**Bigeye tuna**

**Western and Central Pacific**

**WCPFC**

**Japan**

**Longlines**

### IDENTIFICATION

**SCIENTIFIC NAME**

*Thunnus obesus*

**SPECIES NAME(S)**

Bigeye tuna

**COMMON NAMES**

Bigeye tuna

**STOCK IDENTIFICATION**

The Japanese tuna longline fisheries include an offshore fleet, distant water fleet, and small coastal fleet. The distant and offshore longline fisheries caught 7,854 t of yellowfin tuna in 2012, the small offshore longline fisheries caught 4,842 t, and coastal longline fisheries caught 525 t of yellowfin tuna in 2012 (Uosaki et al., 2013).

### ASSESSMENT

**Strengths**

Bigeye tuna in the western and central Pacific Ocean are managed at the international level by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). The WCPFC has an agreement with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community to undertake regular assessments of target tuna and tuna-like species. Therefore, the status of the stocks is known and regularly monitored. Catch limits have recently been put into place for six countries (United States, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan) longline fisheries operating on the high seas. The most recent assessment (2017) indicates that bigeye tuna are no longer overfished or undergoing overfishing.

The WCPFC has recently implemented catch limits for bigeye tuna caught in longline fisheries operating within the Convention Area for the years 2014-2017. Catch limits for 2014 have been set at 70% of the average catches from 2001-2014 or from 2004 (identified in a previous WCPFC management measure 2008). Six countries, including Japan, have been given individual catch limits under this management measures. Prior to this, the WCPFC required a phased-in reduction (20-30%) of bigeye tuna longline catches to occur between 2009-2011 (based on same average catches identified above). Japan has been assigned a part of the catch limit and catches were below the phased in catch limit during 2015 and 2016. Information on catches for 2017 is not yet available. Japan has an observer program in place. Japan conducts research into bycatch mitigation measures for sea turtles and sea birds.

**Weaknesses**

There is no formally adopted harvest control rule or target reference points. Information on compliance and monitoring by member countries has historically not been available. In recent years, there has been an increased lack of transparency with regard to the WCPFC decision-making process.

Timely submissions and data accuracy from some member countries, including Indonesia and the Philippines, has been identified as an issue by the Scientific Committee. Mandated observer coverage rates by the WCPFC in the longline fishery are low (5%) compared to other fisheries (i.e. purse seine) and many fleets still do not reach this threshold. The WCPFC does not allow for the international exchange of observers, which is considered best practices needed to maximize data quality. Smaller countries may lack resources to achieve adequate observer coverage. Bycatch of ecologically important species such as sharks, sea turtles, and sea birds continues to be a problem in many fisheries targeting bigeye tuna.

**Scores**

**Management Quality:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Strategy</th>
<th>Managers Compliance</th>
<th>Fishers Compliance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≥ 6 to ≥ 8</td>
<td>≥ 6 to ≥ 8</td>
<td>≥ 6 to ≥ 8</td>
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**Stock Health:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Health</th>
<th>Future Health</th>
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<tr>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
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**FIPS**

No related FIPS

**MSC**

No related MSC fisheries

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Retailers & Supply Chain**

- Work with WCPFC Members, Cooperating Non-Members, and Participating Territories to:
  - Develop and implement comprehensive, precautionary harvest strategies with specific limits for all tuna stocks, including the adoption and implementation of limit and target reference points, harvest control rules, monitoring strategies, operational objectives, performance indicators, and management strategy evaluation.
  - Strengthen compliance processes and make information on non-compliance public and continue to provide evidence of compliance with all WCPFC Conservation and Management Measures in a timely manner.
  - Implement a 100% observer coverage requirement for all longline movement activities, as well as other measures that ensure
transshipment activity is transparent and well-managed, and that all required data are collected and transmitted to the appropriate bodies in a timely manner.

- Increase compliance with the mandatory minimum 5% longline observer coverage rates by identifying and correcting non-compliance.
- Implement a 100% observer coverage requirement – human and/or electronic – within five years for longline fisheries. Adopt a 105% observer coverage requirement for purse seine vessels where it is not already required and require the use of the best-available observer safety equipment, communications and procedures.
- Adopt effective measures for the use of non-entangling FAD designs as a precautionary measure to minimize the entanglement of sharks and other non-target species, and support research on biodegradable materials and transitions to their use to mitigate marine debris.
- More effectively implement, and ensure compliance with, existing RFMO bycatch requirements and take additional mitigation actions, such as improving monitoring at sea, collecting and sharing operational-level, species-specific data, and adopting stronger compliance measures, including consequences for non-compliance for all gear types.
- Ensure all products are traceable back to legal sources. Verify source information and full chain traceability through traceability desk audits or third party traceability certification. For fisheries without robust traceability systems in place, invest in meaningful improvements to bring the fisheries and supply chain in compliance with best practices.
- Ensure timely submission of longline datasets (i.e. catches, effort, size) needed for robust stock assessments, as required by the WCPFC including operational (i.e. set-by-set) data. Continue cooperation with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) regarding the provision of longline operational data for use in stock assessments.