**Bigeye tuna**

**Western and Central Pacific**

**Fishery:** Western and Central Pacific

**WCPFC**

**Marshall Islands**

**Drifting longlines**

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**IDENTIFICATION**

**SCIENTIFIC NAME:** Thunnus obesus

**SPECIES NAME(S):** Bigeye tuna

**COMMON NAMES:** Bigeye tuna

**STOCK IDENTIFICATION:**

This is a fishery improvement project for bigeye and yellowfin caught tuna in the Marshall Islands longline fishery. The fip is operated by Norpac. The aim of this fip is to address deficiencies in both fishing practices and regional management with the end goal of achieving MSC certification.

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**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 (2015) 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 overfished or undergoing overfishing.

**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. Tightly submitted documents and data accuracy from some member countries, including Indonesia and the Philippines, has been an concern 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 practice 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 seabirds continues to be a problem in many fisheries targeting bigeye tuna.

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**SCORES**

**Management Quality:**

- **Management Strategy:** ≥ 6 to ≥ 8
- **Managers Compliance:** ≥ 6 to ≥ 8
- **Fishers Compliance:** ≥ 6 to ≥ 8

**Stock Health:**

- **Current Health:** 99
- **Future Health:** 8.5

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**FIPS**

No related FIPs

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**MSC**

No related MSC fisheries

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**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, 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 tuna 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 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 transitions 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.