



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Agriculture
Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
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Prof. Glenn Hurry
Executive Director, WCPFC
Kaselehlie Street, P. O. Box 2356,
Kolonia, Pohnpei 96941,
Federated States of Micronesia.

Subject: Philippine Initiatives on the Pacific bluefin tuna

Dear Prof. Hurry,

After conducting a review of all our catches for the year 2010, the Philippines does not have any recorded catches of Pacific bluefin tuna. Thus, we feel that the Conservation and Management Measure 2010-04 on the Pacific bluefin tuna is not applicable to the Philippines.

On the other hand, the Philippines is aware of the "PACIFIC BLUEFIN SURVEY OF NORTHERN PHILIPPINES PHASE 1" conducted during the period of 15th – 25th June 2005 by Dr. Antonio Lewis. In his survey, Dr. Lewis wrote that the land-based survey undertaken in northeast Luzon during June 2005 produced circumstantial evidence of the presence of juvenile Pacific bluefin tuna (1-6 kgs in size) in the waters of Cagayan Province on a seasonal basis which corresponds to March-April, but possibly in relatively small numbers and in association with other tuna species. This should be confirmed by a repeat visit at a more appropriate time in 2006, and by the ongoing efforts of regionally-based staff in Cagayan. He further wrote that the brief survey of Aurora Province did not produce any evidence of the regular occurrence of juvenile bluefin, but this possibility should not be discounted, on the basis of previous unconfirmed sightings in the area.

Lastly, we should take note that Dr. Lewis concluded in his study that the Aurora survey did however produce evidence of the regular capture of adult Pacific bluefin tuna by handline vessels unloading in Dingalan [a fishport along the coast of Aurora Province facing the Pacific Ocean], reportedly most frequently in June-July and these captures are consistent with the close proximity of the single Pacific spawning ground of the species, and spawning activity in April-June.

Dr. Lewis finally states that "*again, more information should be gathered by provincial staff on these landings, and efforts to record any landings of juvenile bluefin in the province encouraged*".

In anticipation of the grant of the pending request of this Bureau for more personnel, we are planning to conduct further surveys in the year 2012. Our office is open to any suggestions as to how best to conduct this so that better fisheries conservation and management measures may be put in place for the Pacific bluefin tuna.


The Philippines is committed to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use, in particular for human food consumption, of highly migratory fish stocks such as the Pacific bluefin tuna in the western and central Pacific Ocean for present and future generations and in accordance with the 1982 Convention and the Agreement. The Philippines is a member of the Coral Triangle Initiative [CTI] and its participation in the CTI is accentuated by the enactment of Republic Act Number 10067 entitled "*An Act Establishing the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park in the Province of Palawan as a Protected Area under the NIPAS Act [RA 7586 and the Strategic Environmental Plan for Palawan [RA7611] providing for its management and for other purposes.*" This law creates the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park plus a 10 nautical mile buffer zone around its perimeter as a "no take zone". By its creation, the Philippines has reduced its available fishing grounds to its fisherfolk in order to protect the foodfish of the predatory species such as tunas as well as the tunas themselves from fishing activities.

Should the results indicate that the area is a spawning ground, the Philippines is committed to protect such area and to provide for a refugia for the Pacific bluefin tuna in the same manner as we have set plans to conduct a study of the specific spawning grounds and spawning periods in the Celebes Sea for yellowfin and bigeye. In order to perform this activity, the Philippines will discuss this with its next door neighbor Indonesia, also a participant to the WCPFC in the conduct of this study as we share the Celebes Sea. The purpose of this study is to further study the biology of yellowfin and bigeye tunas in the Celebes Sea, how fishing impacts on the longevity of the tunas and how best to reduce ensure long term sustainable utilization of the tuna species.

In the same manner, we have started our collaboration with Japan as regards to the Pacific bluefin tuna with an initial landing survey we conducted together with the Japanese Scientists Ziro Suzuki of the National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries last February in Aparri, Cagayan and in Legaspi City. While we received information from the fishermen during our visit that they are observing PBT landings, this was not confirmed during our visit as we did not observe/see PBT. We however, informed them how PBT looks like and provided some posters for their reference.

We will appreciate it if this could be circulated to all members of the Northern Committee.

Best regards.


ATTY. ASIS G. PEREZ
Director

