Skipjack tuna
Western and Central Pacific Ocean

IDENTIFICATION

SCIENTIFIC NAME
Katsuwonus pelamis

SPECIES NAME(S)
Skipjack tuna

COMMON NAMES
Skipjack tuna

STOCK IDENTIFICATION
Skipjack tuna in the western and central Pacific Ocean are considered a single stock for assessment purposes (Rice et al. 2014).

RELATED LINKS:
- Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)
- Tuvalu
- FAD-free

ASSESSMENT

Strengths
Skipjack tuna in the western and central Pacific Ocean are managed at the international level by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). Regular assessments of target tuna and tuna-like species are conducted. Therefore, the status of the stocks is known and regularly monitored. The Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) (EEZ’s of Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, FSM, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Solomon islands and Tuvalu) purse seine fisheries are managed under rules in place through the 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 regarding the WCPFC decision-making process. Skipjack tuna are difficult to assess because of their high and variable productivity. Timely submissions and data accuracy from some member countries are a problem which contributes to the uncertainties in the stock assessment results. The Japanese pole and line fishery, which represents less than 5% of the total catch in this region is the only long-term abundance data set. Calculating an index of abundance for the purse seine fishery, which dominates the catches, is difficult. The impact of fish aggregating device (FAD) purse seine fishing on ecologically important species, continues to be an issue. The WCPFC has yet to formally adopt management measures that require the use of non-entanglement FAD designs. The WCPFC Scientific Committee management advice included concerns over high catches of skipjack in equatorial waters. The Scientific Committee suggested that there should be management of total effort in the WCPFC, including stricter rules surrounding purse seine fishing. In 2012, the WCPFC adopted a measure prohibiting the discard of skipjack (bigeye and yellowfin) with fishing effort. It is too early to determine if this has reduced fishing pressure.

SCORES

Management Quality:

- ≥ 6: Managers
- ≥ 6: Fishers
- ≥ 6: Compliance

Stock Health:

- Current Health: 10
- Future Health: 10

FIPS
for related FIPs

MSC
for related MSC fisheries

RECOMMENDATIONS

RETAILERS & SUPPLY CHAIN

- Conduct outreach to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) requesting continued work on the development and adoption of a harvest control rule, and encourage the WCPFC to take demonstrably effective actions to keep the spawning biomass near the adopted target reference point.
- Request improved transparency of and by the WCPFC, especially regarding the Compliance Committee and issues of non-compliance by individual members (nationals). Press individual members to provide evidence of compliance with all WCPFC Conservation and Management Measures in a timely manner.
- Encourage all firms to trace 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 into compliance with best practices.
- Encourage the supply chain to adopt voluntary shark fins naturally attached regulations and promote the adoption of this rule by the WCPFC.
- Improve data collection (i.e. catches, effort, land) on both target and
bycatch species, and reporting through measures such as electronic logbooks (e-reporting).

- Identify and mandate the use of best practice bycatch mitigation techniques.
- Contact SFP to learn how to initiate your own fishery improvement project (FIP), engage in an ongoing FIP, and/or SFP’s Supply Chain Roundtables.