



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
FIFTH REGULAR SESSION**

10-21 August 2009
Port Vila, Vanuatu

**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMISSION
PART 1: INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH, AND STATISTICS**

WCPFC-SC5-AR/CCM-16

NIUE

NIUE

2009

NIUE

Annual Report Part 1

Information on Fisheries, Statistics & Research

Niue Fisheries Division
PO Box 74, Alofi,
Niue Island

Scientific data was provided to the Commission in accordance with the decisions relating to the provisions of scientific data to the Commission by 30 April 2009	Niue's scientific data was submitted to the Commission on May 04 2009
If no, please indicate the reason(s) and intended actions:	

1. ABSTRACT

Niue's domestic tuna longline fishery has experienced a slight set back in operation for 2008 with only one longline vessel of alia design fishing within its EEZ. Formerly Niue had an active longline fishery with up to 10 licensed longline vessels in operation within the Niue EEZ and offloading into the fish processing factory which is capable of processing up to a substantial amount in metric tonnes of fish per annum, however due to several mitigating factors which provided some impediment for the industry in terms of weather conditions, high operational costs and the continued increasing trend in fuel prices, all of which impacted greatly in the viability of the tuna fishing industry in the medium term.

The 2008 fishing effort saw one active longline vessel of alia design fishing within the Niue EEZ targeting primarily albacore tuna and in addition landing catches of big eye and yellow fin tuna and associated by catch species within the pelagic fishery such as *wahoo* and *mahimahi*. Catches for 2008 equated to just over 17 tonnes of fish.

Niue also plans to undergo a review of its management of pelagic fisheries (under the current Tuna and Billfish Management Plan and development policy) with the view to employing an ecosystems approach to fisheries management. This will include a review of the current sustainable catch limits in place. In addition, an ecological risk assessment which is currently underway in the WCPO is also likely to provide additional information for the ongoing sustainable management of the pelagic longline resources within the Niue EEZ in the future.

Niue continues to implement the collection of valuable catch statistics though the implementation of the port sampling program and the collection of catch and effort data from log books provided by the skipper of the vessel.

2. TABULAR ANNUAL FISHERIES INFORMATION

The following information within this section has been compiled with assistance from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community for Niue and taken from catch and effort statistics supplied to SPC based on log sheet data and port sampling data as collected by the Niue Fisheries Division from the one active long line vessel in 2008 and from data collected in previous years from Niue's fishery. Specific descriptions and analysis of the tables are provided in the associated sub headings further into the report.

Gear	LONGLINE
Fleet	Locally-based fleet (incl. chartered vessels)

Size class (GRT)	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
0-10					1
10-50	0	7	10	7	
50-200					
200-500					
500+					

Table 1. Number of fishing vessels active in the WCPFC Convention Area for the Niue longline fishery by gear and size class.

Species	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
YELLOWFIN	0	34	42	30	8
BIGEYE	0	10	22	18	1
BLUE MARLIN	0	1	5	9	0.06
BLACK MARLIN	0	2	4	3	0.52
SKIPJACK	0	4	8	7	1
ALBACORE	0	55	213	137	6
PACIFIC BLUEFIN	0	0	0	0	0
STRIPED MARLIN	0	3	3	6	0.44
SWORDFISH	0	1	2	2	0.20

Table 2. Annual catch (mt) in the WCPFC Convention Area by species for the Niue Longline fishery

Month	100's of Hooks	ALB	BET	SKJ	YFT	OTHER	TOTAL
1	21.48	0.147	0.215	0	1.69	0.108	2.16
2	24.3	0.127	0.02	0	0.854	0.072	1.073
3	37.83	0.047	0.103	0.015	0.847	0.07	1.082
4	42.92	0.152	0.122	0.016	1.295	0.13	1.715
5	25.95	0.12	0.026	0.008	0.369	0.04	0.563
6	42.15	0.495	0.135	0.185	1.14	0.068	2.023
7	60.5	1.172	0.05	0.052	0.623	0.042	1.939
8	36.69	0.911	0.119	0.116	0.548	0.083	1.777
9	53.51	0.374	0.085	0.088	0.123	0.159	0.829
10	57.77	2.044	0.298	0.019	0.391	0.268	3.02
11	37.57	0.759	0.067	0.003	0.232	0.197	1.258
		6.348	1.24	0.502	8.112	1.237	17.439

Table 3. Monthly catch and effort statistics for the Niue longline fishery for 2008

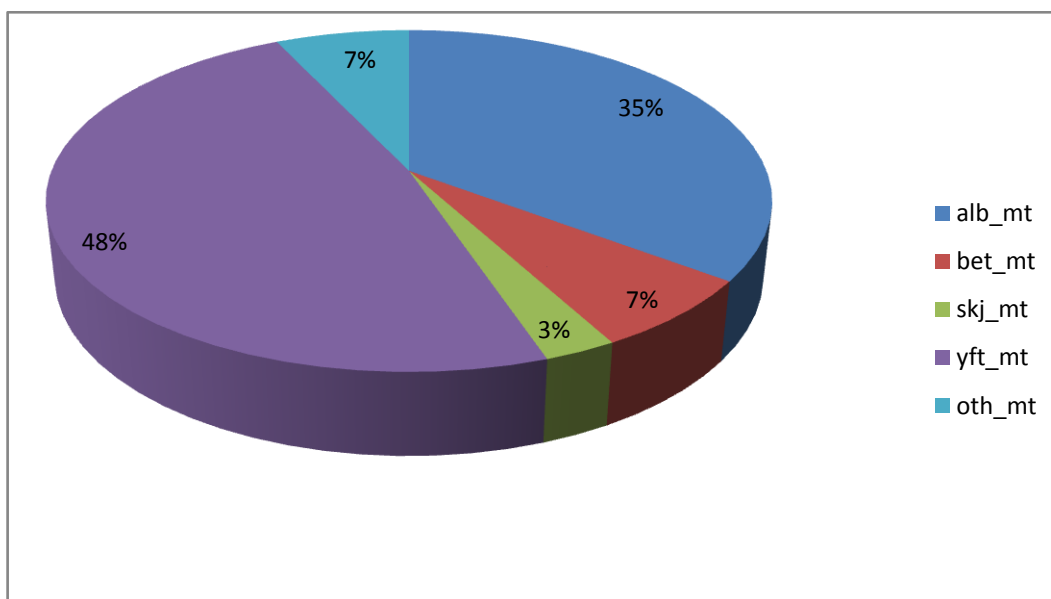


Figure 1. Catch composition (% in weight) by key target tuna species for Niue long line fishery for 2008.

3. BACKGROUND

Fishing activity in Niue is undertaken within a relatively small EEZ (~ 450,00km²) and consists of three components, an artisanal boat and canoe fishery, a tourism related sport fishery and the developing commercial domestic longline fishery. Tuna resources and associated by catch species are considered by Niue as a major natural resource available to support significant economic development opportunities within the fisheries sector.

Niue has an artisanal fleet comprising of traditional outrigger canoes (~100) and small (3.7m to 8.0m) aluminium boats (~40-50). Fishing activity by gear undertaken by the artisanal fleet has been mainly troll or vertical longlining with a few other methods of hooked gear. Fishing effort is predominantly focused around anchored FADs which are located within 3 nautical miles of the island with most of the fish caught being used to supply local demand and the remainder for subsistent consumption. Detailed catch records have been kept by SPC since 2001 with the inception of SPC's FAD program which has provided valuable catch and effort data for Niue's artisanal fishery. Consideration is also being looked at in expanding the log book program to include the traditional canoe fishers so that a broader assessment can be made on the interactions amongst the various components of the tuna fishery can be considered should it be required in future.

The development of a large-scale commercial tuna long line fishery has long been and remains as so, a development aspiration of Niue. Niue has worked progressively over recent years researching and identifying options of continuous development in this area. The returns from the utilisation of fisheries marine resources in the last 10 years or so has been reasonably consistent.

In recognising the potential of Niue's fisheries resources to provide greater economic development opportunities and benefits, the Government of Niue has more recently identified the continued development of the tuna long line fishery as a priority development sector to be

actively pursued over the next five years. This priority and direction is reflected in the National Integrated Strategic Plan.

4. FLAG STATE REPORTING

Niue will continue to report only on vessels under charter. Niue is currently considering the establishment of a vessel registry for the purposes of registering fishing vessels and becoming a flag state.

5. COASTAL STATE REPORTING

Since the departure of the larger long lining vessels that were fishing in Niue waters towards the end of 2007, fishing activity within Niue waters for 2008 has been limited to one domestic longline fishing vessel as reflected in Table 1 and fishing outside of the 3 nautical mile zone and within the 12 nautical mile zone.

The estimated catch composition for Niue's longline fishery for 2008 was dominated primarily by catches of yellowfin tuna (48%) and albacore tuna (35%) for the January 2008 – November 2008 period as reflected in Figure 1 with the remainder of the catches comprising of skipjack and big eye tuna and by catch comprising of wahoo and mahimahi.

Catches of tuna are also subject to seasonal variation in catch rates for the longline fleet.

Due to weather patterns often associated with the cyclone season no fishing was undertaken in the month of December and minimum fishing carried out in January as these months are identified as the 'cyclone season' in Niue and very little to no fishing activity is undertaken during these months. There were also periods where no fishing was undertaken for a whole week often due to weather constraints.

Due to the size and capacity of the vessel the duration of each fishing trip is limited to either two days and one night or two nights at the most before returning to offload and resupply.

6. SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

Rising fuel costs and operational costs along with other issues have resulted in a shortened fishing duration for the operator per vessel trip.

7. DISPOSAL OF CATCH

In previous years (2005 until mid 2007) the majority of catches of albacore from Niue were exported to the two canneries in American Samoa with small quantities of yellowfin and big eye exported as chilled sashimi grade products to the USA and Hawaii as well as frozen loins of other species to New Zealand markets and consumed locally.

Catches for 2008 has been destined for consumption on the local market in both fresh and frozen form.

8. ONSHORE DEVELOPMENTS

Work has continuously progressed with the commencement of the Wharf repairs and upgrading following a devastating category 5 cyclone in 2004, as well as a re-fendering Project which is geared towards upgrading certain support facilities within the main port area to support the efficient and safe unloading of catches and resupplying of fishing vessels. In addition, the establishment of a competent authority and the training of inspectors also commenced in 2008.

Although the fish processing factory has not been operational for the processing of catches, the factory itself and associated machinery have been regularly maintained in support of re-opening in the foreseeable future.

9. FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE FISHERY

- Niue plans to undergo a review of its pelagic fisheries using the ecosystem approach to fisheries management. In addition, an ecological risk assessment which is currently underway in the WCPO is also likely to provide additional information for the ongoing sustainable management of the pelagic longline resources within the Niue EEZ in the future.
- Niue will review its existing management and development plans, including revision of its current sustainable catch limits.

10. STATUS OF TUNA FISHERY DATA COLLECTION SYSTEMS

Niue has a national data collection protocol /procedures document which identifies all information to be collected from the Niue tuna fishery, the responsibilities and procedures for the collection of the information and responsibilities and procedures with respect to the processing of the data. The document is aligned with licensing nation responsibilities for the collection and provision of data as outlined in the WCPF Convention.

Niue has continued to rely primarily on SPC for the processing of data collected from its tuna fishery with efforts being undertaken to equip the Fisheries Division in becoming more self-sufficient with the processing of data and in the effective implementation of data management systems within its Fisheries administration.

10.1 Logsheet data

Completed logsheets are to be provided to Niue Fisheries by the fishing vessel within 48 hours upon its return to port. Although the procedures document outlines that logsheet data is to be sent to SPC on a monthly basis it has been feasible for 2008 to send these logsheets to SPC on a quarterly basis.

SPC is able to obtain Niue's catch and effort data from these logsheets and remains responsible for assisting Niue in the processing and storage of logsheet data.

10.2 Observer programme

Niue's national observer program was not active during 2008. Work is in line for the process of re-establishing the framework for developing and implementing a national observer program aligned with the regional observer program.

Niue does have trained observers however there have been difficulties in their placement in the past as they are also government employees with additional responsibilities onshore.

Recommencement of the program shall be scheduled with a targeted 5% coverage upon increases in effort within the fishing industry.

10.3 Port sampling programme

Niue's port sampling program was established under the Data collection protocol/Procedures Document which outlines the collection of fish lengths from vessel offloadings and collected on a regular basis by Fisheries Officers using SPC's standardised forms. All catch from a vessel trip is accounted for and sampling is undertaken at the only port in Niue.

Only partial coverage (5 % of vessel trips) was achieved for 2008. An increase or in this case, decrease in the number of vessels or modification to the target coverage coupled with limitations in staff support and other administrative constraints will often result in a proportional increase or decrease in the amount of resources available and required for the effective coverage to be achieved and poses a challenge for a small fisheries administration to effectively overcome.

SPC continues to provide data processing services to Niue for its port sampling data.

10.4 Unloading/transshipment

In previous years the processing facility was required to compile and provide information on unloadings data to the Niue Fisheries Division as a condition of operation. SPC continues to remain responsible for the processing of the unloadings data however none were collected and submitted to SPC for 2008.

Transshipment was not an issue for Niue in 2008.

11. RESEARCH ACTIVITIES COVERING TARGET AND NON-TARGET SPECIES

At this present stage Niue is not undertaking any research activities independent of efforts already being undertaken within the South Pacific Region and within the Commission Area other than ongoing monitoring work for its coastal marine resources.