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

WCPFC-SC5-AR/CCM-12

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Republic of the Marshall Islands

Annual Report Part 1
Information of fisheries, statistics and research

Oceanic and Industrial Affairs Division
Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority
Republic of the Marshall Islands

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Scientific data was provided to the Commission in accordance with the decision relating to the provision of scientific data to the Commission by 30 April 2009	Yes
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ABSTRACT/SUMMARY

The tuna fishery in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) is comprised of foreign flagged purse seine, pole-and-line and longline vessels and RMI-flagged purse seine and longline vessels. Some of the foreign flagged longline vessels operate in support of domestic development activities and are based locally.

In 2008, total catch of the national purse seine fleet operating throughout the Western and Central Pacific Ocean was 32,218 mt which is almost half of the previous year's total catch of over 59,000 mt. Conversely, the national longline fleet catch increased from just 6 mt in 2007 to 552 mt in 2008.

Available catch estimates from fleets operating in the RMI EEZ in 2008 indicate a decline in catches when compared to the previous year, with the exception of the locally-based foreign longline fleet whose catch experienced a slight increase.

The Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA) continues to run an active Observer and Port Sampling Program with 1,653 sea days observed and nearly 79,000 fish measured during 2008.

BACKGROUND

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) has an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and territorial waters of around 2 million km². The tuna fishery is the most important fishery both in terms of scale and economics in the RMI.

The Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA) is responsible for the management and development of the tuna fishery in the RMI. The fishery comprises of longline, purse seine, and pole-and-line vessels fishing under various access arrangements. The RMI is a party to a number of regional and international management arrangements such as the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) and the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA). With the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission in place, the RMI is also obliged to comply with the management measures of the Commission.

FLAG STATE REPORTING

Annual catch and effort estimates for the national purse seine fleet, fishing throughout the WCPFC Convention Area during the last five years, are presented in Table 1a with historical estimates further provided in Figure 1a. Catch estimates for purse seine fleet in 2008 amounted to just over 32,000 mt, a considerable decrease from previous years. Skipjack tuna catch, in 2008, accounted for over 80% of total catch with the rest comprising of yellowfin (13%) and bigeye tuna (5%). Additionally, the reported catch and effort estimates from the national longline fleet are illustrated in Table 1b and Figure 1b. As the longline fleet was revitalized in the late 2007 there was very little catch reported from that period but in 2008, estimates totaled 552 mt, by primary species, with bigeye accounting for most of the catch.

Table 1a. Annual catch (mt) and effort (days) estimates for the Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, by primary species, for the WCPFC Convention Area, 2004-2008

Species	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
DAYS FISHING AND SEARCHING	1408	1233	976	1216	1041
SKIPJACK	42078	47565	38881	53916	26500
YELLOWFIN	3716	7628	1436	3370	4151
BIGEYE	878	971	2032	2118	1567

Notes

1. These catch estimates also apply to the WCPO Area (the Pacific Ocean west of 150°W)
2. Catches were taken from logsheet data and the coverage of the logsheet data is considered to be 100%.

Table 1b. Annual catch (mt) and effort (hooks) estimates for the Marshall Islands longline vessels, by primary species, for the WCPFC Convention Area, 2004-2008

Species	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
100s OF HOOKS	383	0	0	177	18347
YELLOWFIN	3	0	0	2	91
BIGEYE	1	0	0	3	375
BLUE MARLIN	0	0	0	1	63
BLACK MARLIN	0	0	0	0	0
SKIPJACK	0	0	0	0	0
ALBACORE	0	0	0	0	15
PACIFIC BLUEFIN	0	0	0	0	0
STRIPED MARLIN	0	0	0	0	1
SWORDFISH	0	0	0	0	7

Notes

1. These catch estimates also apply to the following areas
 - a. The WCPO Area (the Pacific Ocean west of 150°W)
 - b. The WCPFC Convention Area north of the equator
 - c. The WCPO Area north of the equator
2. The MARSHALL ISLANDS longline fleet does not fish in any other areas for which catch estimates are required by the WCPFC
3. Catch estimates were determined from logsheet data adjusted with unloadings data, and the coverage of both types of data is considered to be 100%.

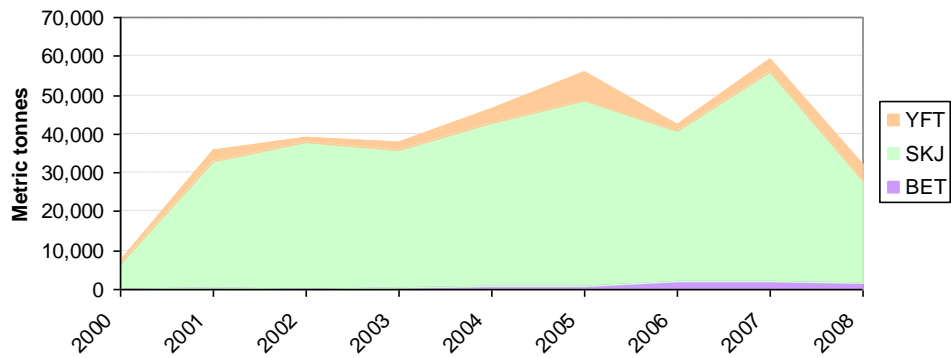


Figure 1a. Historical annual catch for the Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, by primary species, for the WCPFC Convention Area

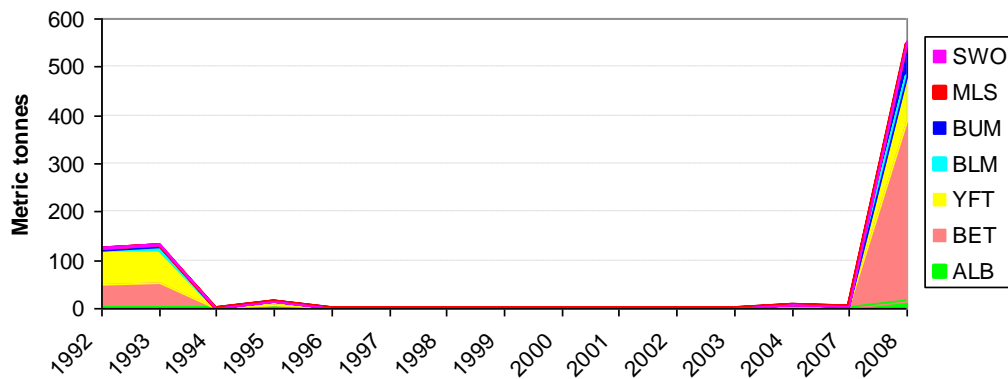


Figure 1b. Historical annual catch for the Marshall Islands longline vessels, by primary species, for the WCPFC Convention Area

Five national purse seine and four longline vessels were active in the Convention Area during 2008 (Figure 2, Tables 2a & 2b). As the relationship with respect to nationality of catch is still being progressed, a number of domestically-based foreign longline vessels are not included in this list, but may be included in the future.

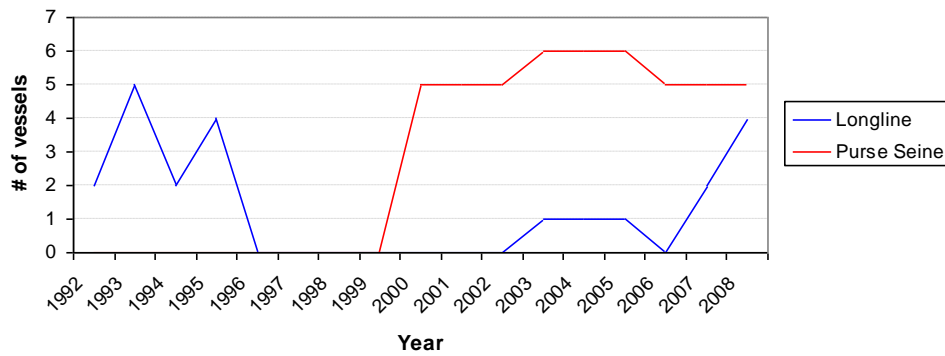


Figure 2. Historical annual vessel numbers for the Marshall Islands, by gear, for the WCPFC Convention Area

Table 2a. Number of Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, by size category, active in the WCPFC Convention Area, 2004-2008

Size class (GRT)	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
0-500					
500-1,000					
1,000-1,500	6	6	5	5	5
1,500+					

Table 2b. Number of Marshall Islands longline vessels, by size category, active in the WCPFC Convention Area, 2004-2008

Size class (GRT)	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
0-10					
10-50					
50-200	1	1	0	2	4
200-500					
500+					

Figure 3a provides an illustration of the distribution of effort for the national purse seine fleet over the past two years. As the fleet is based out of Majuro, the effort is concentrated in the southern half of the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and other adjacent EEZs and high seas areas. On the other hand, the national longline fleet fishes primarily in the RMI EEZ (Figure 3b).

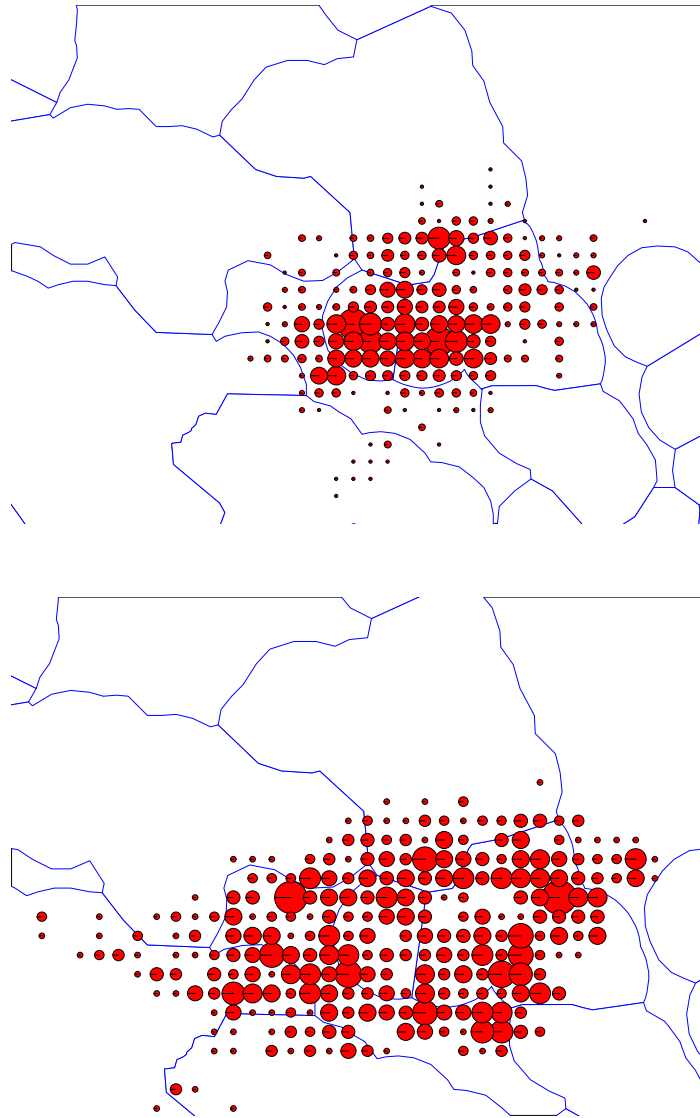


Figure 3a. Annual distribution of effort (days fishing and searching) by the Marshall Islands purse seine vessels active in the WCPFC Convention Area for 2007 (top) and 2008 (bottom)

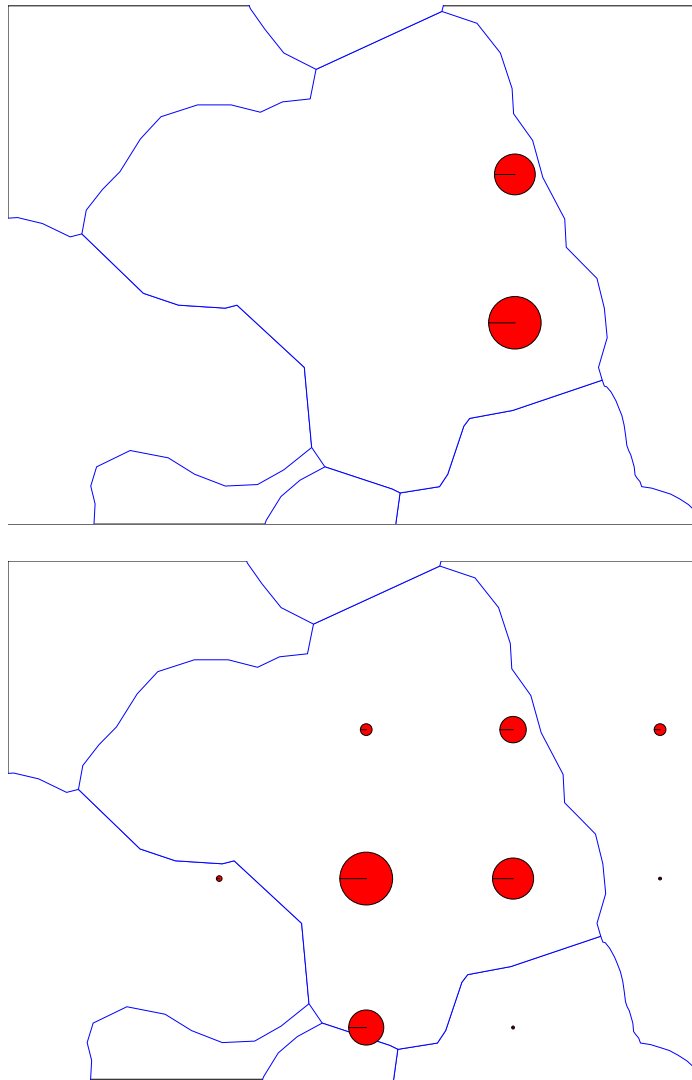


Figure 3b. Annual distribution effort (100s of hooks) by the Marshall Islands longline vessels active in the WCPFC Convention Area for 2007 (top) and 2008 (bottom)

Observed interactions with species of special interest are shown in Tables 3a and 3b. During 2008, three marine mammals were observed to have interacted with the purse seine fleet and one turtle interaction from the longline fleet. Observer data from the longline fleet includes trips covered on the other locally-based foreign longline fleet and estimates for 2008 are considered provisional.

Table 3a. Observed annual estimated catches of species of special interest (seabird, turtle and marine mammals) for the Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, in the WCPFC Convention Area, for 2006-2008 to the extent available.

Category	Species	Individuals encountered					
		2006		2007		2008	
		No.	Dead	No.	Dead	No.	Dead
Marine Turtles	Green Turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Loggerhead Turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Hawksbill turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Leatherback turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Olive Ridley Turtle	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Turtles (unidentified)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marine Mammals	Dolphins and Porpoises	0	0	3	3	1	1
	Toothed Whales	0	0	8	0	2	2
	Non-toothed Whales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Marine Mammals (unident.)	5	5	0	0	0	0
Whale Shark	Whale Shark	4	1	3	0	1	0
Birds	Birds	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Turtles		1	0	0	0	0	0
Total Marine Mammals		5	5	11	3	3	3

Table 3b. Observed annual estimated catches of species of special interest (seabird, turtle and marine mammals) for the Marshall Islands-based longline vessels (China, FSM and RMI-flagged), in the WCPFC Convention Area, for 2006-2008 to the extent available.

Category	Species	Individuals encountered					
		2006		2007		2008	
		No.	Dead	No.	Dead	No.	Dead
Marine Turtles	Green Turtle	1	1	4	4	1	1
	Loggerhead Turtle	1	1	0	0	0	0
	Hawksbill turtle	2	2	1	1	0	0
	Leatherback turtle	2	0	9	9	0	0
	Olive Ridley Turtle	4	3	3	1	0	0
	Turtles (unidentified)	2	2	2	2	0	0
Marine Mammals	Dolphins and Porpoises	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Toothed Whales	1	0	3	1	0	0
	Non-toothed Whales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Marine Mammals (unident.)	1	0	0	0	0	0
Whale Shark	Whale Shark	0	0	0	0	0	0
Birds	Birds	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Turtles		12	9	19	17	1	1
Total Marine Mammals		2	0	3	1	0	0

Further, estimated total catch of non-target species are provided in Table 4a and Table 4b for the different fleets. Rainbow runner is typically the main non-target species taken by the purse seine fleet, but the following species/species groups are also commonly caught – small baitfish, silky (and other) sharks, blue and black marlin, triggerfish and mahi mahi. According to observer data, the proportion of non-target catch is considerably higher from the longline fleet (~39% in 2008). The data suggest that, for locally-based longline vessels the most predominant species in each category are: Blue marlin (billfish), Blue shark (sharks and rays), wahoo (“other” finfish).

Table 4a. Annual estimated catches of non-target, associated and dependent species, including sharks, by the Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, in the WCPFC Convention Area, for 2006-2008 to the extent available.

		Catch estimates					
Category	Species	2006		2007		2008	
		MT	%	MT	%	MT	%
Billfish	Blue marlin	22.3	0.0514%	21.5	0.0360%	8.1	0.0251%
	Black marlin	8.2	0.0190%	0.0	0.0000%	2.0	0.0061%
	Other Billfish	1.7	0.0038%	1.7	0.0029%	2.9	0.0090%
Sharks and Rays	Blue shark	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Mako sharks	0.0	0.0000%	0.1	0.0001%	0.1	0.0003%
	Oceanic whitetip shark	0.2	0.0004%	0.8	0.0014%	0.2	0.0006%
	Silky shark	43.2	0.0996%	13.0	0.0218%	13.2	0.0407%
	Other sharks and rays	0.5	0.0012%	1.2	0.0020%	0.6	0.0020%
Other finfish	Bullet/Frigate tunas	2.9	0.0066%	0.4	0.0006%	0.0	0.0000%
	Kawakawa	0.1	0.0003%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Rainbow Runner	466.4	1.0762%	133.8	0.2243%	60.4	0.1868%
	Wahoo	5.6	0.0128%	4.4	0.0074%	6.4	0.0198%
	Common dolphinfish	35.8	0.0826%	9.3	0.0156%	21.8	0.0676%
	Triggerfish	55.2	0.1274%	37.8	0.0634%	8.9	0.0274%
	Barracudas	0.2	0.0006%	0.1	0.0002%	0.3	0.0008%
	Escolars	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Lanctfishes	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Ocean sunfish	0.3	0.0008%	0.1	0.0002%	0.0	0.0000%
	Oilfish	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Opah	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Pomfrets	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0001%
	Small baitfish	98.4	0.2271%	22.0	0.0369%	0.4	0.0012%
	Other fish	157.1	0.3625%	4.9	0.0082%	0.5	0.0016%
	Total billfish		32	0.0742%	23	0.0389%	13
Total sharks and rays		44	0.1012%	15	0.0254%	14	0.0436%
Total finfish		822	1.8969%	213	0.3568%	99	0.3053%
Total non-target		898	2.0723%	251	0.4211%	126	0.3890%

Table 4b. Annual estimated catches of non-target, associated and dependent species, including sharks, by the Marshall Islands-based longline vessels (China, FSM and RMI-flagged), in the WCPFC Convention Area, for 2006-2008 to the extent available.

		Catch estimates					
Category	Species	2006		2007		2008	
		MT	%	MT	%	MT	%
Billfish	Blue marlin	235.9	3.8322%	485.7	8.1907%	362.7	4.7500%
	Black marlin	44.1	0.7167%	36.5	0.6159%	16.9	0.2209%
	Striped marlin	85.2	1.3838%	135.0	2.2775%	151.6	1.9862%
	Swordfish	78.7	1.2791%	77.4	1.3047%	42.9	0.5621%
	Other Billfish	39.4	0.6399%	15.7	0.2646%	46.5	0.6088%
Sharks and Rays	Blue shark	534.3	8.6807%	701.8	11.8362%	378.4	4.9565%
	Mako sharks	87.9	1.4286%	83.7	1.4123%	38.5	0.5046%
	Oceanic whitetip shark	90.0	1.4629%	177.9	3.0007%	181.4	2.3759%
	Silky shark	257.6	4.1845%	506.9	8.5484%	786.3	10.2992%
	Other sharks and rays	254.6	4.1371%	118.2	1.9941%	1,327.6	17.3892%
Other finfish	Bullet/Frigate tunas	1.0	0.0166%	0.6	0.0102%	4.5	0.0593%
	Kawakawa	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Rainbow Runner	0.2	0.0031%	0.6	0.0099%	0.5	0.0072%
	Wahoo	136.4	2.2166%	151.7	2.5577%	125.5	1.6432%
	Common dolphinfish	73.3	1.1905%	36.8	0.6207%	97.8	1.2804%
	Triggerfish	0.1	0.0022%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Barracudas	12.3	0.1993%	3.0	0.0505%	7.4	0.0970%
	Escolars	11.8	0.1924%	9.9	0.1669%	18.1	0.2371%
	Lanctfishes	12.3	0.2006%	8.8	0.1492%	7.4	0.0970%
	Ocean sunfish	4.8	0.0773%	24.7	0.4165%	0.0	0.0000%
	Oilfish	3.0	0.0492%	4.1	0.0695%	3.7	0.0485%
	Opah	43.4	0.7043%	30.5	0.5150%	61.7	0.8081%
	Pomfrets	11.0	0.1793%	15.3	0.2579%	11.9	0.1562%
	Small baitfish	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Other fish	57.7	0.9377%	33.5	0.5657%	44.4	0.5819%
	Total billfish		483	7.8517%	750	12.6534%	621
Total sharks and rays		1,224	19.8937%	1,589	26.7918%	2,712	35.5255%
Total finfish		367	5.9691%	320	5.3896%	383	5.0158%
Total non-target		2,075	33.7145%	2,658	44.8347%	3,716	48.6693%

Coverage of data collected from both the national purse seine and longline fleets are deemed to satisfy the coverage levels recommended by the WCPFC (Tables 5a and 5b). Additionally, the coverage of unloadings data from the domestically-based foreign longline fleet is close to 100%.

Table 5a. Estimated annual coverage of operational catch/effort, port sampling and observer data for the Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, active in the WCPFC Convention Area, for 2006-2008.

Year	Number of trips	Catch/effort data coverage	Port sampling coverage	Observer coverage
2006	55	100%	13%	51%
2007	75	100%	19%	45%
2008	51	100%	4%	27%

Table 5b. Estimated annual coverage of operational catch/effort, port sampling and observer data for the Marshall Islands longline vessels, active in the WCPFC Convention Area, for 2007-2008.

Year	Number of trips	Catch/effort data coverage	Port sampling coverage	Observer coverage
2007	2	100%	0%	0%
2008	94	100%	88%	13%

COASTAL STATE REPORTING

Tables 6-8 provide a description of foreign-flagged vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands waters over the past five years. Domestically-based foreign longline vessels operating under the Marshall Islands Fishing Venture fly foreign flags of registration and not necessarily the flag of the countries operating and managing these vessels, which is essentially the Marshall Islands.

Table 6. Number of foreign longline vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by year and flag.

	Longline						TOTAL
	CHINA	FSM	JAPAN	KOREA	CH-TAIPEI	BELIZE	
2004	40	4	17	1	3	6	71
2005	43	6	25	2	5	7	88
2006	40	9	34	1	6	0	90
2007	36	6	21	0	1	0	64
2008	39	6	6	0	2	0	53

Table 7. Number of foreign pole-and-line vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by year and flag.

Pole-and-line	
JAPAN	
2004	23
2005	35
2006	23
2007	22
2008	25

Table 8. Number of foreign purse seine vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by year and flag.

	YEAR				
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
CHINA	4	5	8	12	10
FSM	6	6	1	3	4
JAPAN	32	34	33	35	28
KIRIBATI	1	1	1	1	1
KOREA	28	27	20	20	27
NZ	4	3	3	0	1
PNG	17	17	16	17	15
CH-TAIPEI	34	34	19	13	27
VANUATU	7	8	8	7	4
SOLOMON	0	3	0	0	0
USA	21	15	12	22	32
TOTAL	154	153	121	130	149

Available data indicate that total catch by purse seine fleets operating in the RMI EEZ continues to decline from previous years (Table 9). Skipjack tuna continues to be the dominant catch, accounting for ~86% of the total catch. Most of the purse seine fishing in-zone is restricted to southern areas of the EEZ.

The domestically-based foreign longline fleet comprises of vessels from China and FSM which are managed and operated through a local joint-venture fishing company. Japanese longline vessels offload their catch in ports in Japan. Catch estimates for 2006-2008 for the domestically-based vessels have been raised using unloadings data. The overall catch estimates by foreign longline fleets in 2008 indicate a slight increase from the previous year (Table 10). Bigeye catch continues to account for the major part of the target catch composition. As with the purse seine fishery, most of the longline fishing effort occurs in the southern areas of the RMI EEZ however in the longline fishery, effort is more widely distributed in the zone.

In 2008, catches from the pole-and-line fleet declined again after a resurgence in the previous year (Table 11). Skipjack is the main species making up the catch composition for this fleet with yellowfin representing a very minor component. However, there has been no observer data to validate these data.

Table 9. Annual catches by purse seine fleets in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by flag and species, 2004-2008 (Source : Unraised logsheet data collected by MIMRA)

Fleet	Year	CATCH (metric tonnes)				TOTAL
		SKJ	YFT	BET	OTH	
China	2004	663	0	0	0	663
	2005	0	0	0	0	0
	2006	526	217	6	0	749
	2007	0	0	0	0	0
	2008	0	0	0	0	0
FSM Arrangement	2004	7,773	507	110	0	8,391
	2005	6,662	838	93	0	7,593
	2006	5,253	710	22	0	5,985
	2007	3,280	305	150	10	3,745
	2008	3,175	286	160	0	3,621
Japan	2004	2,417	272	5	0	2,693
	2005	1,311	131	23	0	1,466
	2006	3,148	181	0	0	3,329
	2007	0	0	0	0	0
	2008	489	69	44	0	602
Korea	2004	1,621	104	7	0	1,732
	2005	2,231	0	0	0	2,231
	2006	1,231	235	21	0	1,488
	2007	175	100	0	0	275
	2008	0	0	0	0	0
Chinese Taipei	2004	1,271	16	1	0	1,287
	2005	1,488	0	0	0	1,488
	2006	1,705	218	11	0	1,933
	2007	1,664	367	0	2	2,033
	2008	781	48	71	0	900
USA	2004	144	14	5	0	163
	2005	2,932	336	116	0	3,384
	2006	163	8	4	0	175
	2007	110	17	0	0	126
	2008	208	75	0	0	284
Vanuatu	2004	1,496	0	0	0	1,496
	2005	3,376	97	3	0	3,475
	2006	767	192	1	0	959
	2007	3,233	164	3	1	3,401
	2008	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL EEZ	2004	15,384	913	128	0	16,425
	2005	18,000	1,402	235	0	19,637
	2006	12,793	1,761	65	0	14,618
	2007	8,462	953	153	13	9,580
	2008	4,654	478	275	0	5,407

Tables 10. Annual catches by foreign longline fleets in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by flag and species, 2004-2008 (Source : 2006-2008 catch estimates of locally-based fleet derived from best combination of logsheet and unloadings data, others are unraised logsheet data collected by MIMRA)

Flag	Year	ALB	BET	YFT	OTH	Total
China	2004	6	953	328	1	1,288
	2005	20	1,030	600	2	1,651
	2006	39	1,908	1,478	388	3,811
	2007	14	2,028	727	348	3,116
	2008	58	2,270	554	394	3,275
FSM	2004	0	218	74	0	292
	2005	0	136	74	2	211
	2006	4	417	235	76	732
	2007	3	359	133	66	561
	2008	9	434	112	76	631
Japan	2004	6	491	96	7	599
	2005	12	106	45	0	163
	2006	23	120	70	0	212
	2007	5	114	40	0	159
	2008	0	0	0	0	0
Ch-Taipei	2004	1	37	16	0	53
	2005	0	35	21	0	56
	2006	0	5	7	0	12
	2007	0	0	0	0	0
	2008	0	10	2	0	12
TOTAL EEZ	2004	12	1,698	514	8	2,232
	2005	33	1,307	738	3	2,081
	2006	65	2,449	1,790	463	4,768
	2007	21	2,501	899	415	3,836
	2008	67	2,714	668	470	3,918

Table 11. Annual catches by foreign pole-and-line fleets in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by flag and species, 2004-2008 (Source: Unraised logsheet data collected by MIMRA)

Catch (metric tonnes)						
Fleet	Year	BET	SKJ	YFT	OTH	TOTAL
JAPAN	2004	0	1,152	9	11	1,171
	2005	0	653	1	1	655
	2006	0	978	8	1	987
	2007	0	4,517	1	0	4,518
	2008	9	2,447	6	0	2,462

DISPOSAL OF CATCH

The Marshall Islands Fishing Venture (MIFV) operates the Longline Fishbase with domestically-based foreign longline vessels as well as the national longline fleet. There was an increase in total unloadings in 2008 compared to the previous year and most of the unloaded catches were bound for export markets (Tables 12 & 13). The MIFV exports mainly fresh chilled tuna species to markets in the US, China and Canada. Frozen fish (rejects and bycatch), designated as OTHER, are shipped to China via transport containers and/or sold locally.

In recent years, Majuro has become a major transshipment port for the purse seine fleets operating in the WCPO. During 2008 a total of 233 transshipments were undertaken with total transshipped catch amounting to just over 156,000 mt (73% SKJ, 26% YFT, 1% BET)

Table 12. Total unloaded catch (mt) for domestically-based longline vessels, 2007

SPECIES	EXP	OTH	TOTAL
ALBACORE	0	15	15
BIGEYE	2,000	170	2,170
YELLOWFIN	587	178	765
BLUE MARLIN	64	312	377
MAHI MAHI / DOLPHINFISH	10	15	25
OPAH / MOONFISH	9	11	20
SAILFISH (INDO-PACIFIC)	0	2	2
SHARKS (UNIDENTIFIED)	0	256	256
SHORT-BILLED SPEARFISH	0	12	12
SWORDFISH	15	24	39
WAHOO	34	55	88
	2,718	1,051	3,769

Table 13 Total unloaded catch (mt) for domestically-based longline vessels, 2008

SPECIES	EXP	OTH	TOTAL
ALBACORE	17	52	69
BIGEYE	2,706	107	2,813
YELLOWFIN	592	100	692
BLUE MARLIN	38	444	482
MAHI MAHI / DOLPHINFISH	13	37	50
OPAH / MOONFISH	12	44	56
SAILFISH (INDO-PACIFIC)	0	1	1
SHARKS (UNIDENTIFIED)	0	215	215
SHORT-BILLED SPEARFISH	0	0	0
SWORDFISH	19	28	47
WAHOO	20	97	117
	3,378	1,000	4,378

ONSHORE DEVELOPMENTS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

The revitalized loining plant resumed full production in April 2009 after a short hiatus owing to technical issues warranting immediate attention. The plant currently employs around 400 local Marshallese. At present, production output is at 25mt daily. In 2008, the plant processed 435mt of tuna loins with 121mt exported to the US. Recently the managing company opted to purchase a purse seine vessel to help supply raw materials to the plant. The vessel, F/V LOJET, is duly registered and flagged in the RMI and is registered on the WCPFC List of Authorized Vessels. In addition to fishing in the RMI EEZ, the vessel is also licensed with both Nauru and Kiribati.

The Joint Venture between MIMRA and Koo's Fishing Company, Ltd. (KFC), otherwise known as Marshall Islands Fishing Company (MIFCO) continues with the vessel, Marshalls 201, operating under the FSM Arrangement for Regional Fisheries Access administered by the FFA. The company is looking to acquire 2 new additional vessels to complement the

existing fishing operations. The processing facility adjacent to KFC headquarter office building is nearing completion and production is envisaged to commence in due course.

FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE FISHERY

As previously mentioned, transshipment in Majuro port continues to pick up in recent years and remains an important catalyst for economic development in the RMI. It is envisaged that MIMRA and all concerned will continue and advocate for in-port transshipment noting the favorable economic spin-offs associated with this vital activity. Further clarity on this issue is evident in the transshipment discussion paper through the Secretariat in April 2009.

At the same time, the RMI is keen to shift longline catch attribution from a flag-based to zone-based approach noting the recent developments stemming from recent WCPFC meetings and inter-sessional discussions all the while being very mindful of the immediate implications as far as assessed annual financial contributions to the WCPFC is concerned.

Ultimately, with the recent shifts in paradigms taking shape around the region and the renewed active stance of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), of which the RMI is a committed member, through adoption of the 3rd Implementing Arrangement (3IA) among other things, the RMI remains keen to further develop its domestic fishery through innovative means. All of these prospects are lined up bearing in mind all the while the ongoing crucial scientific advice and conservation concerns through practicable measures to safeguard the last remaining healthy tuna stocks in the world.

DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

In 2008, port sampling activities continue to improve compared to 2007 (Tables 14 & 15). A total of 78,693 fish were measured during 2008 by a full-time port sampler stationed the MIFV longline fishbase. Collated data are sent directly to SPC on a bi-weekly basis for analysis. However, it is envisaged that MIMRA will acquire additional data entry staff to increase in-house processing.

The development of its data and statistical capability continues to be a vital tool for MIMRA. The SPC-OFP has been very instrumental in the Oceanic Division's data efforts, as evidenced by the successful integration and regular updates of the TUFMAN database at MIMRA.

MIMRA has attempted to carry observer trainings every year to meet the increasing demands placed on the Observer Program. In 2008, there were 17 active observers and a total of 71 trips and 1,653 sea days were completed on both longline and purse seine vessels (Table 16).

Tables 14. Port sampling (locally-based longline vessels), 2007

Month	Port	Number (Measured)					Number (Not Measured)				
		ALB	BET	YFT	OTH	TOTAL	ALB	BET	YFT	OTH	TOTAL
January	Majuro	0	3,430	1,518	90	5,038	34	0	52	3,309	3,395
February	Majuro	0	1,790	937	94	2,821	11	25	77	5,084	5,197
March	Majuro	0	2,766	1,821	4,587	9,174	86	12	98	3,656	3,852
April	Majuro	0	4,751	1,021	171	5,943	80	2	68	2,654	2,804
May	Majuro	0	5,090	2,712	142	7,944	9	20	33	2,629	2,691
June	Majuro	0	1,713	902	62	2,677	3	18	17	1,094	1,132
July	Majuro	0	2,583	746	121	3,450	1	35	8	727	771
August	Majuro	0	3,479	1,440	153	5,072	5	21	32	1,757	1,815
September	Majuro	0	6,001	1,905	245	8,151	18	7	7	2,601	2,633
October	Majuro	0	4,622	2,198	191	7,011	12	14	7	2,194	2,227
November	Majuro	0	2,806	1,800	95	4,701	24	8	42	2,162	2,236
December	Majuro	1	5,841	3,959	107	9,908	268	10	58	2,808	3,144
		1	44,872	20,959	6,058	71,890	551	172	499	30,675	31,897

Tables 15. Port sampling (locally-based longline vessels), 2008

Month	Port	Number (Measured)					Number (not measured)				
		ALB	BET	YFT	OTH	TOTAL	ALB	BET	YFT	OTH	TOTAL
January	Majuro	0	4,466	3,381	148	7,995	265	15	64	4,173	4,517
February	Majuro	8	5,027	2,059	157	7,251	14	9	69	4,157	4,249
March	Majuro	9	5,679	1,982	142	7,812	200	65	143	4,428	4,836
April	Majuro	83	7,353	1,777	255	9,468	139	36	131	4,994	5,300
May	Majuro	221	6,106	1,190	165	7,682	48	40	69	2,592	2,749
June	Majuro	100	6,157	1,304	73	7,634	49	40	136	2,645	2,870
July	Majuro	226	5,646	2,345	75	8,292	509	78	89	2,155	2,831
August	Majuro	0	4,741	1,406	83	6,230	95	38	109	2,358	2,600
September	Majuro	1	5,124	1,325	97	6,547	128	27	58	1,970	2,183
October	Majuro	8	4,335	891	73	5,307	221	15	37	1,567	1,840
November	Majuro	9	3,663	619	61	4,352	142	10	9	1,165	1,326
December	Majuro	0	84	39	0	123	0	0	0	0	0
		665	58,381	18,318	1,329	78,693	1,810	373	914	32,204	35,301

Tables 16. Observed trips and days at sea in 2008

Month	Number of Trips			Number of Days		
	LL	PS	Total	LL	PS	Total
January	4	0	4	63	0	63
February	2	0	2	28	0	28
March	0	0	0	0	0	0
April	0	1	1	0	41	41
May	3	4	7	44	148	192
June	2	6	8	17	195	212
July	7	2	9	98	81	179
August	5	3	8	72	122	194
September	4	1	5	54	26	80
October	7	2	9	89	112	201
November	4	10	14	65	337	402
December	4	0	4	61	0	61
	42	29	71	591	1,062	1,653