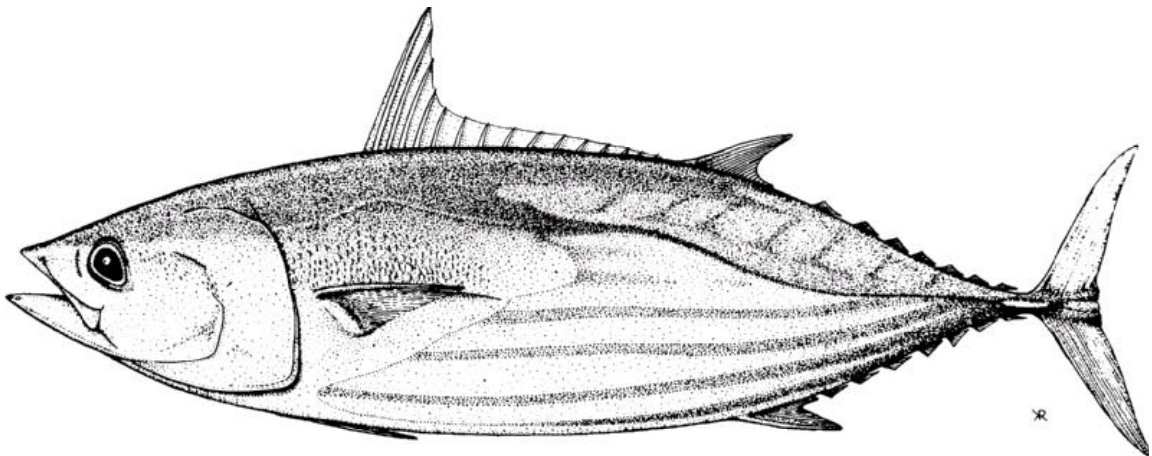


**Summary of U.S. fisheries statistics for highly migratory species  
in the central-western Pacific, 1997-2001**

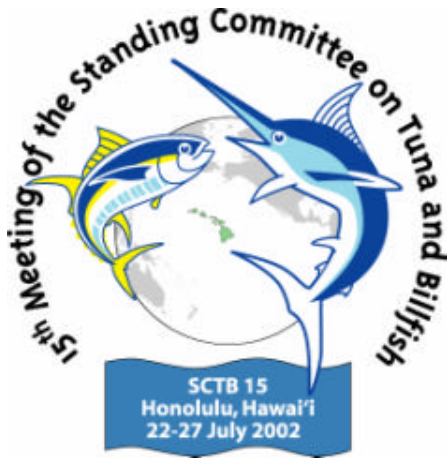


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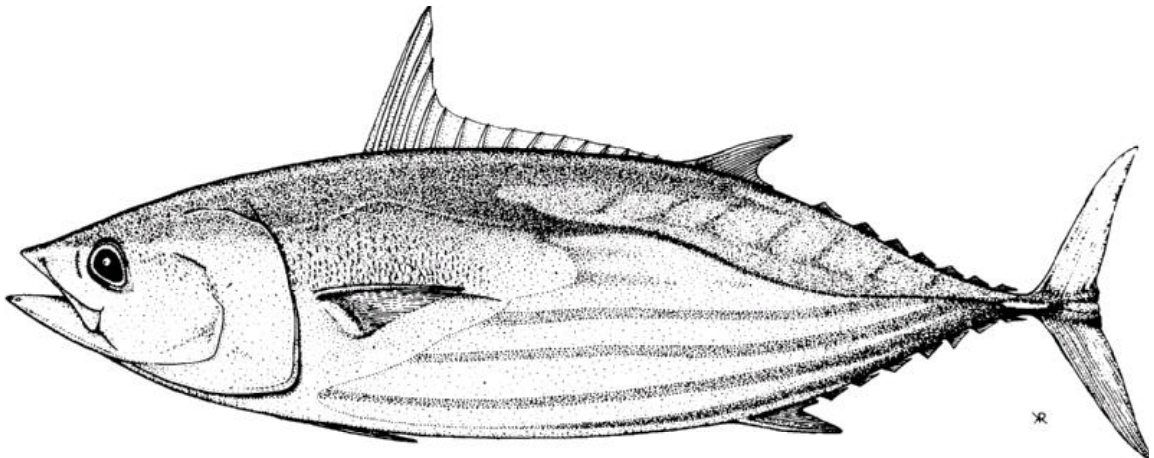
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**NFR-**



**New Caledonia Tuna Fishery**



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Noumea, New Caledonia

15<sup>th</sup> STANDING COMMITTEE ON TUNA AND BILLFISH  
18<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> JULY 2002  
HONOLULU

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REPORT FROM NEW CALEDONIA  
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As stated in last year's report outstanding changes occurred recently in the New Caledonia tuna fishery with new projects having been successfully finalized.

As of June 2002 ten longliners belonging to a new fishing company are now based in the Northern Province. In the Southern Province two new longliners have been active since end of last year, so that more than 20 local vessels are currently entitled to fish in the EEZ.

Other projects with 7 other vessels might be completed within the forthcoming months.

So as to give a legal framework to the development of its tuna fleet a fisheries policy was passed in August 2001 under which the first technical measure approved is a fishing license compulsory to every vessel operated in the EEZ. Some other measures such as vessel tracking by automatic location communicators are currently studied. New Caledonia so continues to prepare for the entry into force of the western and central Pacific fisheries convention.

A. Catch statistics

**Table 1:** Breakdown of catch (whole weights) from the New Caledonia longliners

M. Tonnes (%)	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001 (*)
Yellowfin tuna	466 (41%)	185 (10%)	373 (20%)	250 (13%)	570 (28%)
Bigeye tuna	234 (21%)	498 (28%)	553 (30%)	517 (26%)	128 (6%)
Albacore	277 (24%)	860 (47%)	690 (38%)	895 (45%)	1020 (49%)
Sharks	20 (2%)	18 (1%)	21 (1%)	31 (1%)	36 (2%)
Others	134 (12%)	260 (14%)	206 (11%)	294 (15%)	310 (15%)
TOTAL	1,131	1,821	1,843	1,987	2,064

(\*): preliminary figures

The catch statistics provided in table 1 are compiled from different sources of data, in particular customs statistics which do not allow to obtain detailed data on bycatch species.

From this table it appears that albacore remains a major species in the landings, in spite of the general utilization of monofilament. This species is caught throughout the year with reported catch of large albacore suitable for “cheap sashimi” in the cold season. However, domestic market is still the best place to sell albacore since cannery prices are low.

As the fishery develops larger quantities of albacore as well as by-catch are fished whereas the domestic demand of raw material is already satisfied. There is so a need to develop other marketing strategies with other kinds of products. That is the reason why a processing plant for export was established early this year in Noumea. The fishing company in the Northern Province has also initiated some processing with a unit dedicated to this task. They mainly aim at producing albacore loins, either for the domestic market or for export to the EU and USA as well as for the local market.

With more fishing boats it was expected last year that larger quantities of fish might be unloaded. It was so the first time for years that more than 2,000 metric tonnes were fished. However, with regard to sashimi species, catch of yellowfin was good in 2001 but only 114 metric tonnes of bigeye were unloaded. It is partly due to the difficulties which the largest fishing company in New Caledonia had to face last year to operate its boats efficiently. Moreover, the new vessels based in the Northern Province need time to fish properly.

## B. The domestic tuna longline fleet

**Table 2:** Number of tuna longliners active by gross registered tonnage (GRT)

Number of Longliners	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
GRT less than 50 t.	1	-	-	-	4
GRT from 51 to 200 t.	6	10	12	13	14
GRT from 201 To 500 t.	2	1	1	1	-
TOTAL	9	11	13	14	18

Since last year no large freezer longliner has been licensed to fish. This kind of vessels was gradually replaced by smaller longliners targeting fresh sashimi tuna which are operated more easily.

However, since large quantities of albacore are caught in New Caledonia’s waters, there are opportunities to develop a fleet of longliners targeting this species which would operate similarly than in French Polynesia: packed albacore loins would be

processed onboard before shipping to the main markets (EU, USA). Some local operators are currently thinking of basing such vessels in New Caledonia.

### C. The markets

For years marketing has not been considered as a major problem for the tuna fishery of New Caledonia. With its recent development, however, the New Caledonia tuna fishery has to explore new markets and promote more kinds of products. Processing of albacore loins to be sold locally or exported is one opportunity but there is also a need to carry out a study about by-catch.

With regard to sashimi species there are not so many markets linked to New Caledonia by convenient flights. Fortunately, the demand on the Japanese market remains high but the domestic fishing companies may have to face some difficulties to export their fish after a planned reduction of cargo in the forthcoming months.

### D. The future

After the signature of a framework agreement with Papua New Guinea in February 2002 the next step will be to reach an agreement with this country on access conditions to be applied to New Caledonia tuna purse-seiners endeavouring to fish in the PNG's EEZ.

In the context of an increasing number of longliners a study aiming at drawing an harmonized plan of development for this fishery should be carried out soon dealing in particular with economic aspects.

In terms of tuna resources New Caledonia has just started an observer program under the EDF-funded Procfish which will allow to collect data onboard the vessels and validate some research findings on a local level.