



COMMISSION
Tenth Regular Session
2nd December – 6th December 2013
Cairns, AUSTRALIA

ADVICE ON PURSE SEINE EEZ LIMITS - TONGA

WCPFC10-2013-DP27
18 November 2013

This letter was received by WCPFC Secretariat on 18 November 2013

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MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE & FOOD, FORESTS AND FISHERIES

File No.: F14/7

Date: November 18, 2013

Professor Glen Hurry
Executive Director
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
Kolonia
Phonpei
FSM.

Dear Sir,

**Subject: FORMAL DECLARATION OF CATCH AND EFFORT LIMITS WITHIN THE
EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE OF TONGA**

Our small island Kingdom of Tonga is much depended on our EEZ fisheries for sustainable economic development of our people. We take obligations to our people to properly manage and conserve our highly migratory fisheries resources, very seriously.

We continue to faithfully participate in the work of the Western and Central Pacific Commission (WCPFC) with this important responsibility in mind, and take our WCPFC obligations very seriously.

Given our fisheries are such substantial sources of economic revenue for our country, we are continually working to secure their long-term future, and improve the economic benefits we can derive from them. The key to this is the establishment of sustainable limits for key HMS stocks. We have completed a rigorous process involving technical inputs and advice from the Forum Fisheries Agency, the Secretariat for the Pacific Community and consultation with our national stakeholders.

In determining our fisheries limit, we have taken into account

- a) the status of the stocks, biomass estimates and the existing level of fishing effort in the fishery;
- b) past, present and future fishing patterns and the extent of the catch being utilized for domestic consumption and food security;
- c) historic catches and effort in and around our EEZ;
- d) the fact that our economy, food supply and livelihood are strongly interlinked and dependent on the exploitation of marine living resources;
- e) the contributions we have made and will continue to make to conservation and management of the stocks, including the provision of accurate data and support for scientific research in the Convention Area;
- f) our strong record of compliance with WCPFC conservation and management measures;
- g) the needs of our communities and traditions regarding fish stocks; and
- h) our legitimate development aspirations.

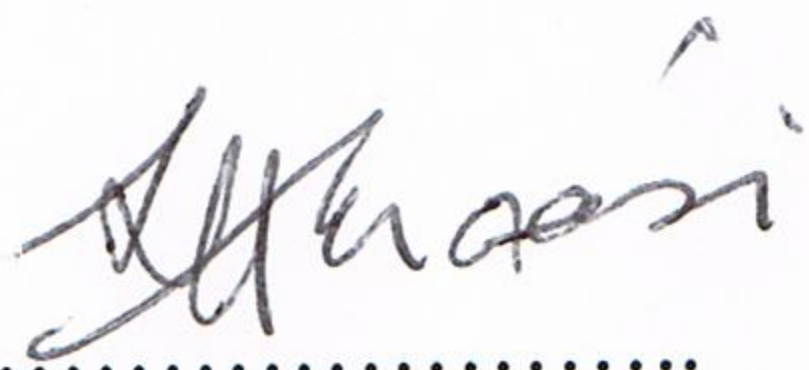
We have followed this process and have implemented an annual limit of within the **150 – 250 fishing days** for purse seine vessels within our exclusive economic zone. It should be noted that the limits that we have adopted include room for further development of our fisheries, in consistent with the WCPF Convention. These are provided without prejudice to our future position on the above named fisheries with our ability to revise and adjust our fisheries management frameworks, including catch or effort limits.

Furthermore, we will make best efforts not to exceed this limit. It should be noted that we have obligations under the multilateral Treaty with the United States, including an obligation on non-PNA countries, to allow up to a total collective fishing effort of 300 days within non-PNA EEZs for vessels fishing pursuant to the multilateral Treaty. The non-PNA members are and will continue to work together to ensure that our collective limits are not exceeded as a result of this obligation

Kindly place this letter on the Commissions website as a delegation paper for the 10th Regular Session of the Commission, where we hope to make a short statement outlining to the Commission that we have established these limits.

On the basis of the above, I look forward for continuing engagement in the work of the Commission to pursue the Convention Objectives.

Sincerely,



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Losaline H. Ma'asi



Chief Executive Officer for Agriculture and Food, Forests and Fisheries