

**Ninth Meeting of the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish (SCTB 9)
22-23 July 1996,
South Pacific Commission, Noumea, New Caledonia.**

Country Report:

COOK ISLANDS

1. TOTAL CATCH FOR ALL SPECIES/ LONGLINE

The 1995 year saw a total catch of approximately 137 tonnes for all species, within the Cook Islands EEZ. This total was caught by longlining, and targeted the fresh chilled and sashimi markets overseas. The total catch was calculated from transshipment data, providing a more accurate figure than the catch sheet total.

2. FLEET STRUCTURE

During the 1995 year there were two locally based foreign fishing vessels operating within the Cook Islands EEZ. Both were longliners around 1-200 GRT, licensed for one year under a joint venture type arrangement. 71 trips were made during the year, and each trip averaged 5 days to coincide with the flight schedule. Approximately 5 sets were made per trip, with an average set of 1100 hooks. Catch per unit effort was approx. 1.23 fish per 100 hooks.

BOATS LICENSED DURING 1995:

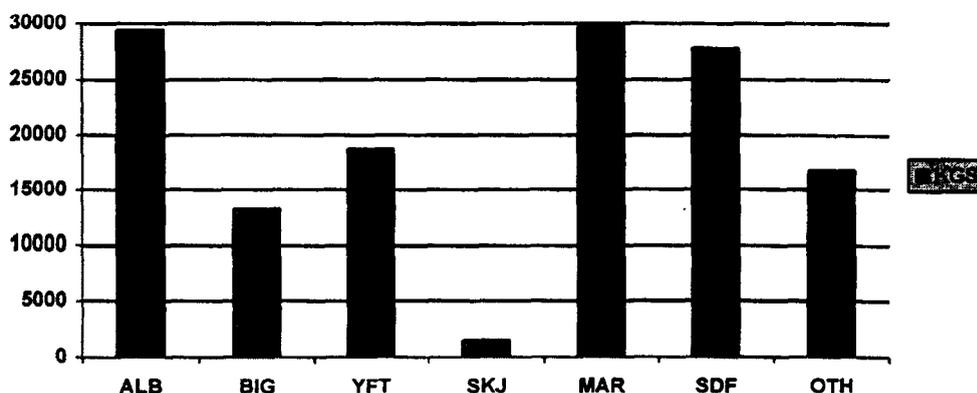
Name	Type	GRT
Southern Progress	Longliner	109
Kona Wind	Longliner	181

BOATS LICENSED DURING 1996:

Suzanne 'M'	Longliner	109
Far Quest	Longliner	30.3

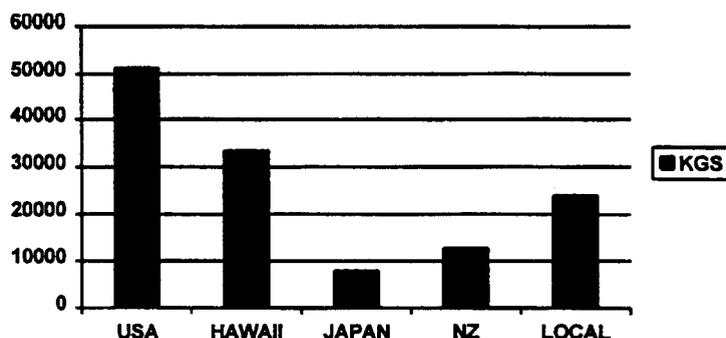
3. CATCH BY SPECIES / LONGLINE

The 1995 catch by species included (as transshipment): 29 metric tonnes of albacore, comprising 21 % of the total catch; 13 tonnes of bigeye (or 10%); 18 tonnes of yellowfin (14%); 29 tonnes of Marlin (22%); 27 tonnes of swordfish (20%); 8 tonnes of mahimahi (6%); 3 tonnes each for spearfish and wahoo, making up 3% of the total catch respectively.



4. FINAL MARKETS OF CATCHES

Final markets of the catch included the mainland USA, which received 40 % of the catch; Hawaii (26%), Japan (6%), New Zealand (10%) and the local market, with 18 %.



5. ONSHORE DEVELOPMENTS

Onshore developments saw the establishment two fish processing plants, as well some refridgeration and ice making facilities. An economic appraisal of the industry was conducted by FFA in early 1995, together with some recommendations for further development, and the factors restricting this development. Quotas for airfreight space were negotiated by the individual companies with the airline, and exports averaged 3 tonnes a week. The standardised logsheet form was put in place for the local based longlining industry, with a few alterations. In addition, the computerised database was improved (with technical assistance from SPC) allowing the user to plot sets, analyse and plot CPUE data, and review transshipment data for management purposes. A database has also been set up to collect tuna and billfish catch data from artisanal fisheries in the Cook Islands

6. FUTURE PROSPECTS

The 1996 year has seen further growth within the industry, with the first 100% locally owned longliner commencing operations in early March of this year. A further two longliners are expected to start fishing in one to two months. An industry committee is planned involving the various Government departments and private sector interests. This committee is planned to meet on a bimonthly basis to review current issues concerning the industry. The overall goal of this is to promote development within the industry, and specifically, overcoming the restrictions constraining this development. A resource profile of the Cook Islands EEZ is scheduled to be undertaken by the South Pacific Commission to assess the status of tuna and billfish stocks within the Cook Islands EEZ, with a view to future management concerns regarding the industry.

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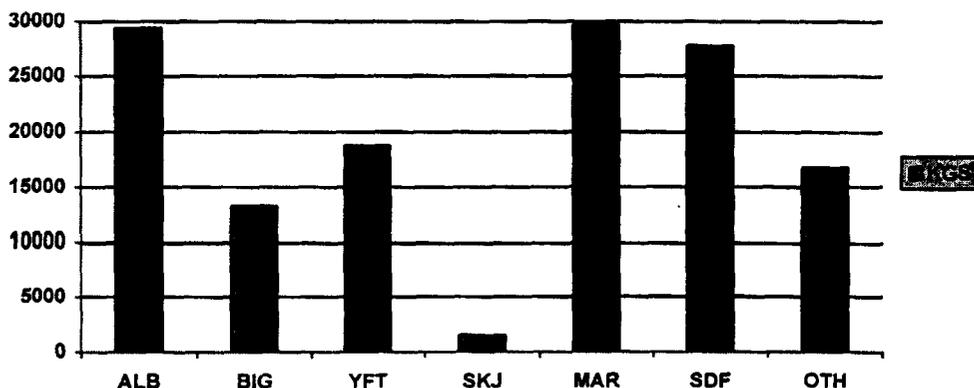
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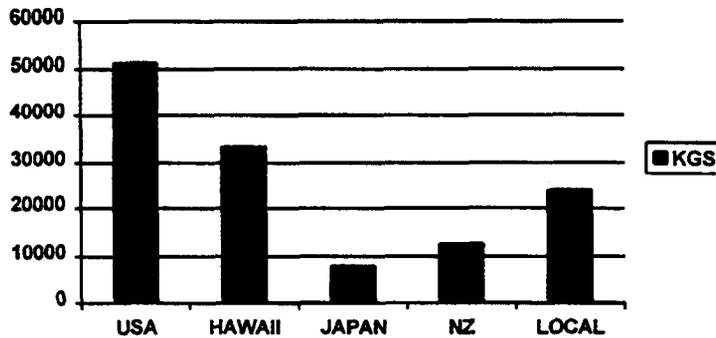
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