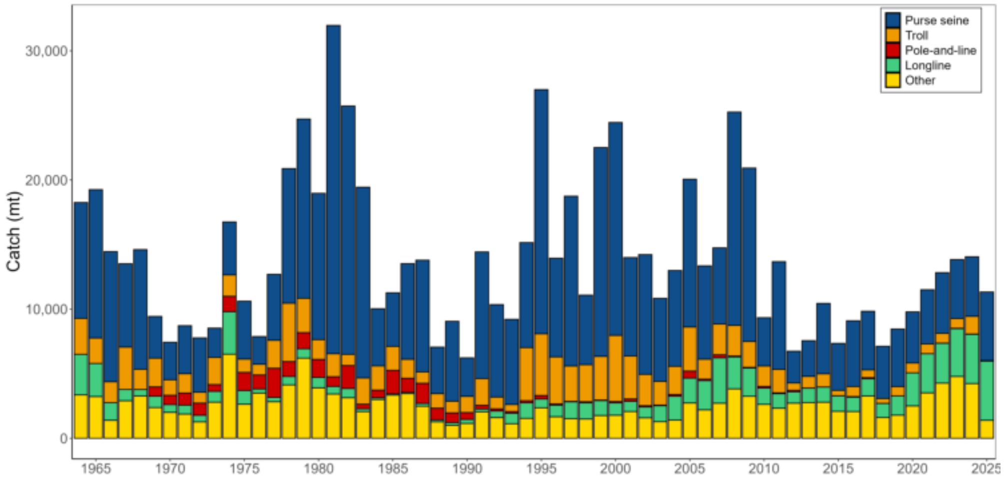

Figure 66: Pacific bluefin catch (mt) by gear

South Pacific swordfish

The distant-water and offshore Asian fleets (Japan, Chinese Taipei, and Korea) accounted for most of the South Pacific swordfish catch from 1972 to the mid-1990s (Figure 67), with catches slowly increasing from 2,500 mt to about 5,000 mt. The development of target (domestic) fisheries in Australia and New Zealand accounted for most of the increase in total catch to around 10,000 mt in early 2000s, with burgeoning Pacific Island domestic fleets also contributing. The EU-Spanish longline fleet targeting swordfish entered the fishery in 2004 and resulted in total swordfish catches increasing significantly to a new level of around 15,000 mt, and then to more than 20,000 mt over the period 2011-2018, with contributions from the EU-Portuguese fleet and distant-water and offshore Asian fleet catches (Figure 68). The provisional 2025 catch estimate for the South Pacific swordfish (18,501 mt; largely landed by the EU-Spanish fleet (76%)) was slightly higher than the 2024 catch level but a significant reduction from the peak in 2016 and 2015 (noting that 2025 estimates for some fleets are provisional at this time).

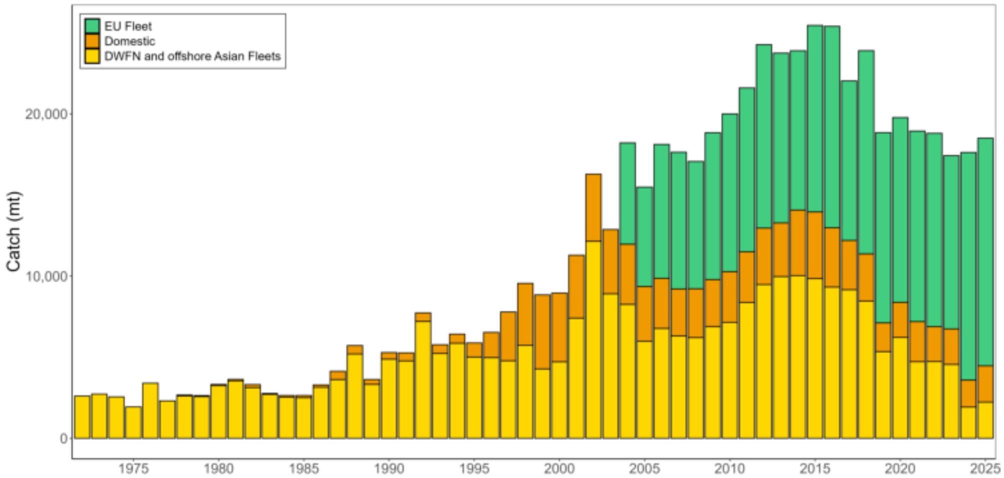

Figure 67: South Pacific longline swordfish catch (mt) by fleet

The catch of swordfish for the WCPFC-CA south of the equator (Figure 68) in 2025 was 4,385 mt, a slight increase of 130 mt from 2024 and considerably lower than the peak years of 2012-2014, with a notable decrease in the DWFN and Asian fleet catches compared to a decade prior.

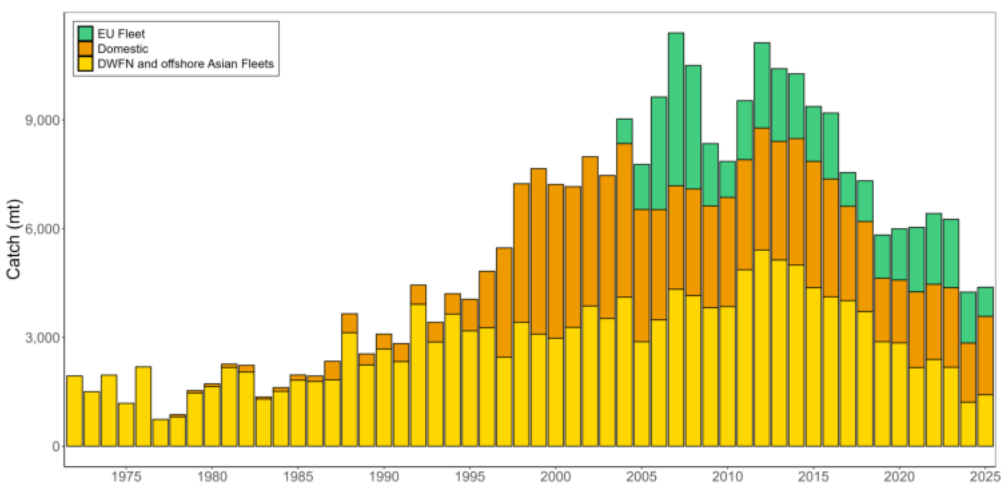

Figure 68: WCPFC–CA (south of equator) longline swordfish catch (mt) by fleet

The longline catch of swordfish is distributed over a large area of the South Pacific (Figure 69). There are four main areas of catches (i) the far eastern Pacific Ocean off Chile and Peru, where most of the EU-Spanish fleet catch comes from but also some of the distant-water and offshore Asian catches; (ii) the south central Pacific Ocean region south of the Cook Islands and French Polynesia, predominantly covered by the EU-Spanish fleet; (iii) the coastal waters of New Zealand, Australia and adjacent Pacific Island countries (domestic fleets); and (iv) the equatorial Pacific Ocean between 130–160°W, covered by the distant-water and offshore Asian fleets.

The swordfish caught throughout the South Pacific Ocean are generally in the range of 110–250 cm, with a mean around 180 cm (lower jaw-fork length). In previous years, there has been evidence of inter-annual variation in the size of swordfish taken by fleet and variation in the size of fish by fleet, for example, the EU-Spanish fleet generally catch larger swordfish than the distant-water and offshore Asian fleets, which could be related to area fished. There have been no size data collected for the EU-Spanish longline fleet for the past few years.

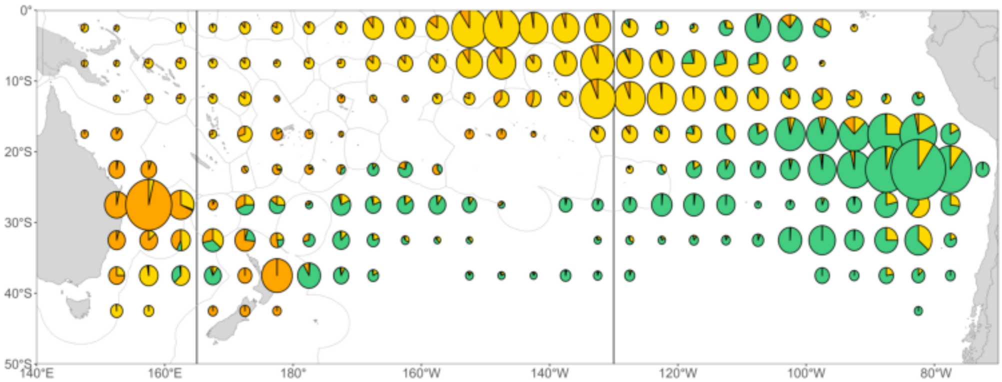

Figure 69: Distribution of South Pacific longline swordfish catch, 1995–2025 (DWFN and offshore Asian fleets - yellow; Spanish fleet - green; others - orange). 2025 data for the EPO have not yet been incorporated.

North Pacific Swordfish

Swordfish are mainly taken by the longline gear in the north Pacific Ocean with minor catches by other gears, including gillnet fisheries. Annual catches of North Pacific swordfish have generally exceeded 10,000 mt since 1972 (Figure 70). Between the mid-2000s to the late-2010s several reported catches were amongst the highest recorded (after the record catch in 1993), although there remains some uncertainty around the availability and quality of estimates for some fleets and gears, and these estimates have yet to be reconciled with estimates from the ISC and the IATTC. The provisional North Pacific swordfish catch (7,787 mt) for 2025 suggests a continuation of the recent period of relatively low catches, compared to those from the decades prior (Figure 70).

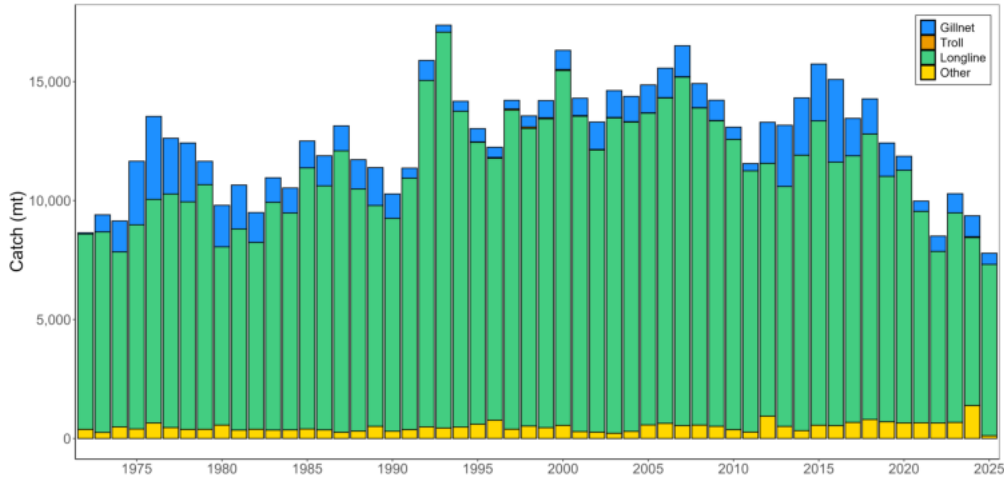

Figure 70: North Pacific swordfish catch (mt) by gear

Figure 71 shows the distribution of longline-caught swordfish in the Pacific Ocean, with catches concentrated north of 20°N in the North Pacific, including the waters off the east coast of Japan, and adjacent to the Hawaii EEZ. Swordfish catches in the North Pacific Ocean are also prevalent in Indonesia and in the waters bounded by China, Chinese Taipei, Philippines and Vietnam. Complete aggregate data stratified by area are not available for the other gears at this stage. In the South Pacific, the distribution is more broad across the latitudinal gradient, with high concentrations of catches off the coast of South America to the east and the east coast of Australia to the west.

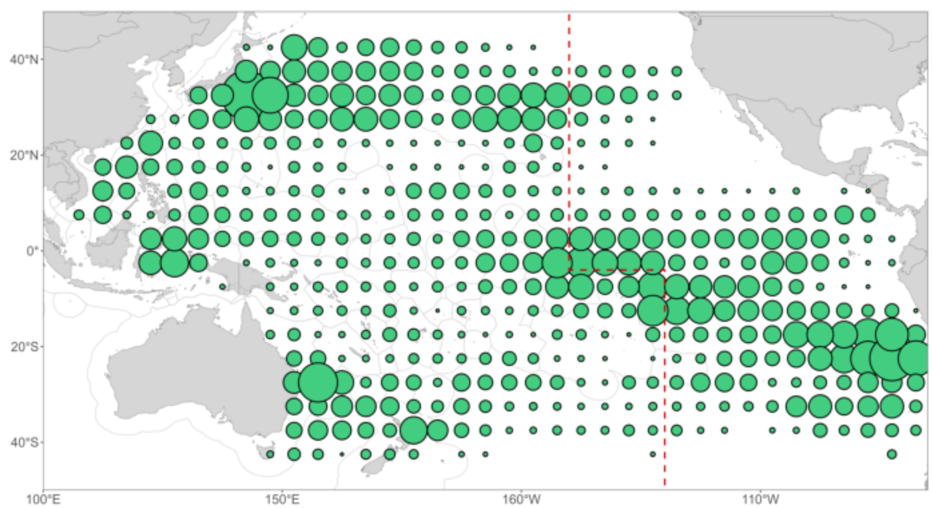

Figure 71: Distribution of longline swordfish catch in the Pacific Ocean, 1990–2025. 2025 data for the EPO have not yet been incorporated.

Other billfish

Blue Marlin

Blue marlin are mainly taken by the longline gear in the tropical WCPFC-CA with relatively small amounts also taken by purse seine, troll, handline and a range of other small-scale gears (e.g., gillnet). WCPFC-CA catches of blue marlin have ranged from around 7,000–25,000 mt since the 1970s although there remains some uncertainty around some of the estimates by fleet and gear. The provisional 2025 WCPFC-CA blue marlin catch (9,257 mt) was approximately 4,000 mt lower than the 2024 catch levels (Figure 72). Figure 73 shows the distribution of longline-caught blue marlin highlighting that they are more prevalent in the western tropical waters of the WCPFC–CA (complete aggregate data stratified by area are not available for the other gears at this stage).

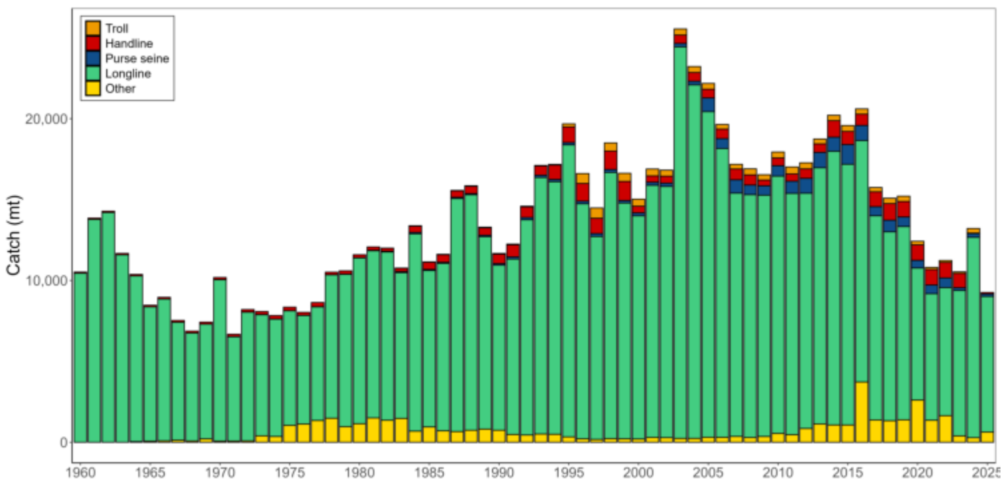

Figure 72: WCPFC–CA blue marlin catch (mt) by gear

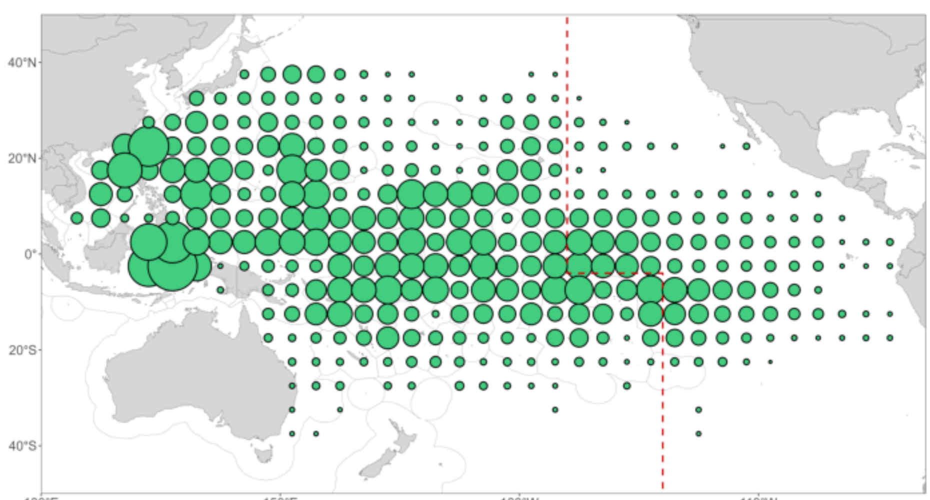

Figure 73: Distribution of longline blue marlin catch in the Pacific Ocean, 1990-2025. 2025 data for the EPO have not yet been incorporated.

Black Marlin

Black marlin have historically been taken by longline gear in the tropical WCPFC-CA but catches are also taken by purse seine, handline and a range of other small-scale gears (e.g., gillnet). WCPFC-CA catches of black marlin have ranged from around 1,300– 3,800 mt since the early 1970s (when catches were at their highest), although there remains some uncertainty around some of the estimates by fleet and gear. The recent large increases in catches have come from several south-east Asian fisheries (including handline and domestic purse seine) and further review is ongoing, although these increases may reflect more reliable estimates from these fisheries. The provisional WCPFC-CA black marlin catch (6,057 mt) for 2025 was a 44% decrease from 2024 catch levels; however, 2024 was a record year for black marlin catches (Figure 74). Figure 75 shows the distribution of longline-caught black marlin highlighting that their distribution does not extend to the eastern areas as much as blue marlin and they are clearly more prevalent in the western tropical waters of the WCP–CA, and to a lesser extent in the waters of PNG, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia and north-east Australia. Complete aggregate data stratified by area are not available for the other gears at this stage, but black marlin catches by Indonesia and Philippines handline and Vietnam gillnet overlap the main areas of the longline catch for this species.

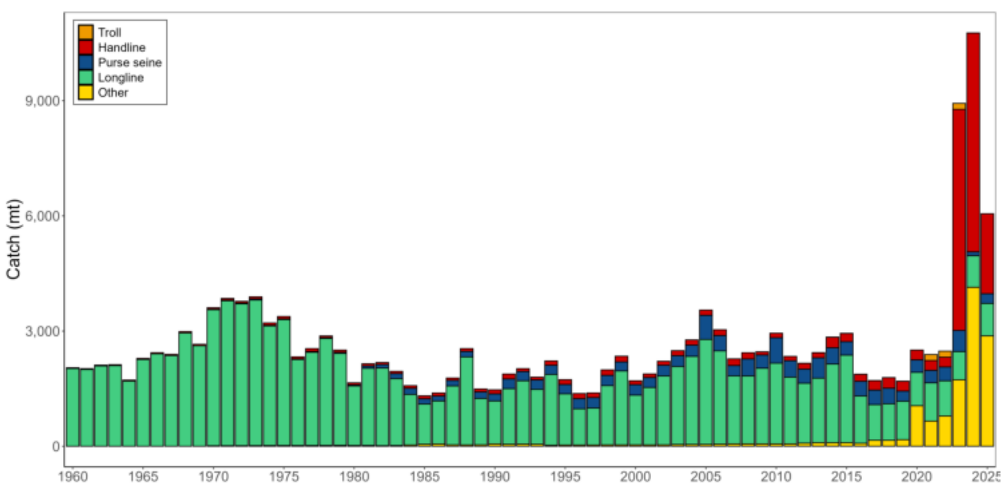

Figure 74: WCPFC–CA black marlin catch (mt) by gear

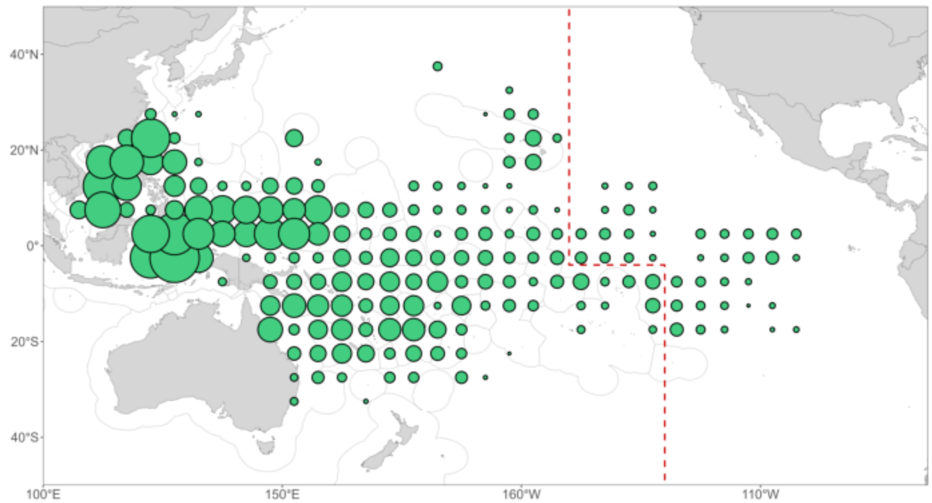

Figure 75: Distribution of longline black marlin catch in the Pacific Ocean, 1990–2025. 2025 data for the EPO have not yet been incorporated.

Striped Marlin

Striped marlin are mainly taken by the longline gear in the subtropical areas of the WCPFC-CA with minor catches by other gears, principally several gillnet fisheries. WCPFC-CA annual catches of striped marlin often exceeded 8,000 mt prior to 1990, with the gillnet fishery catch comprising a significant proportion of this catch during the 1970s. Since 2000, catches have been generally below 6,000 mt., although there remains some uncertainty around the availability and quality of estimates for some fleets and gears. Species identification is also acknowledged to be an issue in some fisheries. The provisional WCPFC-CA striped marlin catch (3,561 mt) for 2025 is a decrease from 2024; however, although recent catches have been some of the lowest of the time series, they have also been relatively stable since the mid to late-2000s (Figure 76).

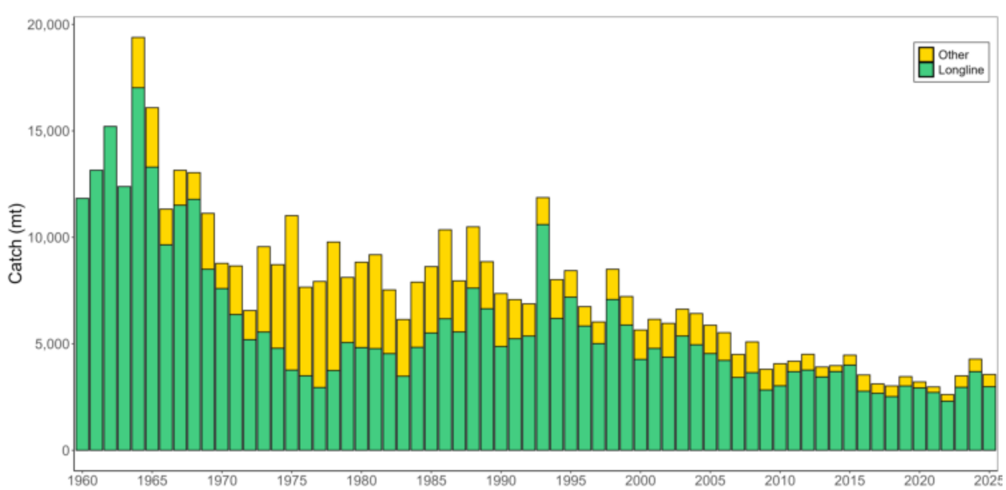

Figure 76: WCPFC–CA striped marlin catch (mt) by gear

Figure 77 shows the distribution of longline-caught striped marlin, with catches concentrated in the waters off the east coast of Japan, the Coral and Tasman Seas between eastern Australia, New Caledonia and New Zealand, and in the eastern areas, in and around Hawaii and French Polynesia. Complete aggregate data stratified by area are not available for the other gears at this stage.

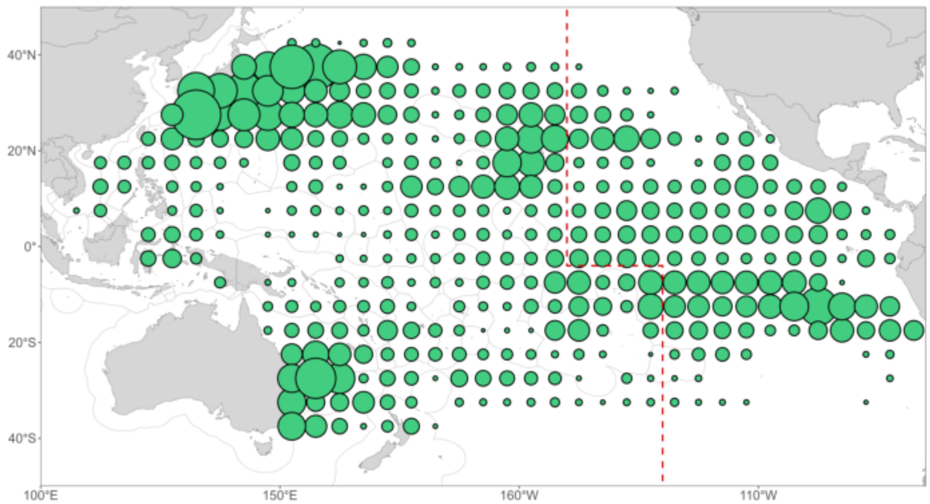

Figure 77: Distribution of longline striped marlin catch in the Pacific Ocean, 1990–2025. 2025 data for the EPO have not yet been incorporated.

Indo-Pacific Sailfish

In 2023, the Commission included Indo-Pacific sailfish *Istiophorus platypterus* (SFA) and shortbill spearfish *Tetrapturus angustirostris* (SSP) to the list of key species to be reported in the SciData. Annual catch estimates for these two species were provided in 2024 for the first time, as a SciData requirement, and this year we have started to report on the catch time series. It should be noted that many CCMs have been providing catches of sailfish in their logbook data for many years, so there is a much longer time-series of operational and aggregate catch and effort; however, the representativeness of those data are unknown at this point.

Although, longline does not appear to be the dominant gear with which sailfish are caught, there is a longer time series of sailfish catches from the longline aggregate catch and effort data dating back to the 1960s. The distribution of sailfish catches from longline are primarily coming from the equatorial region, with the catches concentrated in the more near-shore regions of the Pacific Ocean, both east and west (Figure 79); however, catches occasionally extend into the more temperate waters both north and south of the equator.

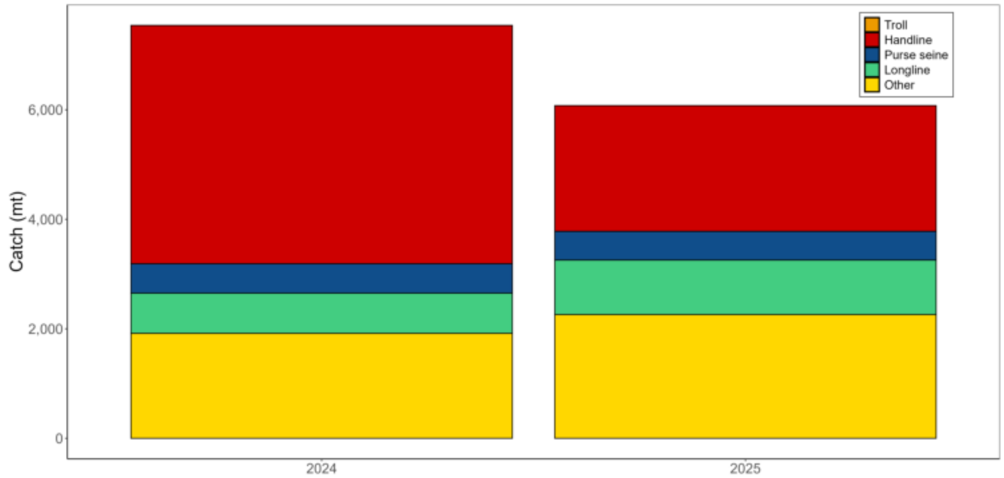

Figure 78: WCPFC-CA Indo-Pacific sailfish catch (mt) by gear

Figure 78 indicates that most of the sailfish catches reported in 2024 and 2025 have come from handline and 'other' gears, whereas only a small portion has come from longline and purse seine. In 2025, the sailfish catches were 6,076 mt, a slight decrease from the 2024 catch of 7,541 mt.

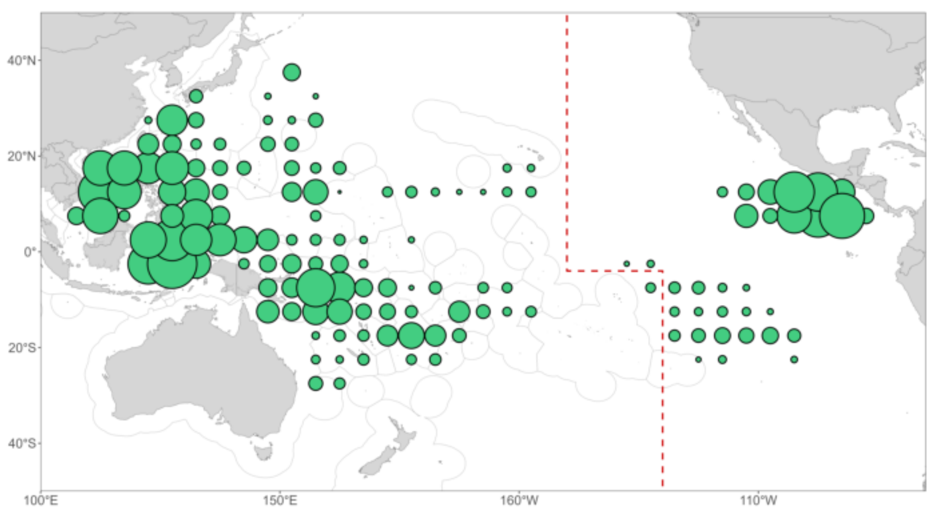

Figure 79: Distribution of longline Indo-Pacific sailfish catch in the Pacific Ocean, 1990–2025. 2025 data for the EPO have not yet been incorporated.

Shortbill Spearfish

Shortbill spearfish is predominately captured using longline gear (Figure 80). The catch estimate for shortbill spearfish in 2025 was 658 mt (99% from the longline fishery), a decrease from 2024 catch levels (927 mt).

Similar to sailfish, although this species was not added to the list fo key SciData species until 2024, it has been reported in logbook and EPO data dating back to the 1990s, and therefore, there is an indication of the spatial distribution of spearfish catches from the aggregate longline data, although the distribution may be biased toward those CCMs that have been reporting spearfish catches. Based on the available data, it appears that spearfish are most often caught in the central Pacific Ocean, however there are also catches around Australia and New Zealand and to a lesser extent east of the Philippines. Reporting patterns from the last couple of years suggests that there may be a lag in reporting these additional species, so we may see a shift in the distributional patterns once all fleets are reliable reporting catches of this species.

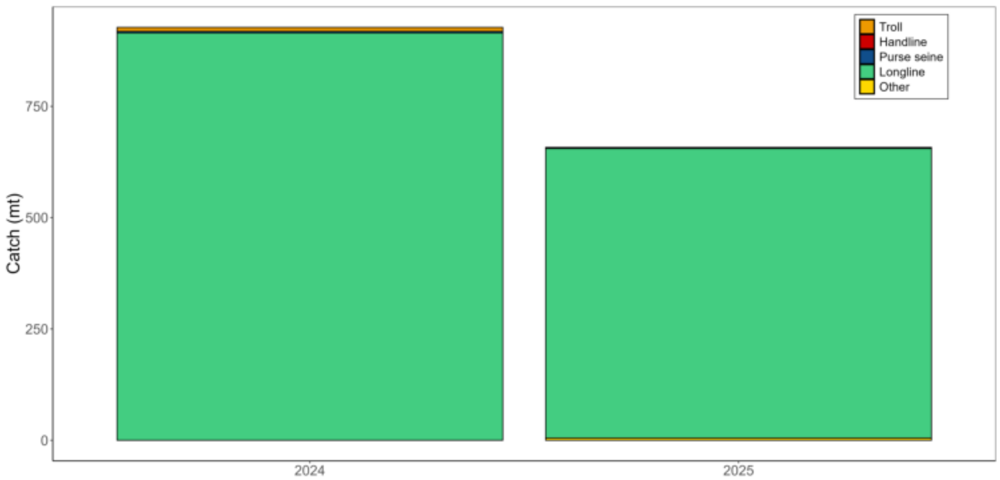

Figure 80: WCPFC–CA shortbill spearfish catch (mt) by gear

Figure 81: Distribution of longline shortbill spearfish catch in the Pacific Ocean, 1990–2025. 2025 data for the EPO have not yet been incorporated.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix - Additional information

All Fisheries

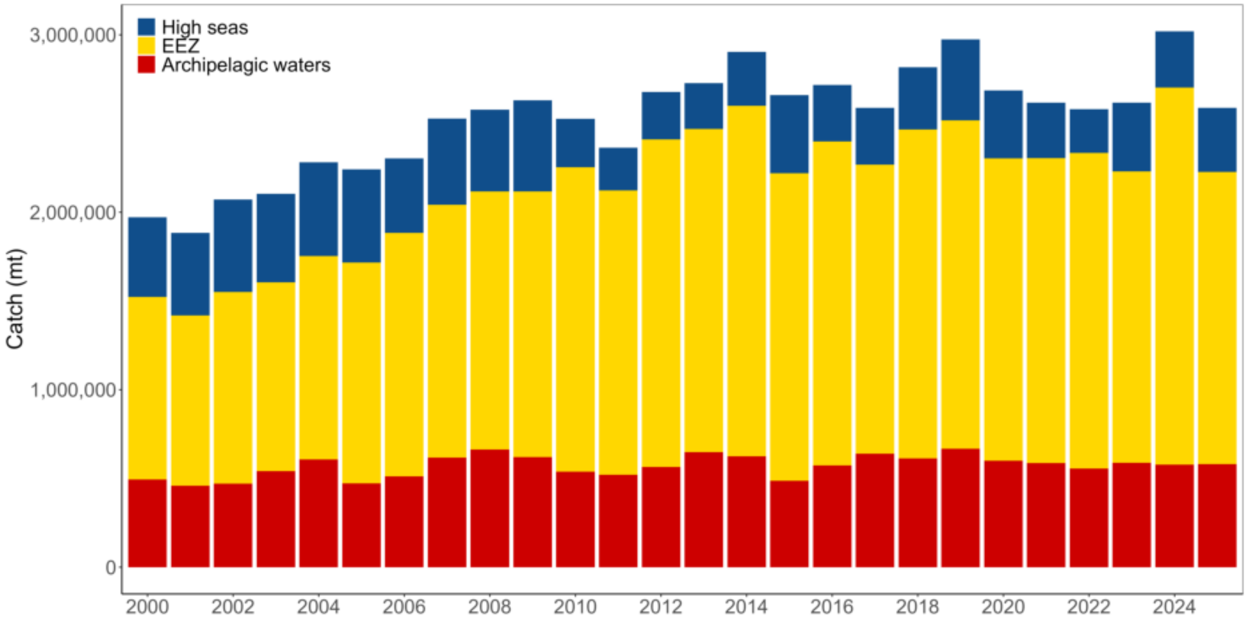

Figure A1: Catch estimates (mt) of the tropical tuna species (albacore, bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin) in the WCPFC–CA, by archipelagic waters (AWs), national waters (EEZs, excluded AWs) and the high seas for all gear types combined

Purse seine fisheries

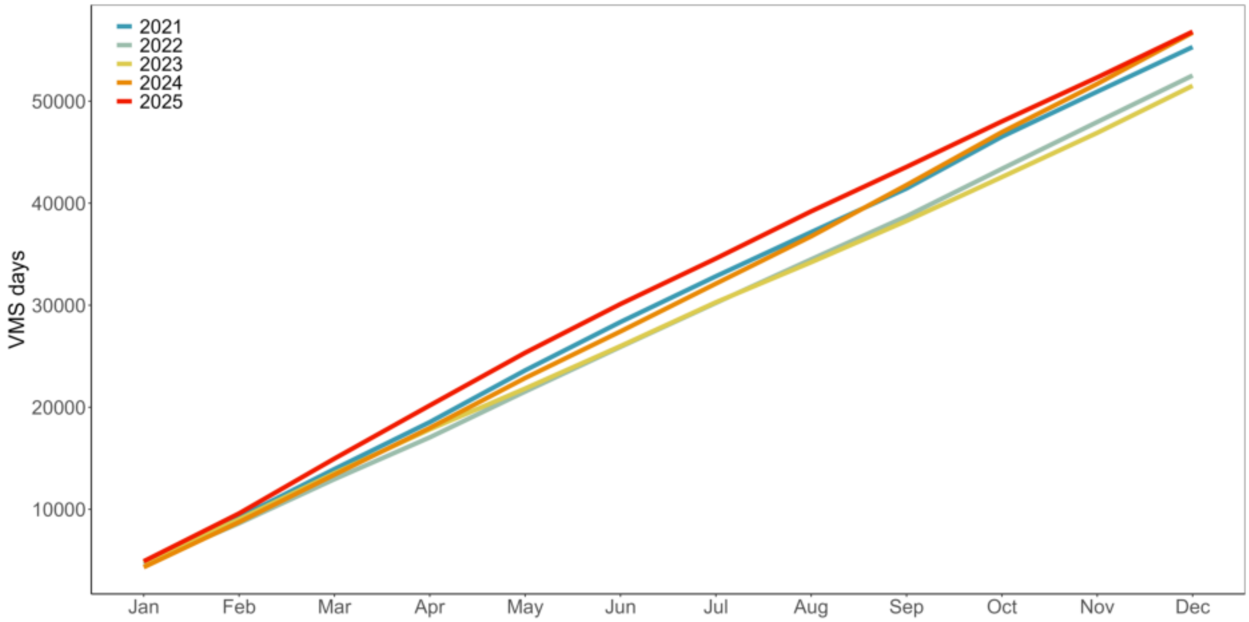

Figure A2: Cumulative tropical purse seine effort by month, 2020-2025, as measured by VMS (excludes days in port and an estimation of days in transit)

Longline fisheries

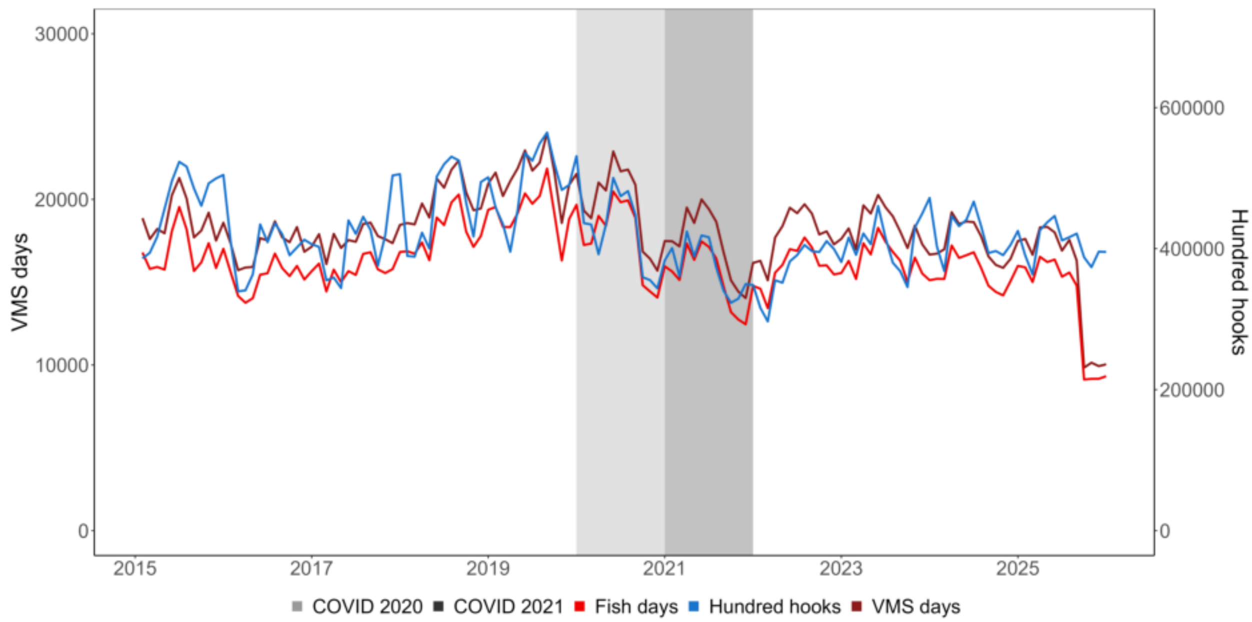

Figure A3: Monthly WCPFC longline fishery effort (VMS fishing days and 100s of hooks, 2020-2025 (WCPFC-CA; longline fishery effort only considers VMS and logbook effort data for the main domestic, domestic-based foreign and distant-water fleets where VMS data with high coverage are available consistently over recent years). Since September of 2025, there has been a disruption to the trasnimssion of VMS data; the SSP is coordinating with the Secretariat to resolve this issue; therefore, data from September-December 2025 are incomplete at this time.

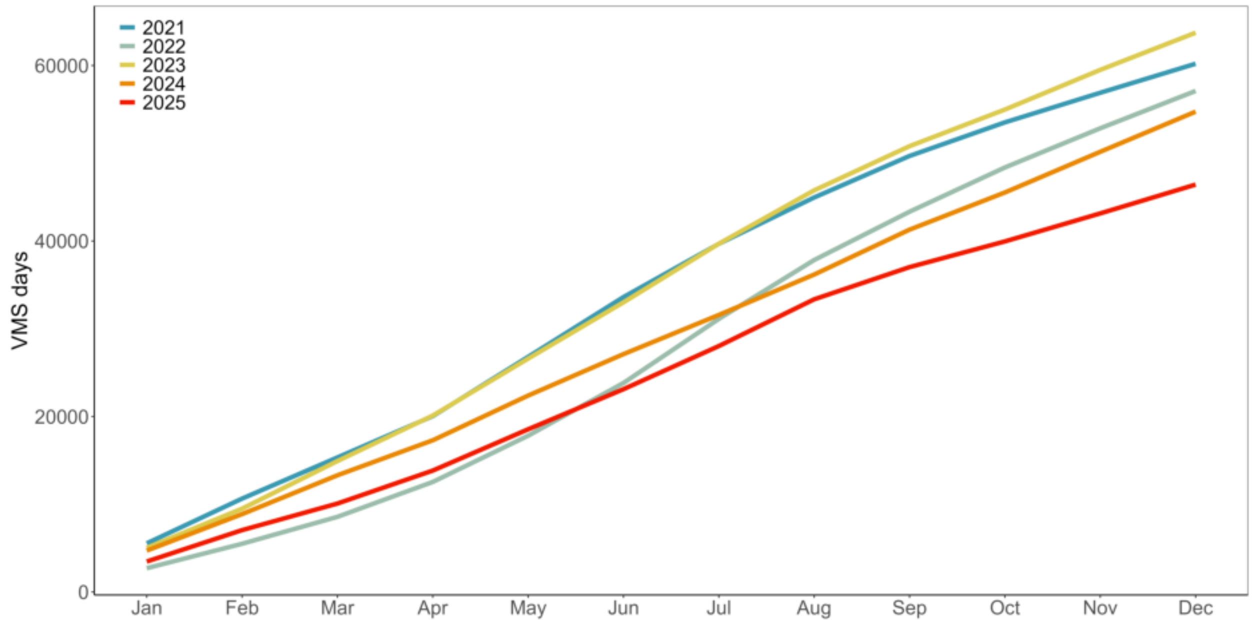

Figure A4: Cumulative South Pacific albacore longline fishery effort by month, 2020-2025, as measured by VMS (WCPFC-CA south of 10°S; VMS estimated fishing days; only includes VMS data for the main domestic, domestic-based foreign and distant-water fleets where VMS data have been provided with high coverage consistently over recent years)

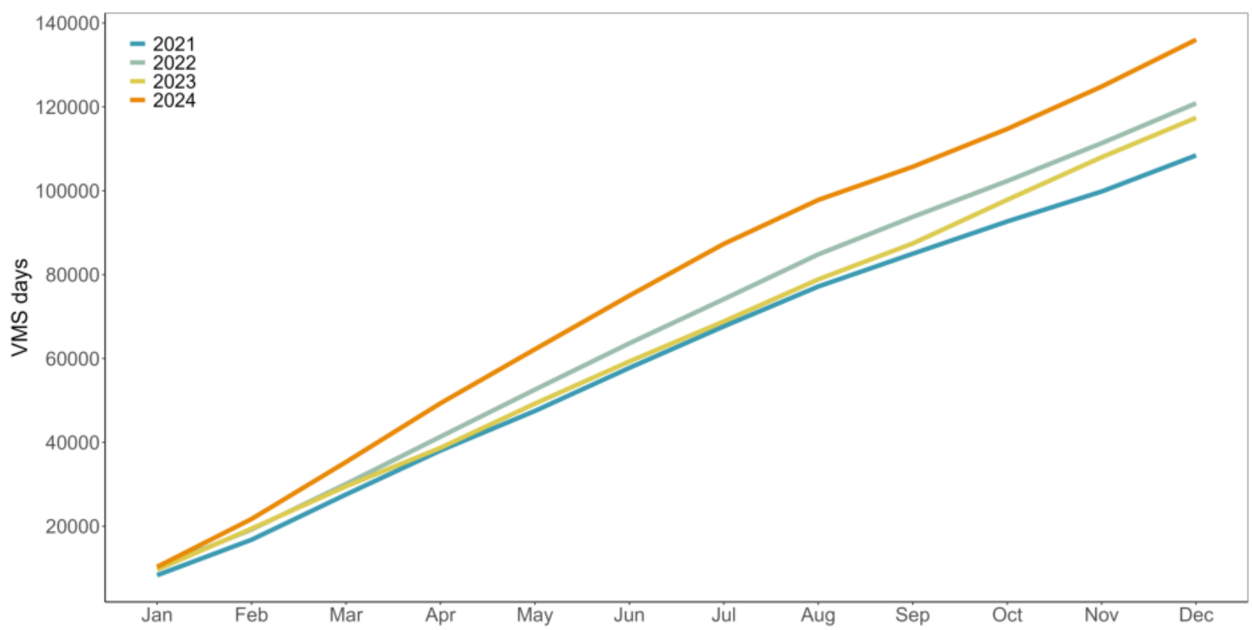

Figure A5: Cumulative Tropical longline fishery effort by month, 2020-2025, as measured by VMS (WCPFC-CA 20°N–10°S, 130°E–150°W; VMS estimated fishing days; only includes VMS data for the main domestic, domestic-based foreign and distant-water fleets where VMS data have been provided with high coverage consistently over recent years)