

# **SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY**

## **11 Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish**

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### ***Country Report: Status of Tuna Fishery in Vanuatu***

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## INTRODUCTION

The development of Vanuatu's offshore pelagic resources within its 200 miles Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has long played a major role through government's budget in revenue generation through its existing licensing scheme. Exploitation of Vanuatu's tuna resource has been dated back to since mid 1950s (Wright 1989). The principal targeted species then was albacore for canning in Japan, U.S. and other countries. This has led to the establishment of the South Pacific Fishing Company in Santo (Vanuatu) in 1957, which was basically handling the catches by longliners (Bell & Amos 1993).

The offshore traditional fishing for tunas was not practised in Vanuatu. However, through the development of the village fishing development programme for offshore pelagic and deep water bottom resources, this has led to the utilisation of these resources in the village, in the artisanal as well as in the commercial fishing levels. In addition, such development has helped in minimising the excessive pressure in over exploiting the country's inshore resources. Given the continuous increase in population growth, over dependence on inshore resources was becoming a major concern. The government of Vanuatu through financial assistance from the European Economic Community was then able to implement the actual offshore pelagic and deep bottom fishery. This saw the birth of the village fishing development project (VFDP) in the country.

This report present a brief account on the current tuna fishery of Vanuatu both locally and through its foreign licensing scheme. However, availability of datas were somewhat in complete due to certain circumstances thereby preventing a much clearer picture on the tuna fishery to be presented in this report.

## **The Fishery**

Offshore fishing for pelagic species such as tuna and related species has not been a tradition in Vanuatu. However with the assistance of the then Village Fishing Development Project (VFDP) through financial assistance from the European Community funding and other participating organisation during the early 1980s, tuna fishery became an important component of the local artisanal and commercial fishery in the country. Fish aggregating devices (FAD) have then being developed and deployed and appropriate basic trainings were offered to Ni Vanuatu local fishermen to master sufficient knowledge and skills in the offshore pelagic species as well as deep bottom fishery (deep water snappers-*Etelis* and *Pristipomoides*).

Its being documented that the commercial fishing for tuna resource within Vanuatu's 200 miles Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has been exploited since mid 1950's on low scale by Taiwanese Korean and Japanese longliners (Wright, 1989). Summary of catch data from 1967 to 1976 are summarised in Bell & Amos, 1993 Vanuatu Resource Profile. During 1996 and the first quarter of 1997, 34 vessels were licensed to operate within Vanuatu's 200 miles Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and 19 recorded for 1997/ 1998 period. The foreign vesels operating in Vanuatu's EEZ waters are mainly longliners, however, there were two purse seiners in 1996 licensed as local vessels.

A total of seven local licenses were granted to vessels operating within the 6-12 nautical miles territorial waters for 1996 to the first quarter of 1997 and from the second quarter of 1997 till the present, five local vessel licenses for surface and bottom long lining as well as six game fishing licenses also being granted. An updated list of commercial fishing vessels licensed in Vanuatu is attached in appendix A.

## **Production and Marketing**

The reported catch for the local vessel, Marine Princess taken from logsheets for 1996 and 1997 is summarised in table 1. Catch data from table 1 indicated that the dominating catch by species being yellow fin tuna followed by Albacore, other species and striped marlin. Catch data from other local vessels could not be obtained since they were not very actively operating. Note that since early 1998, Marine Princess ceased its operation in Vanuatu.

Table 1. Surface long line catch (weight in kilogram) for local vessel, Marine Princess between 18 Feb. 1996 to 20 August 1997 operational periods.

	Albacore	Bigeye	Yellow fin	Blue fin	Striped Marlin	Blue marlin	Black marlin	BB sword	Sail Fish	Shark	Other Sp.
1996	5,545	1,662	23,835	0	2,184	435	0	324	220	190	3,488
1997	984	753	8,947	0	670	0	550	85	60	30	2,366
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,529</b>	<b>2,415</b>	<b>32,782</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,854</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>5,854</b>

The Taiwanese long liners operating since 1992 indicated that the dominating species caught being albacore. Note that the data is incomplete since records of catch of associated pelagic species were not included.

Table 2. Catch statistics for Taiwanese longline fishing in Vanuatu waters, weight expressed in metric tonnes (mt).

Year	Albacore	Big eye	Yellowfin	Striped Marlin	Blue marlin	Black marlin	BB Sword	Sail fish
1992	293.7	19	85.6					
1993	1,241.3	27.7	91.7	6.63	0.85	1	0.04	0
1994	400.8	4.7	58.9					
1995	425.3	8.4	28.6					
1996	92.3	2.1	4.4					
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,453</b>	<b>61.9</b>	<b>269.2</b>	<b>6.63</b>	<b>0.85</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>0</b>

Source of data: Vanuatu logsheets provided to SPC.

In addition, the 1996/1997 licensing period annual catch based on the vessels weekly reportings is also summarised in table 3. In this case, the average trip length per vessel is 3 months. Note that these figures are based on weekly reportings and do not reflect an annual catch by species per year as to a log sheet.

Table 3. 1996/1997 licensing period annual catch based on weekly report, quantity given in tonnes.

Year	Yellow fin	Bigeye	Skipjack	Albacore	Blackmarlin	Others
1996/1997	387.3	61.19	0.074	1,430	23.65	24.9

Source: Vanuatu Fisheries Department data base.

Landings of foreign vessels licensed in Vanuatu's EEZ are Pango Pango, American Samoa and Suva, Fiji. Since the closure of the South Pacific Fishing Company (SPFC) in Santo, no further off loading were being carried out since then.

Tuna catches by small scale fishery are marketed locally to the existing fish markets (table 4) in Vila (Natai) and Santo (Santo Fish market), to the Fisheries Extension Centres in the outer islands which are equipped with ice machines, to the reseaurants and hotels or even sold to the locals upon landing on shore.

Table 4: Pelagic fish sale to Natai and Santo Fish markets.

Species	1990 Natai	1991 Natai	1992 Natai	1990 Santo fis	1991 Santo fis	1992 Santo fis
Skipjack	669.7	195.9	1,172.50	220	272.8	718.8
Yellow fin	2,633	275	2,122.10	147	815.6	1,740.70
D/tooth	567.7	76.3	268.6	666	256.7	487.2
Albacore						
Macker/tuna				546.80	0.9	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3870.4</b>	<b>546.7</b>	<b>3,563.20</b>	<b>1,579</b>	<b>1346</b>	<b>2946.7</b>

Source: Vanuatu Resource Profile, 1993.

The offshore pelagic fish species sold to Natai by small scale local fishermen are recorded in table 5. The annual total catch by species from the country could not be presented since most of the GRNs have not been appropriately filled in and submitted to the Fisheries Department.

Table 5. 1997 Good Received Note (GRN) submitted to Natai Fish market from Village fishing development projects.

Species	Weight (kg)
Skipjack	572.5
Dog tooth tuna	488
Yellow fin	189
Wahoo	131
King fish	98
Marlin	47
Mahimahi	34
Shark	249.5

Retail and whole sale price range on pelagic fish species purchased by the existing fish markets to small scale fishermen varried depending on the species caught. An example on price variation by species is shown in table 6.

Table 6 Natai fish market whole sale and retail sale prices.

Species	Wholesale (vatu/kg)		Retail Sale	
		Fillet (vatu/kg)	Steak (vatu/kg)	Smoked (vatu/kg)
Marlin	250	990	400	1,000
Mahi mahi	300	1185	400	
Skipjack		850	400	
D/tooth		890	400	
Yellow fin			400	
Sailfish	250	810	400	1,000

With the closure of the Santo fish market in early 1995, this has had a great impact on local fishermen based in the Northern Provinces. In addition, regular supply of Good Received Note (GRN) from the fishermen to the Fisheries Department Extension Centers, a valuable source of obtaining local catch data from fishermen has also suffered a great impact. In addition, the effect of the civil servants nation wide strike in 1993 has seen a number of permanent staff within the department leaving the office which thus cause drawbacks in the smooth running of the department. It is now an emphasis from the Fisheries Department to those commercial operation running commercial fish markets to ensure the department with continuous supply of data.

In 1996, the Natai fish market which was for a year being leased by a New Zealand Company and was licensed as the Vanuatu Fish Investment Limited were actively exporting tunas and related species to New Zealand. Table 6 outlines the recorded 1996 export.

Table 7 1996 finfish export from Vanuatu Fish Investment Limited.

Species	Quantity (kg)
Albacore	350
Bigeye	251
Yellow fin	9,002
Mackerel	78
Mahimahi	125
Spear fish	40
Stripped marlin	270
Wahoo	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,131</b>

### **Game Fishing Activity**

Initially, the Department of Fisheries in coöperation with the French based research organisation, ORSTOM had agreements with the Game fishing clubs in the country. Agreements has been that Fisheries and ORSTOM assisted the Game fishing clubs by providing them with fish boxes who in turn supply data to the organisation concerned. However as time proceeds, the supply of datas were no longer consistent and the agreement ended.

There were six Game fishing licenses issued in 1997, however no catch records are available. It is understandable that Game fishing is now a major tourist attraction in the country, attracting the Australian and the American tourists particularly during November to February of every year during billfish season. However, no data are available to quantify the annual local catch present.

### **Management**

Given the migratory nature of tuna and related species, there are no specific legislation regarding the harvesting of these resources in Vanuatu. The management of this resource requires a regional approach. Under Vanuatu Fisheries Act 1983, the Department of Fisheries is responsible in the management of the country's tuna resources.

## **REFERENCES**

Bell and Amos 1993. Vanuatu Resource Profile. FFA Report.

Wright A. 1989. A Review of Fisheries Research in Vanuatu for the Future. FFA Report 89/ 20



LIST OF COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSELS LICENSED IN VANUATU											
	FLAG	VID	Name	IRCS	LicNo	LicStart	LicEnd	GRT	TYPE	Spd.	AGENT
1. FOREIGN FISHING VESSELS											
1	TW	33478	FORTUNA NO.3	VJQ4450	VAN14/97	10/1/97	9/30/98	85.20	LL	Pel Tun	South Pacific Fishing Company
2	TW	33479	FORTUNA NO.7	VJQ4451	VAN15/97	10/1/97	9/30/98	85.20	LL	Pel Tun	South Pacific Fishing Company
3	TW	14696	LIH FAH	BECX	VAN 16/97	21/10/97	10/20/98	154.10	LL	Pel Tun	South Pacific Fishing Company
4	TW	737	JIN DING	BYJK	VAN 17/97	10/14/97	10/13/98	183.33	LL	Pel Tun	South Pacific Fishing Company
7	TW	14696	LIH FAH	BECX	VAN 16/97	10/21/97	10/20/98	154.10	LL	Pel Tun	South Pacific Fishing Company
8	TW	11692	FU PENG NO.1	BG - 2848	VAN 20/97	10/28/97	10/27/98	178.85	LL	Pel Tun	South Pacific Fishing Company
9	TW	729	JIA YEOU NO.6	BYLE	VAN 19/97	10/21/97	10/20/98	187.10	LL	Pel Tun	South Pacific Fishing Company
10	TW	31021	LONG DAR	BG - 2657	VAN 13/97	10/1/97	9/29/98	196.73	LL	Pel Tun	South Pacific Fishing Company
1	TW	22517	HAUR CHUEN 1	BEIA	VAN 01/97	2/4/97	2/3/98	202.7		Pel Tun	South Pacific Fishing Company
4	KR	33422	SOUTH STAR	V3NG7	VAN 09/97	5/6/97	5/5/98	254.16	LL	Pel Tun	International Tuna Services Ltd
5	TW	32448	YIN YI SIANG	BH - 2779	VAN 18/97	10/14/97	10/13/98	225.35	LL	Pel Tun	South Pacific Fishing Company
7	KR	33482	YOHA 9	HQQG9	VAN 04/97	4/15/97	4/14/98	283.90	LL	Pel Tun	Hanjo. Co. Ltd
1	KR	33420	CORVET 25	DTAL3	VAN 10/97	5/6/97	5/5/98	342	LL	Pel Tun	Hanjo. Co. Ltd
2	KR	33536	CORVET NO.27	DTAM3	VAN 05/97	4/21/97	4/20/98	350.00	LL	Pel Tun	Hanjo. Co. Ltd
3	KR	32222	ALBA NO.8	6NLG	VAN 02/97	4/9/97	4/8/98	377	LL	Pel Tun	Hanjo. Co. Ltd
4	KR	32231	LAGOS NO.103	DTAJ2	VAN 07/97	4/21/97	4/20/98	378	LL	Pel Tun	Hanjo. Co. Ltd
5	KR	32914	HAENG BOK NO.103	6LUT	VAN 03/97	4/15/97	4/14/98	384	LL	Pel Tun	Hanjo. Co. Ltd
6	KR	32201	LAGOS NO.101	DTAJ8	VAN 06/97	4/21/97	4/20/98	390	LL	Pel Tun	Hanjo. Co. Ltd
7	KR	33617	BO SEONG NO.315	DTFH	VAN 08/97	4/29/97	4/28/98	380	LL	Pel Tun	International Tuna Services Ltd
US TREATY VESSELS				DEALT WITH BY FFA							
2. LOCALLY-BASED FOREIGN											
NONE											
3. LOCAL VESSELS											
OISEAU BLEU					VANL 03/97	3/20/97	3/19/98		LL	Pel Tun/D.Bot Fish	LTP
M.V AZUR				VJS 7093	VANL 04/97	4/7/97	4/6/98		LL	Pel Tun/D.Bot Fish	MELCOIN LTD
M.V FAGOTA					VANL 01/97	1/21/97	1/20/98		LL	Pel Tun/D.Bot Fish	JOE SAULA YATIBU
*	NZ	33206	MARINE PRINCES	ZM4027	VANL 02/97	2/1/97	1/9/98		LL	Pel Tun/D.Bot Fish	VANUATU FISH INVESTMENT CO.LTD
M.V LATUA				PM/S/217	VANL 05/97	10/21/97	10/20/98		DL	Sharks	Santo Fish Exporters
4.GAME FISHING LICENSES											
NIKITA					GF01/97	1/20/97	1/19/98			Pel Tun/D.Bot Fish	Daniel Joli
YMER					GF02/97	1/20/97	1/19/98			Pel Tun/D.Bot Fish	Remy Frouin
VICKI'S CHOICE					GF03/97	1/20/97	1/19/98			Pel Tun/D.Bot Fish	Marcus Thomson
CASSI NICOLE					GF04/97	1/20/97	1/19/98			Pel Tun/D.Bot Fish	Marcus Thomson
FAGHORN					GF05/97	1/20/97	1/19/98			Pel Tun/D.Bot Fish	John Lowe
KAHUNA					GF06/97	4/7/97	4/6/98			Pel Tun/D.Bot Fish	Allen Tripp
* SHOULD BE LICENSED AS LOCALLY BASED FOREIGN											
Key:											
Pel Tun	Pelagic Tuna										
D. Bot Fish	Deep Bottom fish										
S. Bot Fish	Shallow water bottom fish										