



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE  
SEVENTH REGULAR SESSION**

9-17 August 2011  
Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia

---

**ISSUES WITH CHINESE LONGLINE FLEET DATA SUBMITTED TO THE WCPFC**

---

**WCPFC-SC7-2011/ST IP-03**

Peter Williams<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Oceanic Fisheries Programme (OFP), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Noumea, New Caledonia.

## 1. Introduction

The provision of scientific data to the WCPFC, according to the requirements specified in [Scientific data to be provided to the Commission](#), is an important annual reporting obligation for member and cooperating non-member countries (CCMs) of the WCPFC. Williams (2011) summarises the recent provisions of scientific data to the WCPFC, highlight data gaps and the work that has been done to resolve data gaps.

With regards to reporting data gaps, there are certain cases where a detailed explanation is required which makes it difficult to include in the usual data gaps paper (i.e. Williams, 2011). This information paper has therefore been produced to provide the necessary detail to explain several outstanding issues with the scientific data submitted to the WCPFC by China for their longline fleet, issues that have briefly been mentioned in Williams (2011).

In the future, information papers such as this paper will be produced to provide the necessary detail in explaining outstanding data gaps.

## 2. Chinese Longline bigeye tuna annual catch estimate for 2009

The longline bigeye catch for 2009 listed in the letter by Mr Liu to the WCPFC Executive Director (*Information about Chinese catch of Bigeye and yellowfin tuna in the WCPO* – 22 March 2011; see Annex 1) was 9,793 t. which corresponds to the value provided in China's National Fisheries Report prepared for SC6 (Annual WCPFC Report Part 1). However, when reviewing the 2009 aggregate catch/effort data provided to the Commission by China in April 2010, this catch level (9,793 t.) corresponds to the WCPO (Pacific Ocean west of 150°W – see Figure 1) and not the WCPFC Convention Area (Figure 2), for which total longline bigeye catch for 2009 was 11,565 t. according to the aggregate catch/effort data provided by China.

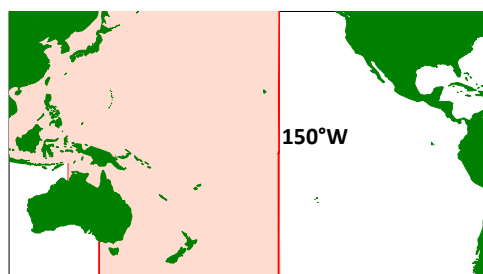


Figure 1. Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO)

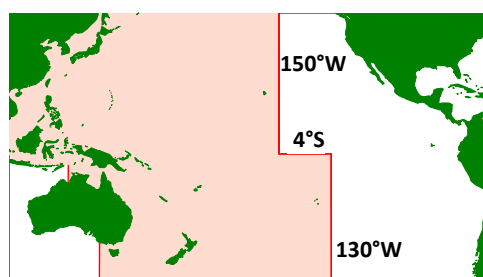


Figure 2. WCPFC Convention Area

Since the Commission is obliged to compile data for its work covering the WCPFC Convention Area (Figure 2) and **not** the WCPO area (Figure 1), the figure of **11,565 t.** was accepted by the Commission as the Chinese longline bigeye catch estimate for 2009 for the WCPFC Convention Area.

This letter also indicates that the bigeye catch the Chinese longline fleet took in Kiribati waters during 2009 (4,133 t.) was **not** included in China's 2009 annual catch estimates and should be attributed to the Kiribati longline fleet catch. Since the 2009 annual catch estimates for the Kiribati longline fleet do not include the 4,133 t. of bigeye tuna taken by Chinese longline vessels in Kiribati waters, this amount of catch is not accounted for in the WCPFC annual catch estimates and therefore, not accounted for in the stock assessments.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Could China and Kiribati please clarify the attribution of the bigeye tuna (and other species) catches by Chinese longline vessels in Kiribati waters for 2009, and then revise their annual catch estimates and aggregate data accordingly. The WCPFC also seek information on any catch attribution that may have been undertaken for any other years.

## 2. Chinese longline aggregate catch/effort data only covers the WCPO

The maps presented in ANNEX 2 (Figures 3–10) show the annual distribution of target tuna catch by the Chinese longline fleet for years 2003–2010, according to aggregate catch/effort data provided to the WCPFC by China. Review of these maps (Figures 3–10), in conjunction with Figures 1 and 2, show that the aggregate catch/effort data provided to the WCPFC for years 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2010 cover the WCPO area only when they should cover the WCPFC Convention Area (noting that data provided for years 2003 and 2009 do cover the WCPFC Convention Area). Since the aggregate catch/effort data provided by China are aligned to the annual catch estimates provided by China, it is likely that the annual catch estimates for these years may also only cover the WCPO area (Figure 1) when they should cover the WCPFC Convention Area (Figure 2).

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Could China please undertake the following work as soon as possible:

- (i) Resubmit the **aggregate catch/effort data** for the years that cover the WCPO only to ensure it covers the WCPFC Convention Area (i.e. for years 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2010)
- (ii) Resubmit the **annual catch estimates** for the years that cover the WCPO only to ensure it covers the WCPFC Convention Area (i.e. for years 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2010)

## 3. Chinese-flagged longline vessels chartered to Pacific-Island countries

There are several Pacific Island countries that have indicated that Chinese-flagged longline vessels based in their country should be considered as chartered to the Pacific-island country (i.e. coastal state) and the catch of the Chinese-flagged longline vessels should therefore be attributed to the Pacific island country with respect to the data (annual catch estimates and aggregated data) that are submitted to the WCPFC. The countries involved are FSM, Kiribati, Palau, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands and Fiji.

In order for the WCPFC data managers to avoid double-counting when compiling aggregate data for the stock assessments, we need to know whether China has excluded or included the catch/effort

for the chartered vessels in the aggregate longline catch/effort data that are submitted to the WCPFC.

The WCPFC therefore seeks answers, and/or revisions to the data, based on the following specific questions which will hopefully resolve these issues.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Could China please review and respond to the following questions as soon as possible:

- Chinese longline catch in the waters of Fiji, Marshall Islands (RMI) and FSM is present in Chinese longline aggregate data years 2003, and 2008–2010 (Figures 3, 8, 9 and 10), but does not appear in any other year.
  - (I) Can you please explain the absence of the catches from your fleet in these waters for years 2004-2007 ?
  - (II) Do you consider that the Chinese longline fleet are chartered vessels to Fiji, RMI and FSM for years 2004-2007, but not in years 2003 and 2008-2010 ?
- The Solomon Islands recently provided 2010 annual catch estimates and operational catch/effort logsheet data to the WCPFC which contain catch by Chinese Longline vessels licensed to fish under a charter arrangement to the Solomon Islands. The catch by these vessels has been attributed to the Solomon Islands (coastal state) for 2010 in line with the information provided in the WCPFC Circular 2010-20 on Charter Notifications, which was sent out to CCMs on 20th September 2010. In order to avoid double-counting with the annual catch estimates of the Solomon Islands chartered longline fleet, could China please advise whether the catches of your vessels (provided in a list sent to the China WCPFC data correspondent via email on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011) have been included in the Chinese longline annual catch estimates and aggregate catch/effort data for 2010.
- There is a large catch of albacore in two 5°x5° cells in 2008 and 2009 in the vicinity of Fiji/Vanuatu (15°-20°S, 170°-175°E and 10°-15°S, 165°-170°E). Can you explain why albacore catch is so concentrated in this area or was the total estimated albacore catch 'assigned' to this area in the absence of logsheet data which would have provide more detailed spatial distribution of the catch in these years.

## References

Williams, P.G. 2011. Scientific data available to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. Working Paper SC7 ST WP-1. Seventh Regular Session of the WCPFC Scientific Committee (SC7), 9–17 August 2011, Pohnpei, FSM. Oceanic Fisheries Programme, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Noumea, New Caledonia.

## 中华人民共和国农业部渔业局

BUREAU OF FISHERIES, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

地址: 北京农展馆南里 11 号, 邮政编码: 100125 Address: No.11 Nongzhanguannanli, Beijing, 100125  
电话 (TEL): 86-10-59192928, 传真 (FAX): 86-10-59192961, E-mail: [inter-coop@agri.gov.cn](mailto:inter-coop@agri.gov.cn)

22, March 2011

Professor Glenn Hurry  
Executive Director, Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission  
PO Box 2356 Kolonia  
Pohnpei 96941, Federated States of Micronesia

**Subject: Information about Chinese catch of Bigeye and Yellow-fin tuna in WCPO**

Dear Professor Hurry,

I am writing this letter to provide information reference to the catch data of Big-eye and yellowfin tuna of Chinese long-line fleet in WCPO, with an intention to clarify some issues in this regard.

As we reported earlier, the total catch of bigeye tuna of China in 2009 was 9793 metric tons. In addition to that, I would advise there is another part of catch of Big-eye tuna, which was 4133 metric tons (round weight), has been taken from the waters of Kiribati in 2009 by Chinese fishing vessels under the fishing access agreement between China and Kiribati. In article 24 of this agreement that stipulated: "The fish caught under this Agreement shall be considered as Kiribati catch and therefore all catch data (log-sheet) referenced to this Agreement shall be forwarded only to Kiribati Government." Therefore, we reported the catch in WCPFC area in 2009 as 9793 metric tons, that did not cover the catch in water of Kiribati. However, but as flag states, according to measures adopted by ICCAT, IOTC and IATTC, we issued the Catch Statistical Document for these part of catch to be exported to other countries that are members of those three tuna RFMOs.

In addition, we note that the catch amount of bigeye tuna of China in 2009 was 479 metric tons higher than the catch limit (9314 metric tons) set for China in CMM-08-01.

Also, we noted that the Commission has made decision to restrain the catch of yellowfin tuna at level of year 2001-2004. We understand that the catch limit is not "the average annual catch in 2001-2004". We, therefore, set our catch limit of yellowfin tuna in 2009 was 4048 metric tons (catch level of 2004). However, we reported yellowfin catch in 2009 was 6318 metric tons, that means we have overused 2270 metric tons.

China will pay back that overage of bigeye tuna and yellowfin tuna in the following years, which means subtracting that amount of catch from the catch limit of China, hopefully based on the mechanism to be introduced by WCPFC.

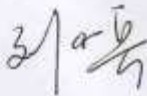
As a responsible member of WCPFC, we will try our best to control the catch limit will not be over again.

I understand that the issues referred in the letter as well as the Chinese catch limit of bigeye tuna in 2011 could be discussed in TCC and in WCPFC meeting this year.

It will be great appreciated if you could circulate this letter to all CCMs of WCPFC.

Best regards

Xiaobing Liu



Director, Division of International Cooperation  
Bureau of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, China

**ANNEX 2 – Annual distribution of Chinese longline catch in the Pacific Ocean, according to data provided to the WCPFC.**

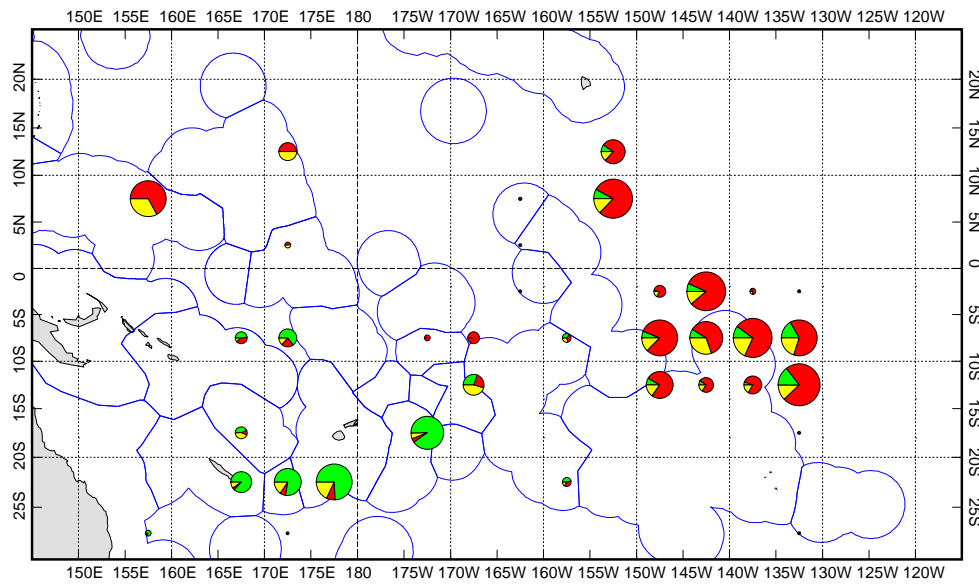


Figure 3. Chinese longline -reported catch of albacore (green), bigeye (red) and yellowfin (yellow) tuna, 2003

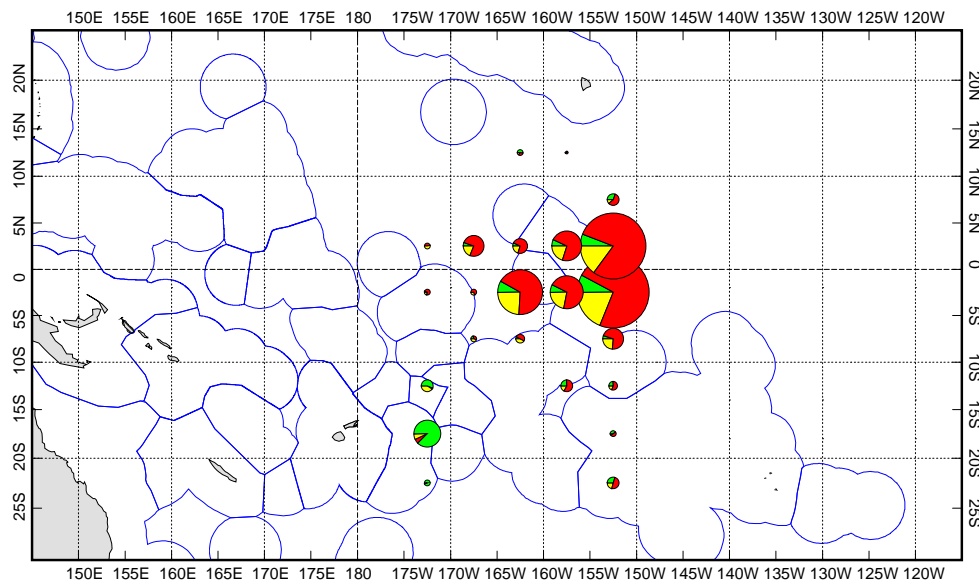


Figure 4. Chinese longline -reported catch of albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tuna, 2004



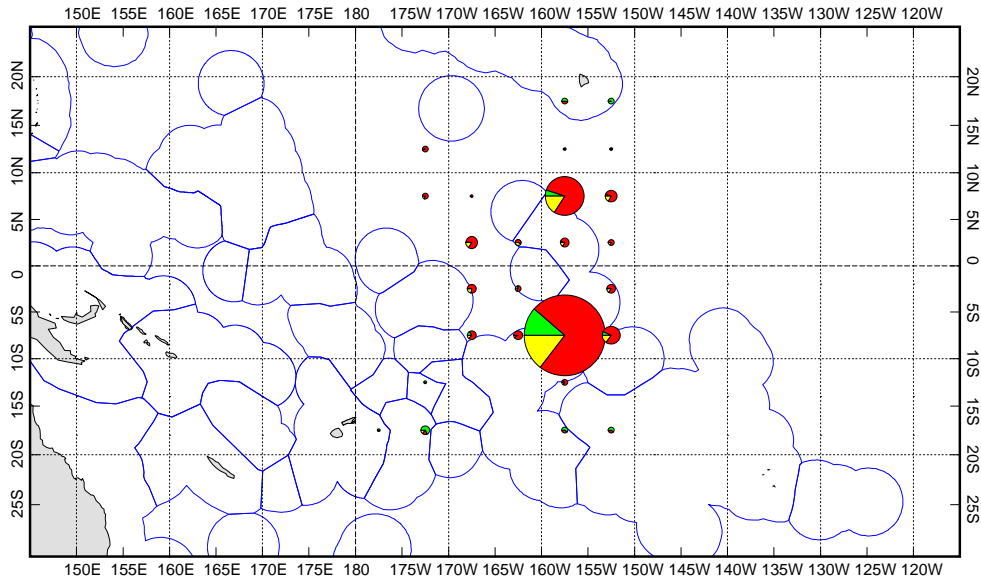


Figure 5. Chinese longline -reported catch of albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tuna, 2005

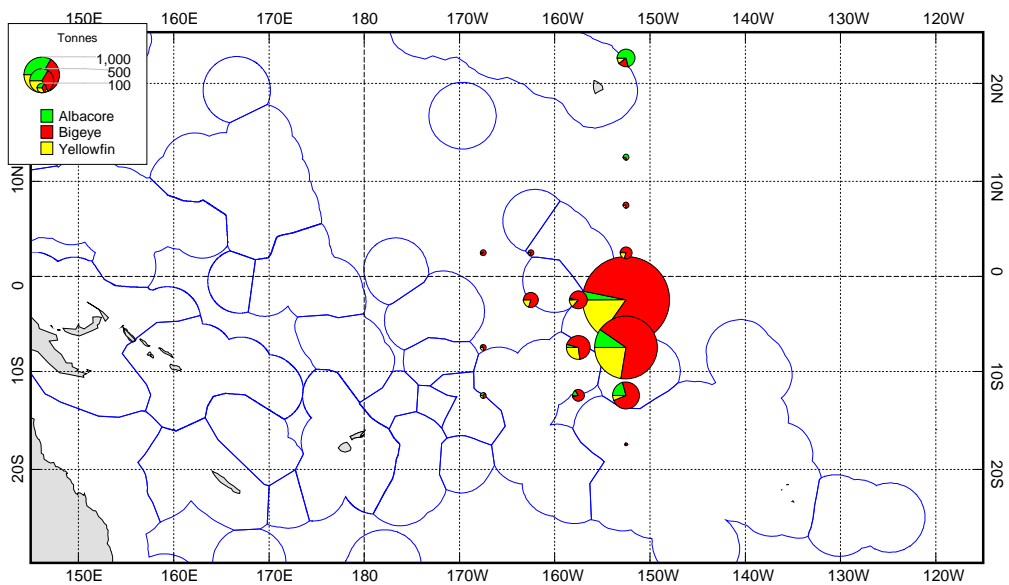


Figure 6. Chinese longline -reported catch of albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tuna, 2006



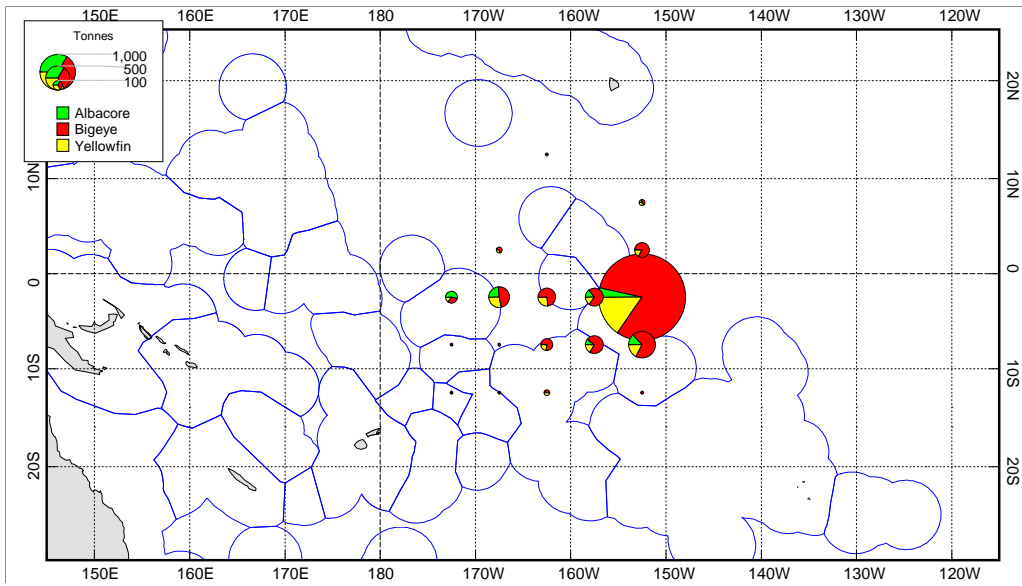


Figure 7. Chinese longline -reported catch of albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tuna, 2007

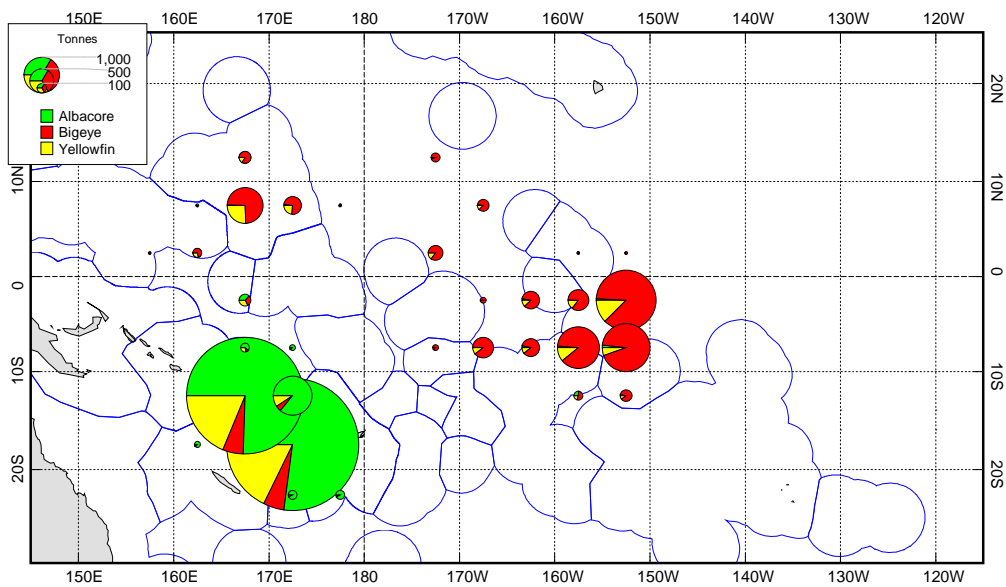


Figure 8. Chinese longline -reported catch of albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tuna, 2008

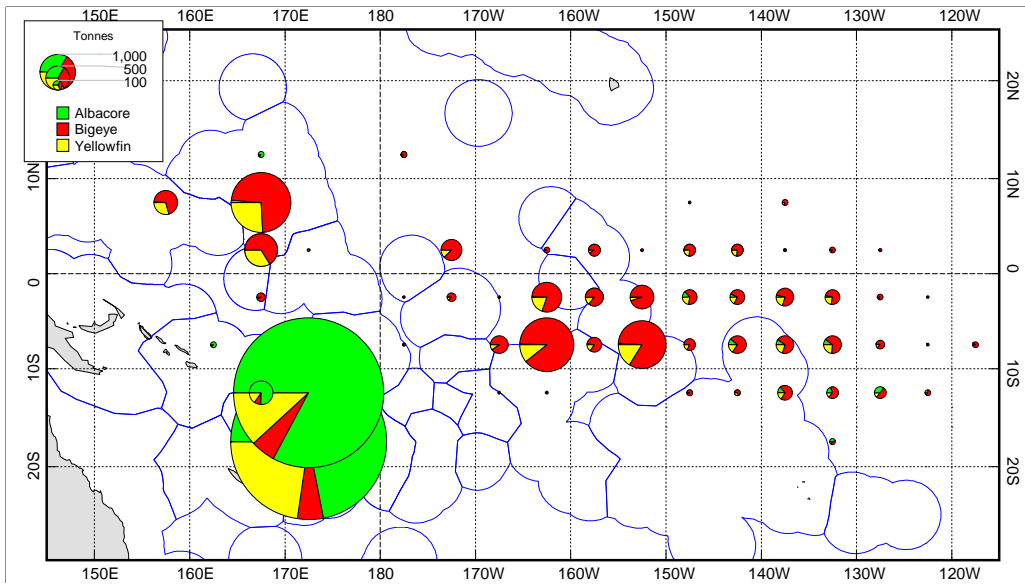


Figure 9. Chinese longline -reported catch of albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tuna, 2009

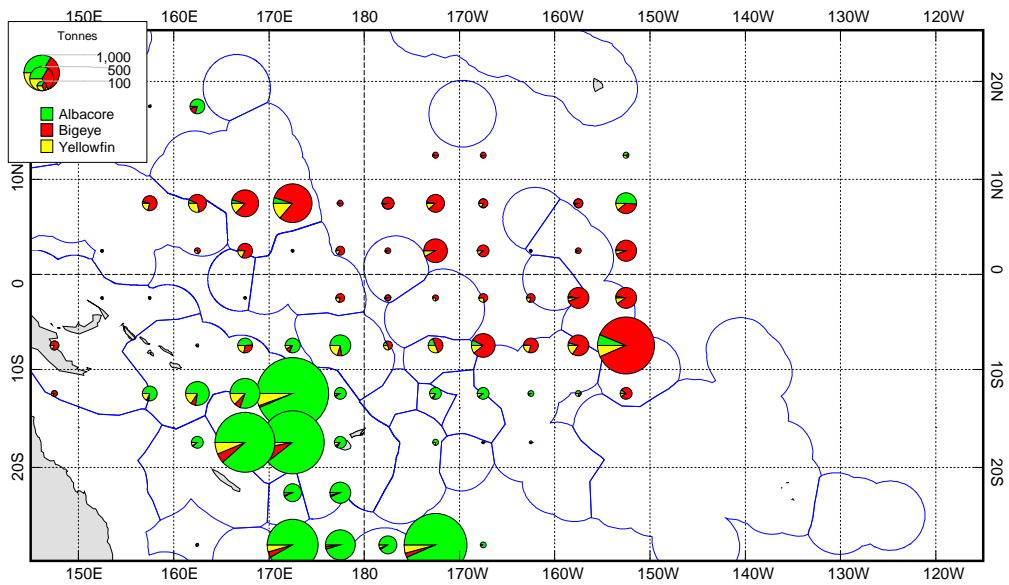


Figure 10. Chinese longline -reported catch of albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tuna, 2010