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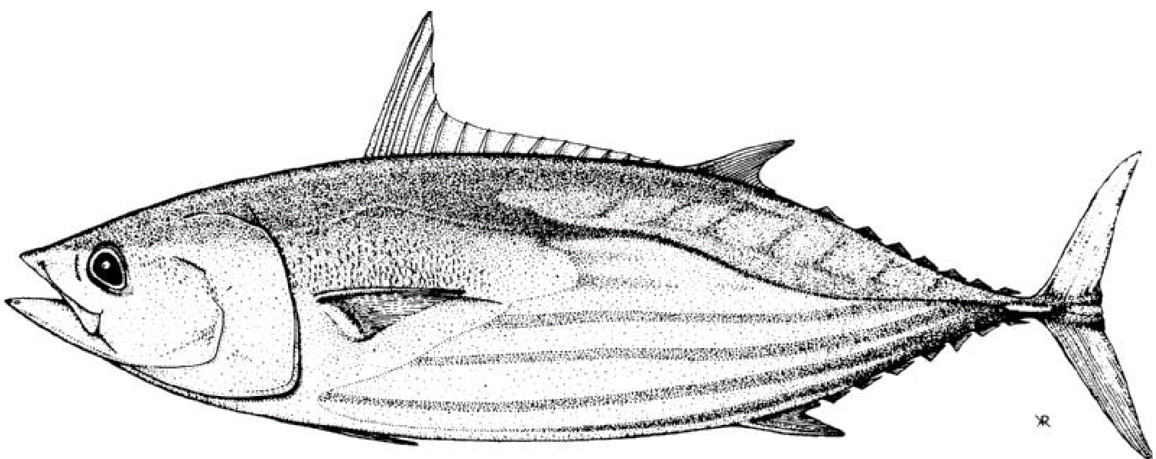
Domestic Tuna Fisheries in the Solomon Islands



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Domestic Tuna Fisheries in the Solomon Islands

A National Tuna Fishery Report

prepared for

The 15th Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish,
Honolulu Hawai'i
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Introduction

Solomon Islands' domestic tuna fishery has continued to struggle following the social unrest problems experienced during the past two and a half years. Before that Solomon Islands has one of the largest domestic tuna fisheries within the region, contributing substantially (25-35%) to the foreign exchange earning of the country. The industry has also been the country's major employer until then. In 2001 a total of 7 locally based companies were licensed to fish for tuna. Of these, three were licensed to operate purse seiners, one for pole-and-liners and three for longliners. The current domestic fleet comprised of pole-and-line, purse seine and longline fleets. In addition to this, Japanese (PL,LL&PS), Taiwanese (LL &PS) and Korean (LL&PS) foreign fishing vessels also fish in the SI waters under bi-lateral arrangements, whilst US purse seiners have access to a restricted zone of the EEZ under the Multi-lateral Treaty arrangement.

The commercial tuna fishery sector is largely based on the country's rich tuna resources which is currently being under the new Tuna Development and Management Plan. Licence limitations and area restriction have become the two strategies used to regulate the tuna fisheries.

Total Catches

An overview of historical annual catches in the SI waters, from1991 – 2001, is shown in **Table 1**. Catches fell from highs of 100,000 mt in mid-90s to an all time low of 12,670 mt in 2000, as a direct result of the exodus of fishing vessels from the SI waters, and the closure of many locally based fishing companies due to the social unrest situation experienced the past two and half years. During 2001 catches have began to increase with a total catch of 35,915 mt recorded.

Domestically based fleets have been dominating tuna catches during each of the last 10 years accounting for an annual average of 95% each year. **Table 2** presents the total domestic catches by number of companies and number of fishing vessels.

Domestic Pole-and-line(DPL) catches for 1999, 2000 and 2001 were 18,606 mt, 2,778 mt and 6,534 mt respectively. The catch by single purse seiners (SPS) increased markedly from 2,365 in 2000 to 20,727 mt in 2001. There was no group purse seine operation in 2001 following the closure of Solomon Taiyo Limited in 2000. Longliners catch fell from 1,197 mt in 2000 to 407 mt in 2001. Of the SPS, only catches for NFD were available for 2001.

Fleet Structure

The current fleet structure is presented in **Table 3**. A total of 7 locally based companies have been licensed to fish for tuna. Of this, 3 companies were licensed to operate purse seiners, 1 company pole-and-liners and 3 companies for longliners. In addition to the domestic fleets, Japanese, Korean and Taiwanese foreign pole-and-liners, purse seiners and longliners have also been granted licence to operate foreign longline and pole-and-line vessels in the SI waters under a bi-lateral arrangement whilst US seiners also have access under the multi-lateral treaty arrangement.

In total, 192 fishing vessels have been licensed to fish in the SI waters. This comprised 45 (27 domestic & 18 foreign) longliners, 33 (2 domestic & 31 foreign) pole-and-liners, 105 (5 domestic & 100 foreign) purse seiners and 9 shark longliners.

Catch by Species for Each Gear Type

Table 4 presents the annual catch composition, by species for each gear type for the domestic fleets for 1995 – 2001. The 27,688 mt catch of 2001 comprised of 17,497 mt skipjack, 9,921 mt yellowfin, 187 mt bigeye, 54 mt Albacore, 7 mt billfishes and 2 mt other species. Skipjack (≈70%) and yellowfin (≈20%) have together accounted for an 99% of the catches for 2001.

Skipjack has continued to be the predominant species of pole-and-line catches.

Final Market Destination of Catches (1996)

Table 5 gives the export destinations of SI tuna products in 1996. Major buyers of frozen fish were Japan and Thailand; canned products were UK, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea; fishmeal were Singapore and Hong Kong. Only Japan imports smoked fish from the SI. SI's fresh tuna are principally exported to Japan.

Onshore Developments

Transshipment

No transshipment was seen in the Solomon Islands during 2001 as a result of the social unrest situation.

Processing

Only STL continues to operate a cannery. STL also operates a fishmeal and a fish smoking (arabushi) plant.

Solgreen Enterprises Limited alone is currently engaged in onshore packaging of fresh tuna and billfish for export. A total of 474 mt of fresh tuna comprising of 265 mt bigeye, 150 mt yellowfin, 31 mt albacore and 28 mt marlin have been exported since the beginning of this year.

Future Prospects and Developments

Tuna policy review

A review of the Solomon Islands Tuna Fisheries was undertaken in 1998 and this has resulted in the production of the Solomon Islands National Tuna Management and Development Plan. The Plan provides for a clear and transparent procedure in the decision-making process with the aim of sustaining exploitable stocks, minimising environmental, social and cultural impacts, increasing domestic participation, increasing foreign revenue, enhancing administrative support and ensuring accountability. This was in support of the Fisheries Act 1998, which provides for the long-term conservation and sustainable utilisation of fishery resources that would enhance the maximisation of benefits and participation of nationals in the exploitation, management and development of fishery resources including tuna.

Observers Programme

Solomon Islands has been running a domestic observers programme since the mid 70s. In 1997 the programme was been re-strengthened with the training of some 25 observers. Twelve observers are currently engaged under contract basis arrangement. Sixteen trips were made in 2001, and of these 11 trips were onboard long liners, four onboard local purse siners and one under the multilateral treaty arrangement. As at the end of June, 2002, a total of 95 trips have already been made and this comprised of 62 onboard domestic pole-and-liners, 26 onboard longliners and 7 for purse seiners.

The Port Sampling Programme was suspended due to the social situation currently being experienced.

TUNA FISHERY

	DOMESTIC				FOREIGN														
					JP		US	VNT		Korea		Taiwan		PH	USR	FJ	JP	KRB	
YEAR	PL	GS	SS	LL	LL	PL	SS	LL	SS	LL	SS	SS	LL	SS	SS	PL	SS	PL	TOTAL
1971	4,711																		4,711
1972	7,905					45													7,950
1973	6,512			132		269													6,913
1974	10,331					6,831													17,162
1975	7,169					8,255													15,424
1976	15,799			212		19,865													35,876
1977	12,115			287		8,138													20,540
1978	18,354			300	235	270													19,159
1979	23,801			715	2,565	535													27,616
1980	21,935			818	2,679	546							40				979		26,997
1981	22,626			93	4,517	802				184							2,793		31,014
1982	17,322			351	3,157	385											2,836		24,051
1983	29,267			553	2,179												5,226		37,224
1984	30,600	3,556		366	1,127	416											1,368		37,432
1985	25,235	2,472		243	4,576	3,324											923		36,772
1986	38,823	5,537			3,059	62													47,480
1987	23,925	6,616			997	80													31,618
1988	33,052	4,469	2,294		7,972	188	158												48,133
1989	25,869	6,560	3,730		4,906	73	30												41,168
1990	18,560	6,161	2,009		3,830	6,722	9									16		102	37,409
1991	36,222	6,618	4,101		4,400	368	948							1,793		399			54,848
1992	19,737	4,738	6,441		2,453	105	0							6,878					40,351
1993	17,832	6,398	4,973		3,107	18	231							616	4,873				38,048
1994	21,261	6,238	6,530		3,123	4,674	784				11,505		121		4,732				58,968
1995	31,345	3,904	13,941	531	7,837	532	1,305	158	6,125	136	49,671	5	210	1,901				269	117,868
1996	21,106	5,941	10,209	1,082	1,739	758	2,129	412	5,192	2,191	46,225	3,382		9				1	100,376
1997	21,651	2,628	12,413	1,793	922	1,413	883	494	7,776	875	41,412	15,974	119	180					108,532
1998	24,120	5,240	14,189	1,865	39		927	107	7,600		32,334	24,469							110,889
1999	18,606	4,186	10,511	1,212			972				430	1,026							36,943
2000	2,778	1,040	2,365	1,197	550		338					290	470				3,641		12,669
2001	6,534	0	20,728	407	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,640	272	0	0	0	4,334	0	35,915

Table 2: Domestic fleets by number of company and vessels and total catches from 1995–2001

	Pole and Line			Long line			Single Purse Seine			Group Purse Seine		
YEAR	**No. of Companies**	**No. of vessels**	**Catch (mt)**	**No. of Company**	**No. of vessels**	**Catch (mt)**	**No. of Company**	**No. of vessels**	**Catch (mt)**	**No. of companies**	**No. of vessels**	**Catch (mt)**
1995	2	32	**31344.0**	4	9	**530.6**	1	2	**13941.0**	1	1	**3904.0**
1996	2	34	**21106.0**	7	13	**1882.0**	1	2	**10209.0**	1	1	**5941.0**
1997	2	31	**21651.0**	5	18	**1793.0**	1	3	**12412.0**	1	1	**2628.0**
1998	2	28	**24538.4**	2	21	**1,865.0**	1	3	**14189.0**	1	1	**5240.0**
1999	2	26	**18606.0**	1	16	**1,212.5**	1	3	**10511.0**	1	1	**2199.0**
2000	2	18	**2,777.5**	1	14	**1197.1**	1	2	**2,365.0**	1	1	**1,040.0**
2001	1	12	**6533.0**	1	8	**407.0**	1	2	**20728.0**	0	0	0

Table 3: Fleet structure (2000 and as of July 15th 2001)

	Company/ Agent	FREEZER	LIGHT/ SCOUT BOAT	OTHER	LONGLINE	Trawl	POLE & LINE	PURSE SEINE	SHARK LONGLINE	Grand Total
Domestic 2000										
	HAINAN QUEBEC	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	**4**
	GLOBAL INVESTMENT	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	**9**
	NFD	0	4	0	0	0	2	3	0	**9**
	SOLFISH & TUNA CO.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	**6**
	MENDANA FISHING	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	**1**
	SEAWAYS	0	0	1	0	0		0	0	**1**
	SOLGREEN	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	**14**
	STL	2	1	0	0	0	21	1	0	**25**
Foreign 2000										
	JAPANTUNA	0	0	0	4	0	26	0	0	**30**
	KINKATSUKYO	0	0	0	7	0	5	0	0	**12**
	Taiwan Deep Sea Tuna	0	0	0	9	0	0	38	0	**47**
	US Vessels	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	0	**33**
	Grand Total	**2**	**5**	**1**	**25**	**4**	**54**	**42**	**11**	**191**
Domestic 2001										
	GLOBAL INVESTMENT	0	0	0	5	0	0	2	7	**14**
	NFD	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	**3**
	SOLFISH & TUNA CO.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	**2**
	MAKO	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	**1**
	TUAN PACIFIC	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	**6**
	SOLGREEN	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	**16**
	STL	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	**2**
Foreign 2001										
	JAPANTUNA	0	0	0	4	0	26	0	0	**30**
	KINKATSUKYO	0	0	0	7	0	5	0	0	**12**
	KDSFA	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	0	**27**
	Taiwan Deep Sea Tuna	0	0	0	7	0	0	40	0	**47**
	US Vessels	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	0	**33**
	Grand Total	**0**	**1**	**0**	**31**	**0**	**33**	**38**	**9**	**193**

Table 4: Domestic fleet catches by gear type and species

a)2001

VES. TYPE	No. of V	SKJ	YFT	BET	ALB	BFT	STM	BLM	BKM	BBS	SLF	SHK	OTH	TOTAl
SPS	2	12,989.0	7,738.0											**20,72**
GPS														
PL	12	4,508.4	2,025.0										0.3	**6,53**
LL	8		158.7	186.5	53.5		0.2	5.0	1.1		0.6		1.8	**40**
TOTAL (mt)		**17,497.4**	**9,921.7**	**186.5**	**53.5**	**-**	**0.2**	**5.0**	**1.1**	**-**	**0.6**	**-**	**2.1**	**27,66**
Catch composition		***63%***	***36%***	***1%***	***0%***	***0%***	***0%***	***0%***	***0%***	***0%***	***0%***	***0%***	***0%***	***100.***

b) 2000

VES. TYPE	No. of V	SKJ	YFT	BET	ALB	BFT	STM	BLM	BKM	BBS	SLF	SHK	OTH	TOTAl
SPS	2	1,369.5	995.5											**2,36**
GPS	1	690.0	255.0										95.0	**1,04**
PL	18	2,631.7	140.8										5.0	**2,77**
LL	14		557.4	364.0	224.5		0.4	42.7	3.7	-	0.5		3.9	**1,19**
TOTAL (mt)		**4,691.2**	**1,948.7**	**364.0**	**224.5**	**-**	**0.4**	**42.7**	**3.7**	**-**	**0.5**	**-**	**103.9**	**7,37**
Catch composition		***63.57%***	***26.41%***	***4.93%***	***3.04%***	***0.00%***	***0.01%***	***0.58%***	***0.05%***	***0.00%***	***0.01%***	***0.00%***	***1.41%***	***100.***

c) 1999

VES. TYPE	No. of V	SKJ	YFT	BET	ALB	BFT	STM	BLM	BKM	BBS	SLF	SHK	OTH	TOTAl
SPS	3	7,727.0	2,784.0	-										**10,51**
GPS	1	1,548.0	651.0										-	**2,19**
PL	26	17,632.0	964.4										10.1	**18,60**
LL	16		532.6	469.1	136.4	1.3	5.7	4.3	60.3	-	2.9	-	-	**1,21**
TOTAL (mt)		**26,907.0**	**4,932.0**	**469.1**	**136.4**	**1.3**	**5.7**	**4.3**	**60.3**	**-**	**2.9**	**-**	**10.1**	**32,52**
Catch composition		***82.72%***	***15.16%***	***1.44%***	***0.42%***	***0.00%***	***0.02%***	***0.01%***	***0.19%***	***0.00%***	***0.01%***	***0.00%***	***0.03%***	***100.***

d) 1998

VES. TYPE	No. of V	SKJ	YFT	BET	ALB	BFT	STM	BLM	BKM	BBS	SLF	SHK	OTH	TOTAl
SPS	3	10,169.0	4,001.0	14.0									5.0	**14,18**
GPS	1	3,797.0	1,435.0										8.0	**5,24**
PL	28	23,284.2	1,244.4										9.9	**24,53**
LL	21		657.2	726.0	370.0		12.7	11.8	67.7	-	1.9	18.0		**1,86**
TOTAL (mt)		**37,250.2**	**7,337.6**	**740.0**	**370.0**	**-**	**12.7**	**11.8**	**67.7**	**-**	**1.9**	**18.0**	**22.9**	**45,83**
Catch composition		***81.27%***	***16.01%***	***1.61%***	***0.81%***	***0.00%***	***0.03%***	***0.03%***	***0.15%***	***0.00%***	***0.00%***	***0.04%***	***0.05%***	***100.0***

Code: SKJ - skipjack; YFT - yellowfin; BET – bigeye; ALB - albacore; BFT - bluefin; STM - striped marlin; BLM - blue marlin; BKM - black marlin; BS- broadbill swordfish; SLF - sailfish; SH K - shark; OTH - other species.

Table 5(a): Market destinations of tuna products from Solomon Islands (mt)

Destination:	FROZEN FISH	CANNED FISH	SMOKED FISH	FISH MEAL	FRESH	TOTAL
A.Samoa	361.10	-	-	-		**361.10**
Australia	262.40	75.60	-	0.03		**338.03**
Fiji	36.10	-	-	-		**36.10**
Indonesia	248.02	-	-	-		**248.02**
Japan	15,117.70	149.60	899.20	-		**16,166.50**
Malaysia	295.51	-	-	-		**295.51**
Thailand	5,524.52	-	-	-		**5,524.52**
Philippine	759.12	-	-	-		**759.12**
Taiwan	0.88	-	-	4.31		**5.19**
PNG	-	274.50	-	-		**274.50**
UK	-	4,900.70	-	-		**4,900.70**
Vanuatu	-	512.20	-	-		**512.20**
Greece	-	32.60	-	-		**32.60**
Hongkong	-	-	-	1.32		**1.32**
New Zealand	-	-	0.00	-		**0.00**
Singapore	-	-	-	2.38		**2.38**
TOTALS	**22,605.34**	**5,945.20**	**899.20**	**8.03**		**29,457.77**

Table 5 (b): Summary of tuna product exports, 1985-2001.

Year	Frozen fish	Canned fish	Smoked fish	Fishmeal	Chillled Tuna	Total
1985	27350	937	212			28499
1986	39565	930	226			40721
1987	26480	1200	314			27993
1988	35659	1206	313			37178
1989	27935	1285	409			29629
1990	17090	2794	521			20405
1991	47558	4854	406			52819
1992	27845	5449	429			33723
1993	15435	5774	504			21712
1994	23065	7712	839			31616
1995	38698	6554	1545			46798
1996	22605	6236	899	8		29749
1997	25910	7524	945	70	2760	37209
1998	37292	1446	149	118	2153	41158
1999	24417				1486	25903
2000						
2001					816	816

Source: Statistics Office, Ministry of Finance.