**YELLOWFIN TUNA**
**Western and Central Pacific Ocean**

**FISHERY:** Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPFC), Japan, Longlines

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**IDENTIFICATION**

**SCIENTIFIC NAME:** Thunnus albacares

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

**STOCK IDENTIFICATION**

Yellowfin tuna are considered a single population in the western and central Pacific Ocean for stock assessment purposes. There is the potential for some mixing between eastern and western stocks to occur (Davies et al. 2014).

The Japanese tuna longline fishery includes an offshore fleet, distant water fleet, and small coastal fleet. The distant and offshore longline fishery caught 6,915 t of yellowfin tuna in 2012, the small offshore longline fishery caught 2,157 t, and coastal longline fishery caught 1,701 t of yellowfin tuna in 2012 (Uosaki et al. 2013).

**RELATED LINKS:**
- Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) (WCPFC)

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**ASSESSMENT**

**Strengths**

- Yellowfin tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean are managed at the international level by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).
- The Secretariat of the Pacific Community conducts regular assessments of tuna and tuna-like species.
- The biomass is above target levels and fishing mortality rates are sustainable.
- Stock is large relative to fishing effort.
- There is no harvest control rule in place for longline fisheries.
- Japan has an observer program in place.
- Japan conducts research into bycatch mitigation measures for sea turtles and sea birds.
- Longline effort has been reduced and logbooks are mandatory.

**Weaknesses**

- In recent years, there has been an increased lack of transparency with regard to the WCPFC decision-making process.
- Significant amounts of juvenile yellowfin tuna are caught in fish aggregating devices (FADs). Japan has an observer program in place.
- The biomass is above target levels and fishing mortality rates are sustainable.
- Significantly, bycatch of ecologically important species such as sharks, sea turtles and sea birds continues to be a problem in many fisheries targeting yellowfin tuna.
- Timely submissions and data accuracy from some member countries, including Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines, has been identified as an issue by the WCPFC Scientific Committee.
- Longline effort has been reduced and logbooks are mandatory.
- Bycatch of ecologically important species such as sharks, sea turtles and sea birds continues to be a problem in many fisheries targeting yellowfin tuna.
- No harvest control rule is imposed.
- Several depleted species (striped marlin, oceanic whitetip and silky sharks) are caught as bycatch.

**SCORES**

**Management Quality:**

- Management Strategy: ≥ 6 to ≥ 8
- Managers Compliance: ≥ 6 to ≥ 8
- Fishers Compliance: ≥ 6 to ≥ 10

**Stock Health:**

- Current Health: 9
- Future Health: 8.8 to 9.1

**FIPS**

- No related FIPs

**MSC**

- No related MSC fisheries

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RETAILERS & SUPPLY CHAIN**

- Work with WCPFC Members, Cooperating Non-Members, and Participating Territories to:
  - Implement catch limits to prevent harvest from increasing beyond 2012 levels.
  - 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 10% observer coverage requirement for all-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, gear-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.