Yellowfin tuna

Science 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).

This fishery entered full assessment by the Marine Stewardship Council system in October 2014 (expedited P1 assessment). Click here to link to the MSC fishery page and to learn more about the MSC fishery.

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.
- There are limit reference points in place for this species.

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 device (FAD)-based purse seine fisheries.
- No harvest control rule is imposed and there are no target reference points.
- 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.
- Bycatch of ecologically important species such as sharks, sea turtles and sea birds continues to be a problem in many fisheries targeting yellowfin tuna.

Scores:

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

- Stock Health:
  - Current Health: 8.8
  - Future Health: 9.1

FIPS:

No related FIPs

MSC:

No related MSC fisheries

Recommendations:

- 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 timetables 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 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. Adapt a 100% observer coverage requirement for purse seine vessels where it is not already requested 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.