**Bigeye tuna** Western and Central Pacific

**Fishery:** Western and Central Pacific  WCPFC  Marshall Islands  Longlines

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### Identification

**Scientific Name:** Thunnus obesus

**Species Name(s):** Bigeye tuna

**Common Names:** Bigeye tuna

**Stock Identification:** In 2012 there were four longline vessels operated by the Marshall Islands that primarily fish in EEZ waters north of the equator (OIAD 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 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 (2013) 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 not longer underfished or undergoing overfishing.

The Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) recently banned the capture and retention of all sharks. Dockside monitoring program monitors close to 100% of longline unloadings in the Marshall Islands.

The RMI tuna longline fishery initiated a national observer program in 2016 that apparently met the 5% minimum coverage (in 2016 and 2017) required by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

#### 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. In recent years, there has been an increased lack of transparency with regard to the WCPFC decision making process.

#### Score

**Management Quality:**

- **Management Strategy:** $\geq 6$ to $\geq 8$
- **Managers Compliance:** $\geq 6$ to $\geq 8$
- **Fishers Compliance:** $\geq 6$ to $\geq 8$

**Stock Health:**

- **Current Health:** 9.9
- **Future Health:** 8.5

**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 timelines for all tuna stocks, including the adoption and implementation of limit and target reference points,
    - Reduce and eliminate bycatch of critically endangered or vulnerable species such as sharks, sea turtles and birds,
    - Increase observer coverage rates to 100% and mandate observers on all fleets, including small vessels,
    - Support the development and implementation of a truly effective rod and reel bycatch management plan,
    - Implement an effective traceability system, including electronic monitoring, to verify compliance,
    - Increase market transparency and data accuracy, including bycatch data, which is critical for effective management of fishery resources,
    - Support the development and implementation of robust tuna traceability systems, including blockchain and other technologies,
    - Work with regional organizations to develop and implement effective traceability systems,
    - Support the development of effective catch certificates and traceability systems,
    - Support the development and implementation of effective traceability systems, including electronic monitoring and reporting

- **Fishery**
  - Provide support to the RMI tuna longline fishery to increase and improve observer coverage rates to at least 100%
  - Support the development and implementation of comprehensive, precautionary harvest strategies with specific timelines for all tuna stocks, including the adoption and implementation of limit and target reference points,
  - Support the development and implementation of effective traceability systems, including blockchain and other technologies,
  - Support the development and implementation of effective traceability systems, including electronic monitoring and reporting

- **Consumer**
  - Support the development and implementation of effective traceability systems, including blockchain and other technologies,
  - Support the development and implementation of effective traceability systems, including electronic monitoring and reporting
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 at-sea transshipment 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 100% 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 transition to their use to mitigate marine debris.
- More effectively implement, and ensure compliance with, existing RFMO bycatch requirements and take additional mitigation action, 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.