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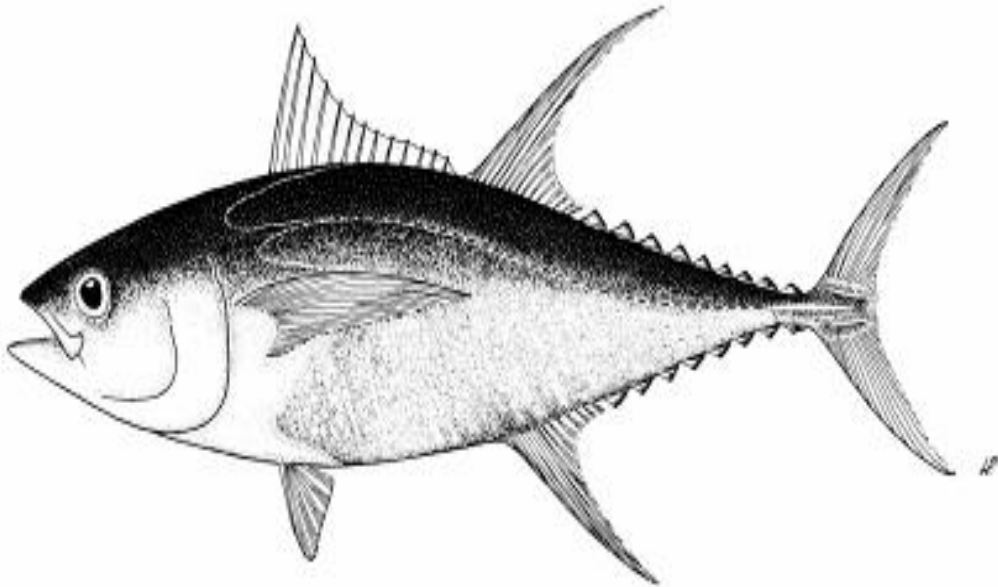
**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMISSION
PART 1: INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH, AND STATISTICS**

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NIUE

WCPFC-SC14

COUNTRY FISHERIES REPORT – NIUE



Fisheries Division

**Ministry of Natural Resources
Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries
Niue**

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1. Abstract

The number of offshore longline vessels in Niue's waters increased from 7 in the previous year to 8. Although this was the highest number of vessels for the last 8 years, the total catch for 2017 is the lowest compared to previous years as only 3 of the 8 had recorded catches and all eight vessels ceased operations in Niue by the end of June.

Albacore remained the dominant catch making up just over 75% of the total weight, followed by yellowfin and bigeye.

Niue's newly established protected area, covering 40% of the total EEZ will enhance protection and management of important habitats and species and all types of fishery.

2. Background

Niue's catch composition has remained consistent for a number of years. Albacore dominates at almost 80% of the total weight every year. Yellowfin tuna and bigeye follow with very low but notable numbers compared to other species.

At the peak of the Niue Fishing Factory processing plant, 2010 was the best catch rate being recorded with the timeline of 3 months fished. At this stage only a few Long Line operators were engaged in the Fishery.

The Fishing vessels were all Cook Island flagged and offloaded in American Samoa, with transshipment of all vessels at Niue designated port, with 100 percent observer coverage during transshipment. Niue has since licensed vessels flagged to other countries.

Niue's management of its artisanal fishery is improving steadily. As of the first quarter of 2016, a Fisheries data officer was dedicated to collect catch data all year round. As tourism is growing, so has the diversification of marine activities. Niue Fisheries is working alongside the Niue Ocean Wide project to set up management of Niue's newest and largest marine protected area. The area will encompass management for significantly important inshore and offshore habitats, species, fishing and non-fishing activities.

At the 10th Annual WCPFC meeting in Cairns, Niue declared its longline and purse seine limits. These limits are incorporated into the National Pelagic Management and Development Plan.

3. Annual Data Summary and Species Catch Distribution by Longline vessels from 2009-2017.

With only three of the eight vessels with recorded catches, the total catch was reduced significantly from the previous year (Table 1). The total number of trips and the subsequent effort was greatly reduced which yielded a very low catch total. Out of the primary species, only albacore had a fairly notable catch weight and the rest barely made 5 tonnes or even a tonnes. However the reduction for albacore from the previous year was still very large at almost 80%. Yellowfin and bigeye follow with very low catches.

YEAR	No. of Vessels	ALBACORE	BIGEYE	SKIPJACK	YELLOWFIN	BLUE MARLIN	STRIPED MARLIN	SWORDFISH	OTHER	TOTAL
2009	3	138.0	7	5	12	1	4	1	8	176
2010	6	97	4	1	8	1	0	0	5	116
2011	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
2012	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
2013	6	416	18	9	44	19	2	4	31	542
2014	5	325	26	13	84	19	1	3	22	491
2015	3	57	4	1	11	3	0	0	3	79
2016	7	233	12	3	31	9	1	0	7	296
2017	8	53	4	0.2	5	3	0.1	1	3	70

Table1. Annual catch estimates in Niue's EEZ. Data Source: Operational (logsheet) catch/effort data, unraised. The catch for 2010 is for the first 4 months of the year before fishing operations by the fisheries partner ceased.

4. Flag State Reporting

Niue is not a flag state

5. Coastal State Reporting

Niue has a Management plan for pelagic fishing, with limits set on main tuna species targeted based on the best catch rates and those neighbouring countries catches that are similar in size and rate.

Niue reports its tuna fisheries catches to the Scientific Committee of the WCPFC.

6. Socio-economic factors

Pelagic fish that is caught by licensed offshore foreign vessels is not sold in Niue. This catch is offloaded at ports designated by the flag state. Fish that is caught by small artisanal vessels remains the main source of fish for locals. It is sold to restaurants and to the general public at around \$15 per kilo. All fishermen whether they are subsistence or chartered sell fish to general stores and restaurants or directly to the general public. Chartered artisanal fishing has been very popular with tourists. The number of boats and average trips per day has increased over the years.

7. Disposal of catch

The Disposal of catch is at the designated port of transshipment. Sharks that are caught in Niue's waters must be discarded as per Niue's legislation and the National Pelagic Management plan.

8. Onshore developments

The processing plant is still inactive and most shore developments are of access to onshore facilities (wharf upgrade).

The wharf upgrade is to provide ease of access and safer offload to fishing vessels given the open nature of Niue's only port. This was identified by the last operations as one key area for improvement.

9. Future Prospects of the fishery

The Pelagic Development and Management plan is a mechanism to drive current and future prospects which can be aided by long term and short term partnerships.

One of the long term partnerships is with the Niue Ocean Wide project to set up management of Niue's newest and largest marine protected area. The area will encompass management for significantly important inshore and offshore habitats, species, fishing and non-fishing activities.

10. Status of tuna fishery data collection systems

The process of data collection is enshrined in the Licensing terms and conditions of foreign vessels fishing in Niue waters. Reporting and data collection is mandatory with authorised Officers rights to set the terms, though these are based on data requirements of SPC and WCPFC.

Penalties are imposed on denying or refusal of access to data. For Artisanal data, a data officer has been appointed to collect the data 4 days per week. In previous years fishermen were relied upon to record their own data. Along with the offshore data, this data is entered and stored in the TUFMAN database developed by SPC.

11. Research activities covering target and non-target species

Research of pelagic species is subject to the availability of funding and requirements under the National Pelagic Management and Development Plan.

In 2010, a wahoo tagging program was carried out using satellite tags and the ARGOS satellite tracking device to track the movement of wahoo. Further research in these areas is expected subject to funding availability.

In 2016, Niue was very fortunate to acquire the assistance of Pristine Seas of National Geographic to conduct a research on pelagic fish assemblage characteristics using mid-water baited remote underwater video stations. At this same time, the Pacific Community undertook finfish and invertebrates surveys with Niue Fisheries staff.