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PART 1: INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH, AND STATISTICS

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REPUBLIC OF MARSHALL ISLANDS

Republic of the Marshall Islands

Annual Report Part 1
Information of fisheries, statistics and research

Oceanic and Industrial Affairs Division
Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority
Republic of the Marshall Islands

August 2012

Scientific data was provided to the Commission in accordance with the decision relating to the provision of scientific data to the Commission by 30 April 2012	Yes

SUMMARY

In 2011, estimated catches by the different gears operating in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) zone indicated an increase of about 24% compared to the previous year. The majority of the catch continues to come from the purse seine fishery which accounts for 86% of the total inzone catch of around 35,400 metric tonnes.

Similarly, total tuna catch by the RMI purse seine fleet fishing throughout the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) also increased to just over 90,000 metric tonnes, about a 37% increase over the previous year. Skipack tuna comprised about 90% of the total tuna catch from this fleet with the remaining 10% from yellowfin (8%) and bigeye (2%) tunas.

There were six turtle and three whale shark interactions observed in the purse seine fishery and all were released alive. No other interactions were recorded. Further, there was no observer coverage available for the longline fleets and the RMI is working to remedy the situation.

The RMI Observer Program employed 30 active observers in 2011 and completed 123 purse seine trips (4,802 sea days) on both national and sub-regional trips. During the same period, two additional office staff were recruited to assist the Observer Program, particularly in areas of training to meet coverage requirements.

FLAG STATE REPORTING

Annual catch and effort estimates for the national purse seine fleet, fishing throughout the WCPFC Convention Area during the last five years, are presented in Table 1a with historical estimates further provided in Figure 1a. Catch estimates for purse seine fleet in 2011 amounted to just over 90,000 mt, about a 37% increase over the previous year. Skipjack tuna catch, in 2011, accounted for about 90% of total catch with the rest comprising of yellowfin (8%) and bigeye tuna (2%). Additionally, the reported catch and effort estimates from the national longline fleet are illustrated in Table 1b and Figure 1b. Provisional catch estimates from the longline fleet in 2011 show a slight decrease from the previous year.

Table 1a. Annual catch (mt) and effort (days) estimates for the Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, by primary species, for the WCPFC Convention Area, 2007-2011

Species	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
SKIPJACK	53916	26500	39697	48106	80625
YELLOWFIN	3370	4151	1532	7173	7456
BIGEYE	2118	1567	2233	1556	2101

Table 1b. Annual catch (mt) and effort (hooks) estimates for the Marshall Islands longline vessels, by primary species, for the WCPFC Convention Area, 2007-2011

Species	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
YELLOWFIN	2	91	120	117	99
BIGEYE	3	375	381	257	259
BLUE MARLIN	1	63	52	52	37
BLACK MARLIN	0	0	0	0	7
SKIPJACK	0	0	0	0	0
ALBACORE	0	15	10	17	4
PACIFIC BLUEFIN	0	0	0	0	0
STRIPED MARLIN	0	1	0	0	0
SWORDFISH	0	7	4	5	3

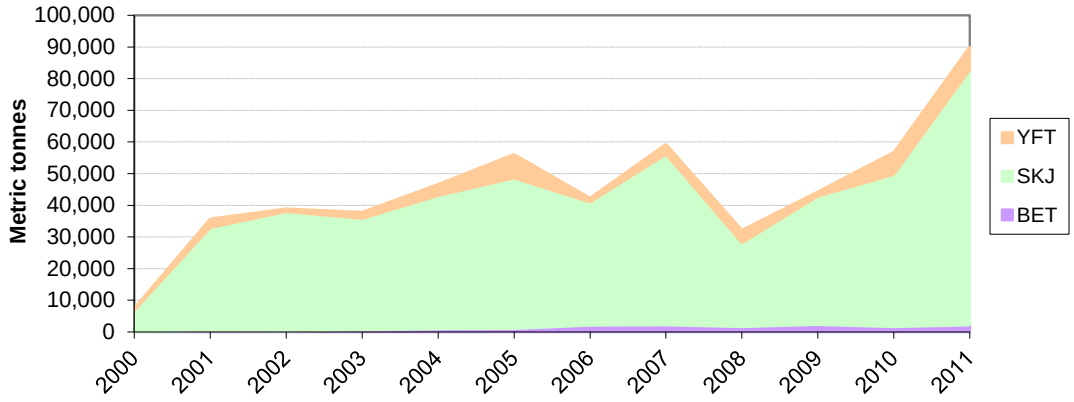

Figure 1a. Historical annual catch for the Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, by primary species, for the WCPFC Convention Area

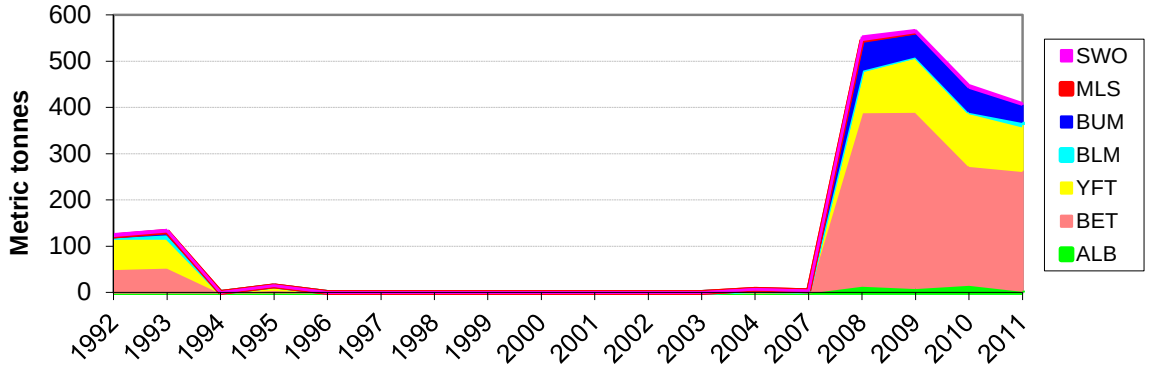

Figure 1b. Historical annual catch for the Marshall Islands longline vessels, by primary species, for the WCPFC Convention Area

Ten national purse seine and four longline vessels were active in the Convention Area during 2011 (Figure 2, Tables 2a & 2b). As the relationship with respect to nationality of catch is still being progressed, a number of domestically-based foreign longline vessels are not included in this list, but will be included in the future.

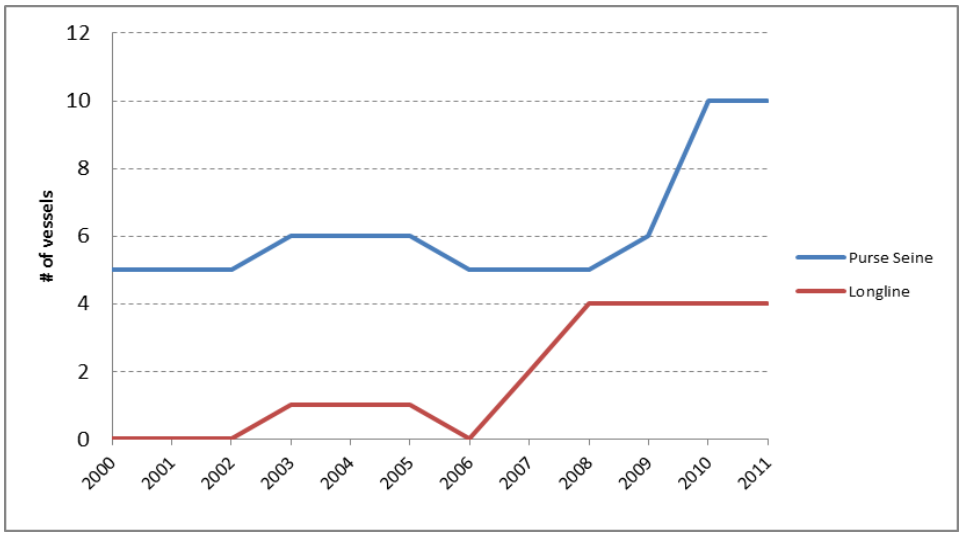

Figure 2. Historical annual vessel numbers for the Marshall Islands, by gear, for the WCPFC Convention Area

Table 2a. Number of Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, by size category, active in the WCPFC Convention Area, 2007-2011

Size class (GRT)	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
0–500					
500–1,000					
1,000–1,500	5	5	5	6	7
1,500+				3	3

Table 2b. Number of Marshall Islands longline vessels, by size category, active in the WCPFC Convention Area, 2007-2011

Size class (GRT)	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
0–10					
10–50					
50–200	2	4	4	4	4
200–500					
500+					

Figure 3a provides an illustration of the distribution of effort for the national purse seine fleet over the past two years. As the fleet is based out of Majuro, the effort is concentrated in the southern half of the Marshall Islands, and into the EEZs of Kiribati, Nauru and other adjacent EEZs. The national longline fleet fishes primarily in the RMI EEZ although the fleet occasionally ventures out of the EEZ (Figure 3b).

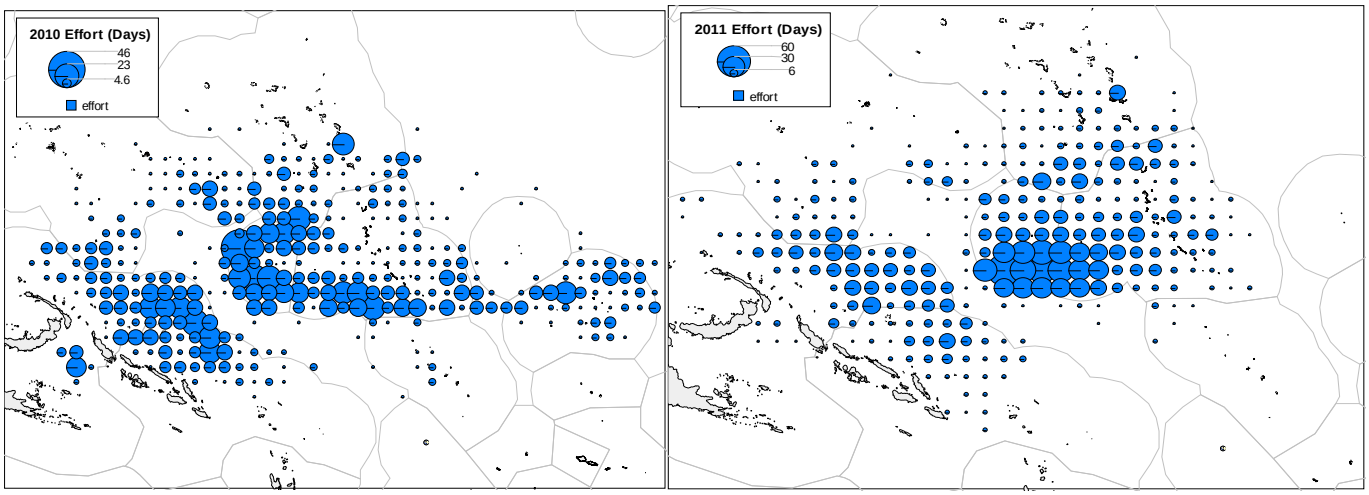

Figure 3a. Annual distribution of effort (days fishing and searching) by the Marshall Islands purse seine vessels active in the WCPFC Convention Area for 2010 (left) and 2011 (right)

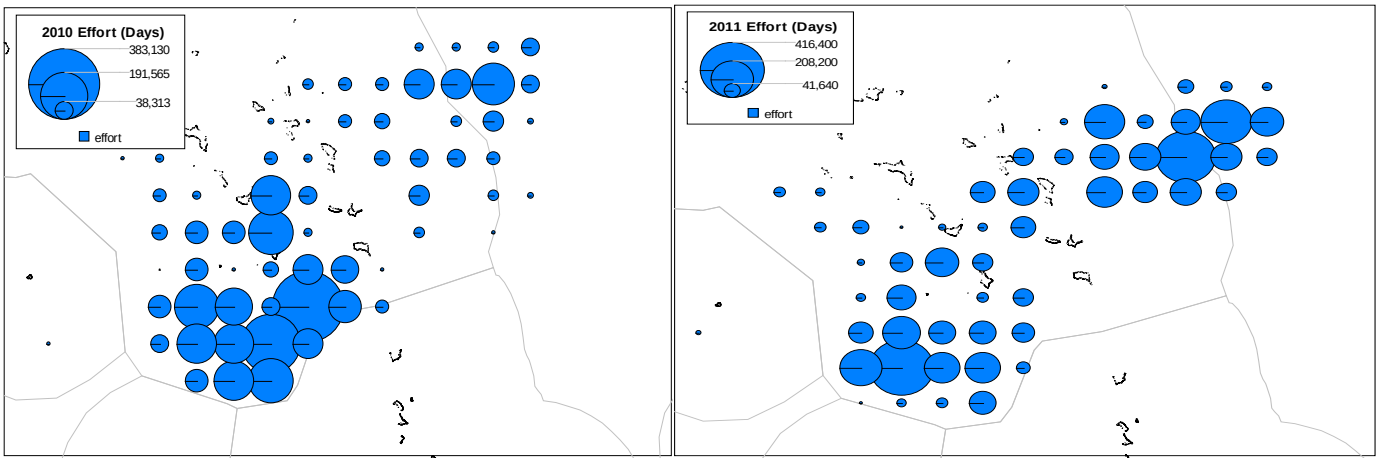

Figure 3b. Annual distribution effort (100s of hooks) by the Marshall Islands longline vessels active in the WCPFC Convention Area for 2010 (left) and 2011 (right)

Observed interactions with species of special interest are shown in Tables 3a and 3b. Data are derived from available trips conducted by MIMRA observers and are not limited to trips on RMI fleets. During 2011, there were three whale shark and six turtle interactions reported from purse seine trips and all were released alive. There were no observer trips on longline vessels in 2011 thus no interactions were recorded.

Table 3a. Observed annual estimated catches of species of special interest (seabird, turtle and marine mammals) from Marshall Islands observers on purse seine vessels, in the WCPFC Convention Area, for 2009-2011 to the extent available.

		Individuals encountered					
		2009		2010		2011	
Category	Species	No.	Dead	No.	Dead	No.	Dead
Marine Turtles	Green Turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Loggerhead Turtle	0	0	1	0	2	0
	Hawksbill turtle	0	0	0	0	3	0
	Leatherback turtle	1	0	0	0	1	0
	Olive Ridley Turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Turtles (unidentifed)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marine Mammals	Dolphins and Porpoises	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Toothed Whales	2	1	8	0	0	0
	Non-toothed Whales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Marine Mammals (unident.)	1	1	0	0	0	0
Whale Shark	Whale Shark	1	0	7	1	3	0
Birds	Birds	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Turtles	1	0	1	0	6	0
	Total Marine Mammals	3	2	8	0	0	0

Table 3b. Observed annual estimated catches of species of special interest (seabird, turtle and marine mammals) for the Marshall Islands-based longline vessels (China, FSM and RMI-flagged), in the WCPFC Convention Area, for 2009-2011 to the extent available (Note: No observer coverage on longlines since 2009)

		Individuals encountered					
		2009		2010		2011	
Category	Species	No.	Dead	No.	Dead	No.	Dead
Marine Turtles	Green Turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Loggerhead Turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Hawksbill turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Leatherback turtle	5	5	0	0	0	0
	Olive Ridley Turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Turtles (unidentifed)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marine Mammals	Dolphins and Porpoises	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Toothed Whales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-toothed Whales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Marine Mammals (unident.)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Whale Shark	Whale Shark	0	0	0	0	0	0
Birds	Birds	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Turtles	5	5	0	0	0	0
	Total Marine Mammals	0	0	0	0	0	0

Further, provisional estimated total catch of non-target species are provided in Table 4a and Table 4b for the different fleets. Rainbow runner is typically the main non-target species taken by the purse seine fleet, but the following species/species groups are also commonly caught – dolphinfish, triggerfish, wahoo, blue and black marlin, and silky (and other) sharks. Since there was no observer coverage on longline vessels during 2011, non-target catches have been estimated based on 2009 data. Catches of non-target species in the longline fleet usually accounts for a much greater proportion of the catch compared to the purse seine fleet and this is an area that MIMRA intends to put more focus on with a view to ensuring improvements are achieved through closer consultations with the fleet operator. The data suggest that, for locally-based longline vessels the most predominant species in each category are still: Blue marlin (billfish), Blue shark (sharks and rays), wahoo ("other" finfish).

Table 4a. Annual estimated catches of non-target, associated and dependent species, including sharks, by Marshall Islands observers on purse seine vessels, in the WCPFC Convention Area, for 2009-2011 to the extent available.

		Catch estimates (MT)					
		2009		2010		2011	
Category	Species	MT	%	MT	%	MT	%
Billfish	Blue marlin	6.5	0.0148%	15.6	0.0273%	34.1	0.0375%
	Black marlin	1.8	0.0041%	13.5	0.0237%	0.2	0.0003%
	Other Billfish	5.3	0.0122%	1.7	0.0030%	14.4	0.0159%
Sharks and Rays	Blue shark	0.1	0.0002%	0.1	0.0001%	0.0	0.0000%
	Mako sharks	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Oceanic whitetip shark	0.1	0.0002%	1.9	0.0033%	6.9	0.0076%
	Silky shark	6.5	0.0150%	12.2	0.0214%	350.7	0.3865%
	Other sharks and rays	5.6	0.0129%	3.2	0.0056%	10.9	0.0121%
Other finfish	Bullet/Frigate tunas	0.6	0.0013%	9.8	0.0173%	12.7	0.0140%
	Kawakawa	0.2	0.0005%	5.9	0.0103%	0.2	0.0002%
	Rainbow Runner	99.8	0.2285%	90.3	0.1584%	79.5	0.0876%
	Wahoo	2.1	0.0048%	3.7	0.0066%	4.3	0.0047%
	Common dolphinfish	34.1	0.0780%	17.5	0.0306%	29.1	0.0320%
	Triggerfish	11.1	0.0254%	33.9	0.0594%	24.3	0.0268%
	Barracudas	0.4	0.0009%	0.5	0.0008%	2.0	0.0022%
	Escolars	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Lanctfishes	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Ocean sunfish	0.1	0.0003%	0.3	0.0005%	0.3	0.0003%
	Oilfish	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Opah	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Pomfrets	0.0	0.0000%	0.1	0.0001%	0.0	0.0000%
	Small baitfish	28.6	0.0656%	25.4	0.0445%	5.9	0.0065%
	Other fish	7.4	0.0169%	556.4	0.9761%	1.4	0.0016%
	Total billfish	14	0.0311%	31	0.0540%	49	0.0537%
	Total sharks and rays	12	0.0283%	17	0.0305%	369	0.4061%
	Total finfish	184	0.4220%	744	1.3046%	160	0.1760%
	Total non-target	210	0.4814%	792	1.3891%	577	0.6358%

Table 4b. Annual estimated catches of non-target, associated and dependent species, including sharks, by the Marshall Islands-based longline vessels (China, FSM and RMI-flagged), in the WCPFC Convention Area, for 2009-2011 to the extent available.

		Catch estimates					
		2008		2009		2010	
Category	Species	MT	%	MT	%	MT	%
Billfish	Blue marlin	416.3	5.3738%	477.4	6.0863%	415.2	6.0863%
	Black marlin	29.6	0.3826%	213.2	2.7180%	185.4	2.7180%
	Striped marlin	122.4	1.5801%	292.1	3.7249%	254.1	3.7249%
	Swordfish	75.6	0.9760%	200.3	2.5532%	174.2	2.5532%
	Other Billfish	50.7	0.6539%	44.9	0.5724%	39.0	0.5724%
Sharks and Rays	Blue shark	621.2	8.0189%	433.5	5.5274%	377.1	5.5274%
	Mako sharks	91.3	1.1789%	150.2	1.9149%	130.6	1.9149%
	Oceanic whitetip shark	135.6	1.7500%	131.5	1.6767%	114.4	1.6767%
	Silky shark	558.2	7.2048%	191.8	2.4453%	166.8	2.4453%
	Other sharks and rays	723.2	9.3357%	530.8	6.7681%	461.7	6.7681%
Other finfish	Bullet/Frigate tunas	2.3	0.0294%	0.4	0.0045%	0.3	0.0045%
	Kawakawa	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Rainbow Runner	0.3	0.0036%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Wahoo	104.0	1.3426%	95.2	1.2137%	82.8	1.2137%
	Common dolphinfish	95.3	1.2296%	24.1	0.3072%	21.0	0.3072%
	Triggerfish	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Barracudas	7.6	0.0979%	5.3	0.0674%	4.6	0.0674%
	Escolars	21.8	0.2811%	8.3	0.1064%	7.3	0.1064%
	Lanctfishes	8.4	0.1085%	6.1	0.0779%	5.3	0.0779%
	Ocean sunfish	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Oilfish	3.7	0.0472%	6.1	0.0779%	5.3	0.0779%
	Opah	83.4	1.0765%	30.8	0.3926%	26.8	0.3926%
	Pomfrets	21.0	0.2714%	24.2	0.3087%	21.1	0.3087%
	Small baitfish	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Other fish	102.2	1.3194%	61.0	0.7776%	53.1	0.7776%
	Total billfish	695	8.9664%	1,228	15.6548%	1,068	15.6548%
	Total sharks and rays	2,130	27.4883%	1,438	18.3323%	1,251	18.3323%
	Total finfish	450	5.8071%	261	3.3338%	227	3.3338%
	Total non-target	3,274	42.2618%	2,927	37.3209%	2,546	37.3209%

COASTAL STATE REPORTING

Tables 5-7 provide a description of foreign-flagged vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands waters over the past five years. Domestically-based foreign longline vessels operating under the Marshall Islands Fishing Venture fly foreign flags of registration and not necessarily the flag of the countries operating and managing these vessels, which is essentially the Marshall Islands.

Table 5. Number of foreign longline vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by year and flag.

	Longline					
	CHINA	FSM	JAPAN	CH-TAIPEI	BELIZE	TOTAL
2007	36	6	21	1	0	64
2008	39	6	6	2	0	53
2009	33	6	6	0	0	45
2010	22	11	14	2	0	49
2011	22	11	16	2	0	51

Table 6. Number of foreign pole-and-line vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by year and flag.

	Pole-and-line
	JAPAN
2007	22
2008	25
2009	12
2010	26
2011	25

Table 7. Number of foreign purse seine vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by year and flag.

	YEAR				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
CHINA	12	10	4	1	2
FSM	3	4	4	6	7
JAPAN	35	28	30	31	30
KIRIBATI	1	1	1	2	5
KOREA	20	27	26	0	0
NZ	0	1	1	0	0
PNG (HomeParty)	17	15	17	19	19
CH-TAIPEI	13	27	18	16	16
VANUATU	7	4	3	3	5
SOLOMON	0	0	0	1	0
USA	22	32	38	38	39
TOTAL	130	149	142	117	123

Available logsheet data indicate that total catch by purse seine fleets operating in the RMI EEZ increased from 18,248 mt in 2010 to 30,412 mt in 2011 (Table 8). Skipjack tuna continues to be the dominant catch, accounting for over 75% of the total catch in the last year. Most of the purse seine fishing in-zone is restricted to southern areas of the EEZ.

The domestically-based foreign longline fleet comprises of vessels from China and FSM which are managed and operated through a local joint-venture fishing company. Japanese longline vessels offload their catch in ports in Japan. Catch estimates for the domestically-based vessels have been raised using unloadings data. The overall catch estimates by foreign longline fleets in 2011 indicate about a 15% decrease from the previous year (Table 9). Bigeye catch continues to account for the major part of the target catch composition. As with the purse seine fishery, most of the longline fishing effort occurs in the southern areas of the RMI EEZ however in the longline fishery, effort is more widely distributed throughout the zone.

In 2011, catches from the pole-and-line fleet experienced a significant drop in the catch compared to the previous year (Table 10). Skipjack is the main species making up the catch composition for this fleet and in fact almost 100% of the reported catch in 2010 was of this species. However, there remains no observer data to from this fleet for validation purposes.

Table 8. Annual catches by purse seine fleets in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by flag and species, 2007-2011 (**Source** : Unraised logsheet data collected by MIMRA)

		Catch (metric tonnes)			
FLAG	YEAR	SKJ	YFT	BET	TOTAL
CHINA	2007	0	0	0	0
	2008	0	0	0	0
	2009	925	161	12	1,098
	2010	0	0	0	0
	2011	0	0	0	0
CHINESE TAIPEI	2007	1,613	499	164	2,275
	2008	3,286	1,940	298	5,524
	2009	2,338	487	102	2,927
	2010	1,429	422	24	1,875
	2011	6,890	1,810	848	9,548
FSM Arrangement	2007	3,553	595	362	4,510
	2008	5,032	2,786	512	8,330
	2009	7,090	1,196	612	8,897
	2010	4,997	1,350	164	6,511
	2011	7,285	1,663	882	9,830
JAPAN	2007	0	0	0	0
	2008	580	232	31	843
	2009	845	41	1	887
	2010	13	0	0	13
	2011	1,032	112	50	1,194
REPUBLIC OF KOREA	2007	202	69	3	274
	2008	348	191	46	584
	2009	694	148	50	892
	2010	0	0	0	0
	2011	0	0	0	0
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	2007	413	82	40	535
	2008	3,265	1,819	255	5,339
	2009	2,789	617	193	3,598
	2010	6,568	1,637	131	8,337
	2011	6,932	1,362	926	9,220
VANUATU	2007	3,351	774	242	4,367
	2008	1,386	912	40	2,337
	2009	447	35	12	494
	2010	1,226	279	8	1,514
	2011	612	7	1	620
TOTAL	2007	9,131	2,020	810	11,961
	2008	13,897	7,880	1,181	22,958
	2009	15,126	2,684	983	18,793
	2010	14,232	3,689	327	18,248
	2011	22,750	4,953	2,708	30,412

Tables 9. Annual catches by foreign longline fleets in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by flag and species, 2007-2011 (**Source** : catch estimates of locally-based fleet derived from best combination of logsheet and unloadings data, others are unraised logsheet data collected by MIMRA)

		Catch (metric tonnes)				
Flag	Year	ALB	BET	YFT	OTH	Total
China	2007	14	2,028	727	348	3,116
	2008	58	2,270	554	394	3,275
	2009	57	2,156	732	359	3,304
	2010	109	1,882	793	395	3,179
	2011	54	1,834	597	354	2,839
FSM	2007	3	359	133	66	561
	2008	9	434	112	76	631
	2009	23	711	227	98	1,059
	2010	39	710	285	179	1,213
	2011	23	507	144	104	778
Japan	2007	5	114	40	0	159
	2008	0	0	0	0	0
	2009	0	0	0	0	0
	2010	76	344	194	30	644
	2011	9	235	156	68	468
Ch-Taipei	2007	0	0	0	0	0
	2008	0	10	2	0	12
	2009	0	0	0	0	0
	2010	1	108	28	2	139
	2011	33	167	52	46	298
TOTAL EEZ	2007	21	2,501	899	415	3,836
	2008	67	2,714	668	470	3,918
	2009	80	2,867	959	457	4,363
	2010	225	3,044	1,300	606	5,175
	2011	119	2,743	949	572	4,383

Table 10. Annual catches by foreign pole-and-line fleets in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by flag and species, 2007-2011 (Source: Unraised logsheet data collected by MIMRA)

		Catch (metric tonnes)				
Fleet	Year	BET	SKJ	YFT	OTH	TOTAL
JAPAN	2007	0	4,988	1	0	4,989
	2008	9	2,451	6	1	2,467
	2009	0	475	0	1	476
	2010	1	2,898	1	0	2,900
	2011	1	238	1	0	240

DISPOSAL OF CATCH

The Marshall Islands Fishing Venture (MIFV) operates the Longline Fishbase with domestically-based foreign longline vessels as well as the national longline fleet. There was a decrease in total unloadings in 2011 compared to the previous year and most of the unloaded catches were bound for export markets (Tables 11 & 12). The MIFV exports mainly fresh chilled tuna species to markets in the US, China and Canada.

Frozen fish (rejects and bycatch), designated as OTHER, are shipped to China via transport containers and/or sold locally.

Table 11 . Total unloaded catch (mt) for domestically-based longline vessels, 2010

Species	EXP	OTH	TOTAL
ALBACORE	0	162	162
BIGEYE	2,778	131	2,909
BLUE MARLIN	62	515	577
MAHI MAHI / DOLPHINFISH	13	35	48
OPAH / MOONFISH	5	0	5
SAILFISH (INDO-PACIFIC)	0	3	3
SHARKS (UNIDENTIFIED)	0	49	49
SWORDFISH	15	33	48
WAHOO	9	45	54
YELLOWFIN	944	235	1,179
	3,826	1,208	5,034

Table 12 . Total unloaded catch (mt) for domestically-based longline vessels, 2011

Species	EXP	OTH	TOTAL
ALBACORE	0	103	103
BIGEYE	2,253	205	2,457
BLUE MARLIN	31	433	465
MAHI MAHI / DOLPHINFISH	18	39	58
OPAH / MOONFISH	15	9	24
OTHER FISH	0	19	19
SAILFISH (INDO-PACIFIC)	0	20	20
SHARKS (UNIDENTIFIED)	0	245	245
SHORT-BILLED SPEARFISH	0	73	73
SWORDFISH	10	27	37
WAHOO	24	113	137
YELLOWFIN	619	108	726
	2,970	**1,395**	**4,365**

ONSHORE DEVELOPMENTS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

The Pan Pacific Foods (PPF) loining plant continues to operate with viable production outputs entailing ongoing hiring and recruitment of local Marshallese employees. Since acquiring their first purse seine fishing vessel in 2009, the operators have since acquired 2 additional vessels, namely, F/V LOMETO and F/V LOMALO.

The Joint Venture between MIMRA and Koo's Fishing Company, Ltd. (KFC), operating under the name Marshall Islands Fishing Company (MIFCO), which commenced in March 2006, is ongoing with the vessel, F/V Marshalls 201, operating under the FSM Arrangement for Regional Fisheries Access administered by the FFA. This venture continues to provide additional revenue stream and overall economic prospects for the small yet vibrant domestic fisheries sector in the RMI. The company also secured 2 additional fishing vessels in 2010, F/V Marshalls 202 and F/V Marshalls 203, which are currently fishing FSMA.

The KFC fleet continues to operate also under the FSMA as in years past. On-shore expansion entails by-catch processing and exports in the near future with the recent construction and eventual completion of a multi-purpose cold storage facility within the KFC Headquarters compound.

FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE FISHERY

Transshipment in Majuro port continues to pick up in recent years and remains an important catalyst for economic development in the RMI. It is envisaged that MIMRA and all concerned will continue and advocate for in-port transshipment noting the favorable economic spin-offs associated with this vital activity. Further clarity on this issue is evident in the recent adoption of the WCPFC transshipment measure on which the RMI was a strong advocate and was deeply involved in its initial formulation beginning in 2007.

In late 2009, the RMI, through MIMRA, formally wrote to the SPC-OFP to notify of its clear intention to attribute all longline catches in the RMI EEZ to the RMI. This is in line with the recent efforts by FFA Members to shift longline catch attribution from a flag-based to a zone-based arrangement. This is an area warranting immediate follow-up by and with all concerned.

The RMI remains keen to further develop its domestic fishery through innovative and sustainable means. All of these prospects are lined up bearing in mind all the while the ongoing crucial scientific advice and conservation concerns through practicable measures to safeguard the last remaining healthy tuna stocks in the world.

The renewed active stance of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), of which the RMI is a committed member, through adoption of the 3rd Implementing Arrangement (3IA) among other things, has garnered international attention and prompted for more effective conservation and management measures while also mindful of the commercial aspects of the fishery as it relates to Pacific Island Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The ongoing refinement of the purse seine Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) and subsequent development of the longline VDS are but some of the management tools being addressed by the PNA through the PNA Office (PNAO) in Majuro. The office was recently established in early 2010 and its momentous establishment was further boosted by the signing of the Host Country agreement between the RMI Government and the PNAO Director later in the year.

The RMI will continue and lobby for domestic fisheries development aspirations in the region. It is envisaged that sometime in the near future, a gradual shift in allocation of participatory rights from DWFNs to strictly domestic-based is what is needed to address the needs of all CCMs so as to ensure that no unnecessary burden is put on SIDS, as Coastal States and custodians of the stocks themselves.

DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

MIMRA continues to employ a dedicated port sampler covering almost 100% of longline unloadings however, the data for 2011 is still being processed. Collated data are also being sent to SPC-OFP on a regular basis for analysis. Port sampling on purse seine vessels transshipping in Majuro has been sporadic as the port samplers have dual responsibilities as observers and spend most of their time at sea to meet coverage requirements.

The development of its data and statistical capability continues to be a vital tool for MIMRA. The SPC-OFP has been very instrumental in the Oceanic Division's data efforts, as evidenced by such activities as the successful integration and regular updates of the TUFMAN database at MIMRA.

The SPC-OFP is also currently assisting MIMRA to establish tuna data collection from the artisanal fisheries sector and it is envisaged that this will continue with refinements as time progresses into the near future.

MIMRA has attempted to carry observer trainings every year to meet the increasing demands placed on the Observer Program. In 2011, there were 30 active observers and a provisional total of 123 trips and 4,802 sea days, all completed on purse seine vessels only. As previously mentioned, the 100% purse seine observer coverage has left virtually no coverage on longline vessels but it is hoped that the with additional training staff now available, MIMRA will be better equipped to meet coverage requirements.