**Skipjack tuna** Western and Central Pacific Ocean

**Fishery**
- Western and Central Pacific Ocean
- Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA)
- Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands
- Tuvalu

**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).

**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)’s EEZ of Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, FSM Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu (purse seine unassociated or free school sets) fishery is MSC certified for skipjack tuna. Skipjack tuna have a healthy population size and fishing mortality rates are sustainable. There are several management measures specific to skipjack tuna purse seine fisheries currently 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 with regard to the WCPFC decision-making processes. Skipjack tuna are difficult to assess because of their high and variable productivity. Timely submissions and data accuracy from some member countries is a problem which has contributed to the significant uncertainties in the stock assessment results. The Japanese pole and line fishery, which represents less than 4% 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 equatorial catches, is difficult. The impact of fish-aggregating devices (FAD) on skipjack fishing is 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) tuna caught in purse seine fisheries, but it is too early to determine if this had reduced fishing pressure.

**Scores**

**Management Quality:**
- Management Strategy: ≥ 6
- Managers Compliance: ≥ 6
- Fishers Compliance: ≥ 6

**Stock Health:**
- Current Health: 10
- Future Health: 10

**FIPS**
- No related FIPS

**MSC**
- PNA Western and Central Pacific skipjack and yellowfin
- MSC Certified

**Recommendations**

**Retailers & Supply Chain**
- Monitor the progress in closing out conditions placed upon the MSC certification of the fishery and if agreed timelines are met. Offer assistance in closing conditions where possible.
- 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.
- 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
- Encourage the supply chain to adopt voluntary shark fin naturally attached regulations and promote the adoption of this rule by the WCPFC.
- Improve data collection (i.e., catches, effort, size) 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.

Stock-wide recommendations