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PART 1: INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH, AND STATISTICS

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REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

Republic of the Marshall Islands

Annual Report Part 1
Information of fisheries, statistics and research

Oceanic and Industrial Affairs Division
Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority
Republic of the Marshall Islands

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Scientific data was provided to the Commission in accordance with the decision relating to the provision of scientific data to the Commission by 30 April 2011	Yes

SUMMARY

The tuna fishery in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) is comprised of foreign flagged purse seine, pole-and-line and longline vessels and RMI-flagged purse seine and longline vessels. Most of the foreign flagged longline vessels operate in support of domestic development activities and are based locally.

As part of the RMI's ongoing domestic development aspirations, four additional purse seine vessels were introduced into the national fleet while the longline fleet remained at four vessels. During 2010, estimated total catch of the RMI's purse seine fleet operating throughout the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) was just over 56,800 mt, an increase of around 24% compared to the previous year although the new vessels only entered the fishery during the second half of the year. Further, provisional estimates from the national longline fleet which fished primarily in the RMI EEZ indicate just under 450 mt of catch.

Overall catch estimates from licensed foreign fleets operating in the RMI EEZ in 2010 amounted to just over 25,400 mt with 69% of the catch attributed to the purse seine fleets and a majority of the catch comprising of skipjack tuna.

Unfortunately, there has been no observer coverage on longline vessels since the 100% purse seine coverage came into effect. There is, however, an observer training scheduled for late 2011 that will hopefully reverse the situation. RMI observers did managed to undertake 176 trips totaling around 5,268 sea days on both national and sub-regional trips.

BACKGROUND

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) has an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and territorial waters of around 2 million km^2. The tuna fishery is the most important fishery both in terms of scale and economics in the RMI.

The Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA) is responsible for the management and development of the tuna fishery in the RMI. The fishery comprises of longline, purse seine, and pole-and-line vessels fishing under various access arrangements. The RMI is a party to a number of regional and international management arrangements such as the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) and the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA). With the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) in place, the RMI is also obliged to comply with the management measures of the Commission

FLAG STATE REPORTING

Annual catch and effort estimates for the national purse seine fleet, fishing throughout the WCPFC Convention Area during the last five years, are presented in Table 1a with historical estimates further provided in Figure 1a. Catch estimates for purse seine fleet in 2010 amounted to over 56, 830 mt, about 24% more than the previous year. A portion of this increase can be attributed to the addition of four new entrants into the purse seine fishery. Skipjack tuna catch, in 2010, accounted for about 85% of total catch with the rest comprising of yellowfin (12%) and bigeye tuna (3%). Additionally, the reported catch and effort estimates from the national longline fleet are illustrated in Table 1b and Figure 1b. Provisional catch estimates from the longline fleet in 2010 show a slight decrease from the previous year.

Table 1a. Annual catch (mt) and effort (days) estimates for the Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, by primary species, for the WCPFC Convention Area, 2006-2010

Species	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
DAYS FISHING AND SEARCHING	976	1216	1041	1162	1604
SKIPJACK	38881	53916	26500	39697	48106
YELLOWFIN	1436	3370	4151	1532	7173
BIGEYE	2032	2118	1567	2233	1556

Table 1b. Annual catch (mt) and effort (hooks) estimates for the Marshall Islands longline vessels, by primary species, for the WCPFC Convention Area, 2006-2010

Species	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
100s OF HOOKS	0	177	18347	12756	13127
YELLOWFIN	0	2	91	120	117
BIGEYE	0	3	375	381	257
BLUE MARLIN	0	1	63	52	52
BLACK MARLIN	0	0	0	0	0
SKIPJACK	0	0	0	0	0
ALBACORE	0	0	15	10	17
PACIFIC BLUEFIN	0	0	0	0	0
STRIPED MARLIN	0	0	1	0	0
SWORDFISH	0	0	7	4	5

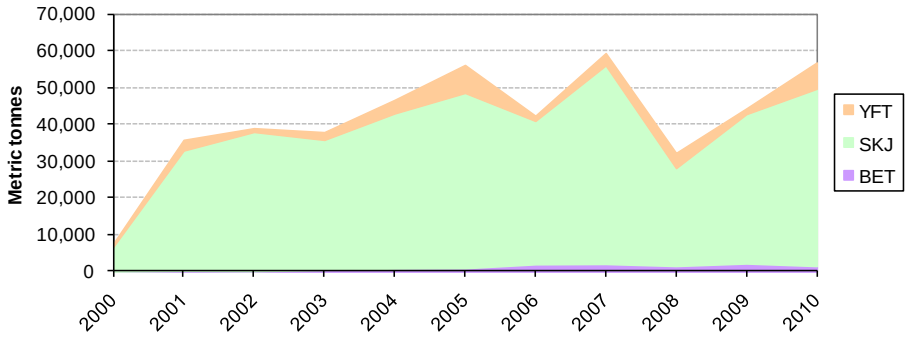

Figure 1a. Historical annual catch for the Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, by primary species, for the WCPFC Convention Area

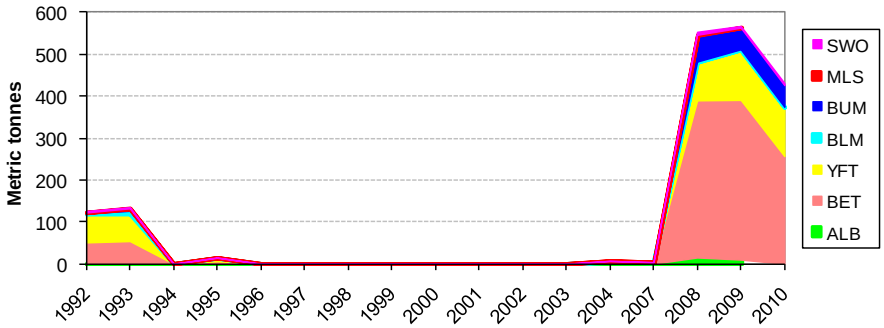

Figure 1b. Historical annual catch for the Marshall Islands longline vessels, by primary species, for the WCPFC Convention Area

Ten national purse seine and four longline vessels were active in the Convention Area during 2010 (Figure 2, Tables 2a & 2b). As the relationship with respect to nationality of catch is still being progressed, a number of domestically-based foreign longline vessels are not included in this list, but may be included in the future.

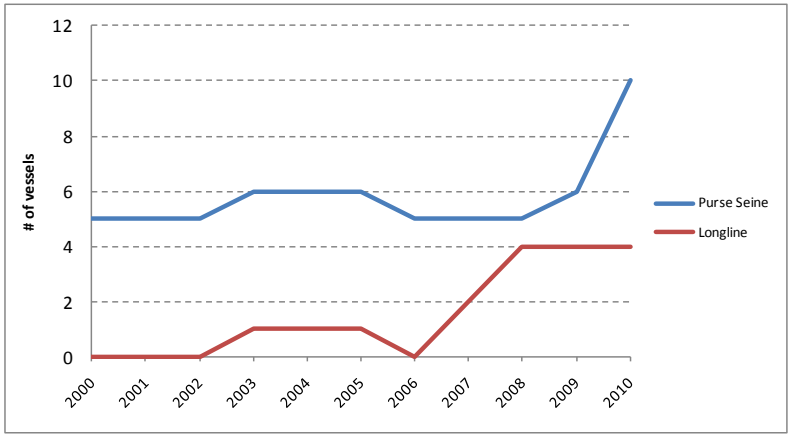

Figure 2. Historical annual vessel numbers for the Marshall Islands, by gear, for the WCPFC Convention Area

Table 2a. Number of Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, by size category, active in the WCPFC Convention Area, 2006-2010

Size class (GRT)	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
0–500					
500–1,000					
1,000–1,500	5	5	5	5	7
1,500+					3

Table 2b. Number of Marshall Islands longline vessels, by size category, active in the WCPFC Convention Area, 2006-2010

Size class (GRT)	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
0–10					
10–50					
50–200	0	2	4	4	4
200–500					
500+					

Figure 3a provides an illustration of the distribution of effort for the national purse seine fleet over the past two years. As the fleet is based out of Majuro, the effort is concentrated in the southern half of the Marshall Islands, and into the EEZs of Kiribati, Nauru and other adjacent EEZs. There is an apparent westward shift in effort during 2010 possibly due to the development of a La Nina event in the latter part of the year. The national longline fleet fishes primarily in the RMI EEZ although the fleet occasionally ventures out of the EEZ (Figure 3b).

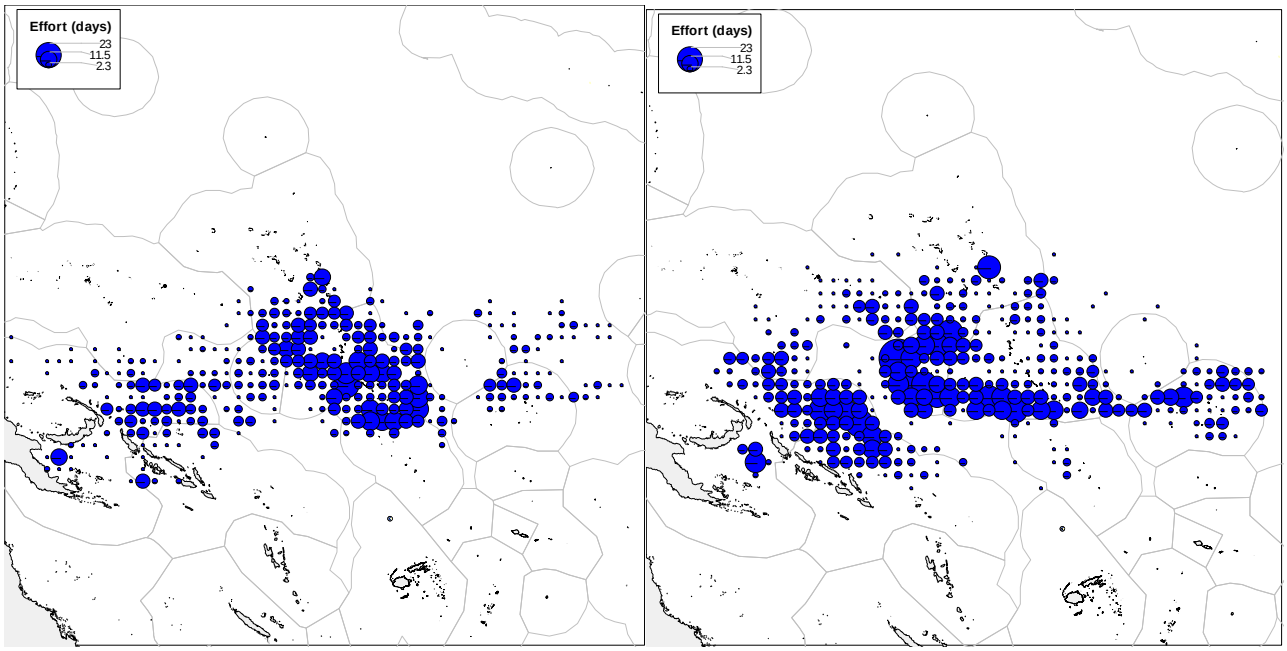

Figure 3a. Annual distribution of effort (days fishing and searching) by the Marshall Islands purse seine vessels active in the WCPFC Convention Area for 2009 (left) and 2010 (right)

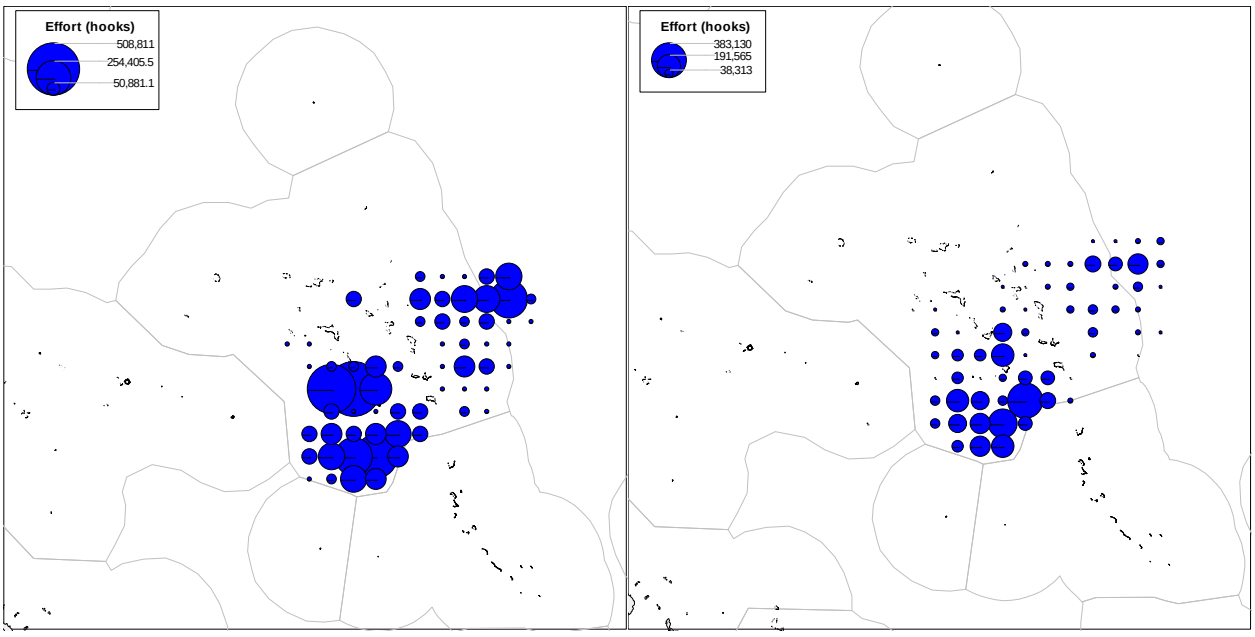

Figure 3b. Annual distribution effort (100s of hooks) by the Marshall Islands longline vessels active in the WCPFC Convention Area for 2009 (left) and 2010 (right)

Observed interactions with species of special interest are shown in Tables 3a and 3b. Data are derived from available trips conducted by MIMRA observers and are not limited to trips on RMI fleets. During 2010, there

were six toothed whale interactions reported from purse seine trips whilst there were no observer trips on longline vessels. Increased demands on the MIMRA Observer Program has meant increased data to be processed thus estimates for 2010 are considered provisional at this stage. As well, the mandatory requirement for 100% observer coverage has prompted a shift in coverage from the locally-based longline fleet to the domestic and foreign purse seine fleets.

Table 3a. Observed annual estimated catches of species of special interest (seabird, turtle and marine mammals) from Marshall Islands observers on purse seine vessels, in the WCPFC Convention Area, for 2008-2010 to the extent available.

		Individuals encountered					
		2008		2009		2010	
Category	Species	No.	Dead	No.	Dead	No.	Dead
Marine Turtles	Green Turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Loggerhead Turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Hawksbill turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Leatherback turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Olive Ridley Turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Turtles (unidentifed)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marine Mammals	Dolphins and Porpoises	1	1	0	0	0	0
	Toothed Whales	3	2	0	0	6	0
	Non-toothed Whales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Marine Mammals (unident.)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Whale Shark	Whale Shark	7	0	3	0	0	0
Birds	Birds	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Turtles	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Marine Mammals	4	3	0	0	6	0

Table 3b. Observed annual estimated catches of species of special interest (seabird, turtle and marine mammals) for the Marshall Islands-based longline vessels (China, FSM and RMI-flagged), in the WCPFC Convention Area, for 2008-2010 to the extent available (Note: Estimates carried over from 2009 as there was no observer coverage on longline vessels in 2010)

		Individuals encountered					
		2008		2009		2010	
Category	Species	No.	Dead	No.	Dead	No.	Dead
Marine Turtles	Green Turtle	1	1	0	0	0	0
	Loggerhead Turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Hawksbill turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Leatherback turtle	0	0	5	5	0	0
	Olive Ridley Turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Turtles (unidentifed)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marine Mammals	Dolphins and Porpoises	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Toothed Whales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-toothed Whales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Marine Mammals (unident.)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Whale Shark	Whale Shark	0	0	0	0	0	0
Birds	Birds	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Turtles	1	1	5	5	0	0
	Total Marine Mammals	0	0	0	0	0	0

Further, provisional estimated total catch of non-target species are provided in Table 4a and Table 4b for the different fleets. Rainbow runner is typically the main non-target species taken by the purse seine fleet, but the following species/species groups are also commonly caught – small baitfish, triggerfish, wahoo, blue and black marlin, and silky (and other) sharks. Since there was no observer coverage on longline vessels during 2010, non-target catches have been estimated based on 2009 data. Catches of non-target species in the longline fleet usually accounts for a much greater proportion of the catch compared to the purse seine fleet and this is an area that MIMRA intends to put more focus on with a view to ensuring improvements are achieved through closer consultations with the fleet operator. The data suggest that, for locally-based longline vessels the most predominant species in each category are still: Blue marlin (billfish), Blue shark (sharks and rays), wahoo ("other" finfish).

Table 4a. Annual estimated catches of non-target, associated and dependent species, including sharks, by Marshall Islands observers on purse seine vessels, in the WCPFC Convention Area, for 2008-2010 to the extent available.

		Catch estimates (MT)					
		2008		2009		2010	
Category	Species	MT	%	MT	%	MT	%
Billfish	Blue marlin	12.4	0.0381%	41.2	0.0937%	36.7	0.0637%
	Black marlin	3.4	0.0106%	8.8	0.0200%	20.5	0.0355%
	Other Billfish	2.5	0.0077%	30.0	0.0682%	3.2	0.0056%
Sharks and Rays	Blue shark	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Mako sharks	0.1	0.0002%	0.0	0.0000%	11.1	0.0192%
	Oceanic whitetip shark	0.8	0.0023%	9.9	0.0225%	0.1	0.0001%
	Silky shark	12.7	0.0389%	80.7	0.1835%	11.7	0.0202%
	Other sharks and rays	2.6	0.0079%	50.6	0.1151%	0.3	0.0005%
Other finfish	Bullet/Frigate tunas	124.2	0.3817%	7.6	0.0172%	0.0	0.0000%
	Kawakawa	0.0	0.0000%	0.3	0.0007%	1.0	0.0017%
	Rainbow Runner	79.2	0.2434%	176.6	0.4016%	361.5	0.6271%
	Wahoo	10.6	0.0327%	7.2	0.0164%	82.7	0.1435%
	Common dolphinfish	29.6	0.0910%	16.7	0.0380%	16.2	0.0281%
	Triggerfish	12.1	0.0373%	22.4	0.0509%	107.1	0.1858%
	Barracudas	0.4	0.0013%	3.4	0.0078%	0.0	0.0001%
	Escolars	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Lanctfishes	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Ocean sunfish	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Oilfish	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Opah	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Pomfrets	0.0	0.0001%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Small baitfish	17.7	0.0545%	21.6	0.0492%	153.0	0.2654%
	Other fish	2.8	0.0087%	34.9	0.0794%	2.8	0.0048%
	Total billfish	18	0.0564%	80	0.1818%	60	0.1049%
	Total sharks and rays	16	0.0493%	141	0.3211%	23	0.0401%
	Total finfish	277	0.8508%	291	0.6613%	724	1.2565%
	Total non-target	311	0.9564%	512	1.1643%	808	1.4014%

Table 4b. Annual estimated catches of non-target, associated and dependent species, including sharks, by the Marshall Islands-based longline vessels (China, FSM and RMI-flagged), in the WCPFC Convention Area, for 2008-2010 to the extent available.

		Catch estimates					
		2008		2009		2010	
Category	Species	MT	%	MT	%	MT	%
Billfish	Blue marlin	416.3	5.3738%	477.4	6.0863%	415.2	6.0863%
	Black marlin	29.6	0.3826%	213.2	2.7180%	185.4	2.7180%
	Striped marlin	122.4	1.5801%	292.1	3.7249%	254.1	3.7249%
	Swordfish	75.6	0.9760%	200.3	2.5532%	174.2	2.5532%
	Other Billfish	50.7	0.6539%	44.9	0.5724%	39.0	0.5724%
Sharks and Rays	Blue shark	621.2	8.0189%	433.5	5.5274%	377.1	5.5274%
	Mako sharks	91.3	1.1789%	150.2	1.9149%	130.6	1.9149%
	Oceanic whitetip shark	135.6	1.7500%	131.5	1.6767%	114.4	1.6767%
	Silky shark	558.2	7.2048%	191.8	2.4453%	166.8	2.4453%
	Other sharks and rays	723.2	9.3357%	530.8	6.7681%	461.7	6.7681%
Other finfish	Bullet/Frigate tunas	2.3	0.0294%	0.4	0.0045%	0.3	0.0045%
	Kawakawa	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Rainbow Runner	0.3	0.0036%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Wahoo	104.0	1.3426%	95.2	1.2137%	82.8	1.2137%
	Common dolphinfish	95.3	1.2296%	24.1	0.3072%	21.0	0.3072%
	Triggerfish	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Barracudas	7.6	0.0979%	5.3	0.0674%	4.6	0.0674%
	Escolars	21.8	0.2811%	8.3	0.1064%	7.3	0.1064%
	Lanctfishes	8.4	0.1085%	6.1	0.0779%	5.3	0.0779%
	Ocean sunfish	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Oilfish	3.7	0.0472%	6.1	0.0779%	5.3	0.0779%
	Opah	83.4	1.0765%	30.8	0.3926%	26.8	0.3926%
	Pomfrets	21.0	0.2714%	24.2	0.3087%	21.1	0.3087%
	Small baitfish	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%	0.0	0.0000%
	Other fish	102.2	1.3194%	61.0	0.7776%	53.1	0.7776%
	Total billfish	695	8.9664%	1,228	15.6548%	1,068	15.6548%
	Total sharks and rays	2,130	27.4883%	1,438	18.3323%	1,251	18.3323%
	Total finfish	450	5.8071%	261	3.3338%	227	3.3338%
	Total non-target	3,274	42.2618%	2,927	37.3209%	2,546	37.3209%

COASTAL STATE REPORTING

Tables 5-7 provide a description of foreign-flagged vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands waters over the past five years. Domestically-based foreign longline vessels operating under the Marshall Islands Fishing Venture fly foreign flags of registration and not necessarily the flag of the countries operating and managing these vessels, which is essentially the Marshall Islands.

Table 5. Number of foreign longline vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by year and flag.

	Longline						
	CHINA	FSM	JAPAN	KOREA	CH-TAIPEI	BELIZE	TOTAL
2006	40	9	34	1	6	0	90
2007	36	6	21	0	1	0	64
2008	39	6	6	0	2	0	53
2009	33	6	6	0	0	0	45
2010	22	11	14	0	2	0	49

Table 6. Number of foreign pole-and-line vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by year and flag.

	Pole-and-line
	JAPAN
2006	23
2007	22
2008	25
2009	12
2010	26

Table 7. Number of foreign purse seine vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by year and flag.

	YEAR				
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
CHINA	8	12	10	4	1
FSM	1	3	4	4	6
JAPAN	33	35	28	30	31
KIRIBATI	1	1	1	1	2
KOREA	20	20	27	26	0
NZ	3	0	1	1	0
PNG (HomeParty)	16	17	15	17	19
CH-TAIPEI	19	13	27	18	16
VANUATU	8	7	4	3	3
SOLOMON	0	0	0	0	1
USA	12	22	32	38	38
TOTAL	121	130	149	142	117

Available logsheet data indicate that total catch by purse seine fleets operating in the RMI EEZ increased from 13,945 mt in 2009 to 17,525 mt in 2010 (Table 8). Skipjack tuna continues to be the dominant catch, accounting for over 93% of the total catch in the last year. Most of the purse seine fishing in-zone is restricted to southern areas of the EEZ.

The domestically-based foreign longline fleet comprises of vessels from China and FSM which are managed and operated through a local joint-venture fishing company. Japanese longline vessels offload their catch in ports in Japan. Catch estimates for the domestically-based vessels have been raised using unloadings data. The overall catch estimates by foreign longline fleets in 2010 indicate a slight increase from the previous year (Table 9). Bigeye catch continues to account for the major part of the target catch composition. As with the purse seine fishery, most of the longline fishing effort occurs in the southern areas of the RMI EEZ however in the longline fishery, effort is more widely distributed throughout the zone.

In 2010, catches from the pole-and-line fleet experienced a resurgence in the catch compared to the previous year (Table 10). Skipjack is the main species making up the catch composition for this fleet and in fact almost 100% of the reported catch in 2010 was of this species. However, there remains no observer data to from this fleet for validation purposes. Again, in light of the 100% observer coverage required under PNA 3IA and CMM 2008-01, there is a clear need to improve in this area through strengthening of the observer program through constant recruitments and maintaining high retention rates.

Table 8. Annual catches by purse seine fleets in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by flag and species, 2006-2010 (**Source** : Unraised logsheet data collected by MIMRA)

	Catch (metric tonnes)				
Fleet	**Year**	**BET**	**SKJ**	**YFT**	**TOTAL**
CN	2006	3	334	111	448
	2007	0	0	0	0
	2008	0	0	0	0
	2009	0	203	0	203
	2010	3	335	7	345
FSMA	2006	118	6,419	639	7,176
	2007	184	4,189	384	4,756
	2008	236	7,177	1,824	9,237
	2009	308	7,121	211	7,639
	2010	48	3,687	311	4,046
JP	2006	0	3,221	177	3,398
	2007	0	0	0	0
	2008	0	675	283	958
	2009	6	690	41	737
	2010	0	0	0	0
KR	2006	25	1,242	255	1,523
	2007	7	170	109	286
	2008	18	304	150	472
	2009	2	683	6	691
	2010	0	0	0	0
TW	2006	9	1,676	224	1,908
	2007	29	1,669	341	2,039
	2008	139	3,587	1,606	5,331
	2009	7	1,477	45	1,530
	2010	25	1,574	289	1,888
US	2006	3	155	4	163
	2007	7	394	20	422
	2008	104	3,586	2,071	5,762
	2009	77	2,797	98	2,972
	2010	131	9,691	248	10,071
VU	2006	25	760	184	969
	2007	37	3,956	170	4,162
	2008	24	1,967	293	2,284
	2009	7	130	37	174
	2010	0	1,085	90	1,175
Total EEZ	2006	183	13,807	1,594	15,584
	2007	264	10,378	1,024	11,666
	2008	522	17,295	6,226	24,043
	2009	407	13,101	437	13,945
	2010	207	16,373	946	17,525

Tables 9. Annual catches by foreign longline fleets in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by flag and species, 2006-2010 (**Source** : catch estimates of locally-based fleet derived from best combination of logsheet and unloadings data, others are unraised logsheet data collected by MIMRA)

		Catch (metric tonnes)				
Flag	Year	ALB	BET	YFT	OTH	Total
China	2006	39	1,908	1,478	388	3,811
	2007	14	2,028	727	348	3,116
	2008	58	2,270	554	394	3,275
	2009	57	2,156	732	359	3,304
	2010	108	1,877	791	395	3,171
FSM	2006	4	417	235	76	732
	2007	3	359	133	66	561
	2008	9	434	112	76	631
	2009	23	711	227	98	1,059
	2010	34	709	281	175	1,199
Japan	2006	25	195	118	0	338
	2007	7	259	91	0	357
	2008	0	0	0	0	0
	2009	23	147	68	0	238
	2010	39	124	89	0	251
Ch-Taipei	2006	0	5	7	0	12
	2007	0	0	0	0	0
	2008	0	10	2	0	12
	2009	0	0	0	0	0
	2010	0	113	28	1	142
TOTAL EEZ	2006	68	2,525	1,838	463	4,894
	2007	23	2,646	951	415	4,034
	2008	67	2,714	668	470	3,918
	2009	103	3,014	1,027	457	4,601
	2010	181	2,823	1,189	571	4,763

Table 10. Annual catches by foreign pole-and-line fleets in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by flag and species, 2006-2010 (Source: Unraised logsheet data collected by MIMRA)

		Catch (metric tonnes)				
	YEAR	BET	SKJ	YFT	OTH	TOTAL
JAPAN	2006	0	978	8	1	987
	2007	0	4,988	1	0	4,988
	2008	9	2,451	6	1	2,467
	2009	0	475	0	1	476
	2010	0	3,120	1	0	3,121

DISPOSAL OF CATCH

The Marshall Islands Fishing Venture (MIFV) operates the Longline Fishbase with domestically-based foreign longline vessels as well as the national longline fleet. There was an increase in total unloadings in 2010 compared to the previous year and most of the unloaded catches were bound for export markets (Tables 11 & 12). The MIFV exports mainly fresh chilled tuna species to markets in the US, China and Canada. Frozen fish (rejects and bycatch), designated as OTHER, are shipped to China via transport containers and/or sold locally.

Table 11 . Total unloaded catch (mt) for domestically-based longline vessels, 2009

Species	EXP	OTH	TOTAL
ALBACORE	2	83	85
BIGEYE	2,989	142	3,131
BLUE MARLIN	51	424	475
MAHI MAHI / DOLPHINFISH	3	14	17
OPAH / MOONFISH	10	15	25
SAILFISH (INDO-PACIFIC)	0	2	2
SHARKS (UNIDENTIFIED)	0	70	70
SWORDFISH	15	34	49
WAHOO	9	48	56
YELLOWFIN	818	203	1,021
	3,895	1,035	4,931

Table 12 . Total unloaded catch (mt) for domestically-based longline vessels, 2010

Species	EXP	OTH	TOTAL
ALBACORE	0	162	162
BIGEYE	2,778	131	2,909
BLUE MARLIN	62	515	577
MAHI MAHI / DOLPHINFISH	13	35	48
OPAH / MOONFISH	5	0	5
SAILFISH (INDO-PACIFIC)	0	3	3
SHARKS (UNIDENTIFIED)	0	49	49
SWORDFISH	15	33	48
WAHOO	9	45	54
YELLOWFIN	944	235	1,179
	3,826	1,208	5,034

ONSHORE DEVELOPMENTS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

The Pan Pacific Foods (PPF) loining plant continues to operate with viable production outputs entailing ongoing hiring and recruitment of local Marshallese employees. Since acquiring their first purse seine fishing vessel in 2009, the operators have since acquired 2 additional vessels, namely, F/V LOMETO and F/V LOMALO.

The Joint Venture between MIMRA and Koo's Fishing Company, Ltd. (KFC), operating under the name Marshall Islands Fishing Company (MIFCO), which commenced in March 2006, is ongoing with the vessel, F/V Marshalls 201, operating under the FSM Arrangement for Regional Fisheries Access administered by the FFA. This venture continues to provide additional revenue stream and overall economic prospects for the small yet vibrant domestic fisheries sector in the RMI. The company also secured 2 additional fishing vessels in 2010, F/V Marshalls 202 and F/V Marshalls 203, which are currently fishing FSMA.

The KFC fleet continues to operate also under the FSMA as in years past. On-shore expansion entails by-catch processing and exports in the near future with the recent construction and eventual completion of a multi-purpose cold storage facility within the KFC Headquarters compound.

FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE FISHERY

Transshipment in Majuro port continues to pick up in recent years and remains an important catalyst for economic development in the RMI. It is envisaged that MIMRA and all concerned will continue and advocate for in-port transshipment noting the favorable economic spin-offs associated with this vital activity. Further clarity on this issue is evident in the recent adoption of the WCPFC transshipment measure on which the RMI was a strong advocate and was deeply involved in its initial formulation beginning in 2007.

In late 2009, the RMI, through MIMRA, formally wrote to the SPC-OFP to notify of its clear intention to attribute all longline catches in the RMI EEZ to the RMI. This is in line with the recent efforts by FFA Members to shift longline catch attribution from a flag-based to a zone-based arrangement. This is an area warranting immediate follow-up by and with all concerned.

The RMI remains keen to further develop its domestic fishery through innovative and sustainable means. All of these prospects are lined up bearing in mind all the while the ongoing crucial scientific advice and conservation concerns through practicable measures to safeguard the last remaining healthy tuna stocks in the world.

The renewed active stance of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), of which the RMI is a committed member, through adoption of the 3rd Implementing Arrangement (3IA) among other things, has garnered international attention and prompted for more effective conservation and management measures while also mindful of the commercial aspects of the fishery as it relates to Pacific Island Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The ongoing refinement of the purse seine Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) and subsequent development of the longline VDS are but some of the management tools being addressed by the PNA through the PNA Office (PNAO) in Majuro. The office was recently established in early 2010 and its momentous establishment was further boosted by the signing of the Host Country agreement between the RMI Government and the PNAO Director later in the year.

The RMI will continue and lobby for domestic fisheries development aspirations in the region. It is envisaged that sometime in the near future, a gradual shift in allocation of participatory rights from DWFNs to strictly domestic-based is what is needed to address the needs of all CCMs so as to ensure that no unnecessary burden is put on SIDS, as Coastal States and custodians of the stocks themselves.

DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

MIMRA continues to employ a dedicated port sampler covering almost 100% of longline unloadings however, the data for 2010 is still being processed. Collated data are also being sent to SPC-OFP on a monthly basis for analysis. Port sampling on purse seine vessels transshipping in Majuro has been sporadic as the port samplers have dual responsibilities as observers and spend most of their time at sea to meet coverage requirements.

The development of its data and statistical capability continues to be a vital tool for MIMRA. The SPC-OFP has been very instrumental in the Oceanic Division's data efforts, as evidenced by such activities as the successful integration and regular updates of the TUFMAN database at MIMRA.

The SPC-OFP is also currently assisting MIMRA to establish tuna data collection from the artisanal fisheries sector and it is envisaged that this will continue with refinements as time progresses into the near future.

MIMRA has attempted to carry observer trainings every year to meet the increasing demands placed on the Observer Program. In 2010, there were 35 active observers and a provisional total of 176 trips and 5,268 sea days, all completed on purse seine vessels only. As previously mentioned, the 100% purse seine observer coverage has left virtually no coverage on longline vessels but it is hoped that the observer training planned for late 2011 will improve the situation.