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REPORT ON CMM 2012-06 (PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA)

WCPFC-NC9-2013 /DP-02

KOREA



West Sea Fisheries Management Service
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August 2, 2013

Professor Glenn Hurry
Executive Director
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
P.O. Box 2356
Kolonias
Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, 96940

Dear Executive Director Hurry,

The Republic of Korea hereby provides the following information pursuant to paragraph 4 of WCPFC CMM 2012-06, the Conservation and Management Measures for Pacific Bluefin Tuna.

Paragraph 2:

a. Management of fishing efforts

Korea's fishing efforts by the number of vessels stood at 24 vessels as of 2013, which have been kept under the level of 2002-2004 (32 vessels in 2002, 29 vessels in 2003 and 2004).

b. Management of juveniles(age 0-3)

Korea established the Ministerial Directive on Conservation and Management of Bluefin Tuna (Administrative Directive No. 2011-51 of the Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) on May 26, 2011. With the cabinet reshuffle that took place in the first quarter this year, the control over the Directive was transferred from the Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries as from May 3rd, 2013. (Administrative Directive No. 2013-9 of the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries)

According to this Directive, any person shall not capture a Pacific Bluefin tuna which weight equivalent to 20kg and/or less than 20kg. It is exceptionally allowed when: 1) there is need for scientific studies, research or experiment 2) juveniles are needed for stock enhancement 3) juveniles are needed as fry for aquaculture, and 4) juveniles are incidentally caught. Additionally, it is required to obtain permission from the government in case of subparagraph 1 and 2.

Furthermore, Korea's large-scale mackerel purse seine operators have been observing a voluntary closure period from March 14 to April 19(45 days) based on a lunar calendar to reduce the bycatches of juvenile Pacific bluefin tuna. Considering that no fishing takes place after September due to changes in fishing conditions such as water temperatures, PBT bycatches occur during the months of May-August (4 months).

Recently, catches from Korea's large-scale purse seiners were 1,196 tonnes, 670 tonnes and 1,412 tonnes in 2010, 2011 and 2012, respectively. As of late June 2013, 540 tonnes of PBT have been caught, showing a downward trend in catches year-on-year.

This decline is due to reduced fishing efforts and the fringe benefit from mackerel purse seine operators' voluntary closure. The fluctuation between years seems to have occurred not only as a result of the government's resource management measures but also due to changes in fishing conditions (e.g. water temperature distribution, etc). Since 2010, the government has been implementing "the five year plan for PBT stock assessment" which is scheduled to be completed in 2014.

In 2013, observers were placed on board Korea's large scale mackerel purse seiners for 4 months from early April to July. They collected operational and biological information such as the location and time of fishing, catch compositions (PBT's share in the total catches), lengths of catches, water temperatures and fishing conditions. They also carried out tagging/releasing to identify the migratory routes of PBT. From July to August, scientists from the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI) were on board the vessels to conduct scientific research on PBT bycatches. The data collected are currently being raised and analyzed, and the result will be made available at NC 9 apart from this report.

Paragraph 3:

Korea established an electronic statistics system in 2011 to maintain a record of the weight and the number of Pacific Bluefin tuna. The system went through an improvement work in 2012 to enhance the accuracy of the data collected.

The system is operated as follows: The operator enters the catches by vessel and weight and this information is cross-checked through the verification by NFRDI, thereby securing the reliability of the data. Further improvement is on the way in terms of cross-checking. (e.g checking with export data, etc)

In addition, the observers in the Busan Cooperative Fishery Market where Pacific Bluefin tuna caught by large-scale purse seiners are sold on commission have been doing monitoring, surveillance and data collection activities.

In 2013, the Korean government submitted PBT catch data collected from Korea's small-scale pole and line vessels. This is part of Korea's effort to improve the accuracy and representativeness of relevant data. (National Report of Korea, ISC/13/PLENARY/07)

Paragraph 6:

Not Applicable.

Paragraph 7:

The Korean government has been cooperating with relevant Members of the IATTC on the matters regarding PBT. At the 85th IATTC annual meeting (June 213, Veracruz, Mexico), Korea co-sponsored the PBT Conservation and Management Measures along with Mexico and Japan, recognizing the importance of PBT resources.

I always appreciate your efforts in assisting the important work of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of three stylized characters: 'S', 'H', and 'S'.

Hyunseok Sin
Director of the Distant-Water Fisheries Division
of the Overseas Fisheries and International Policy Bureau
the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of Korea