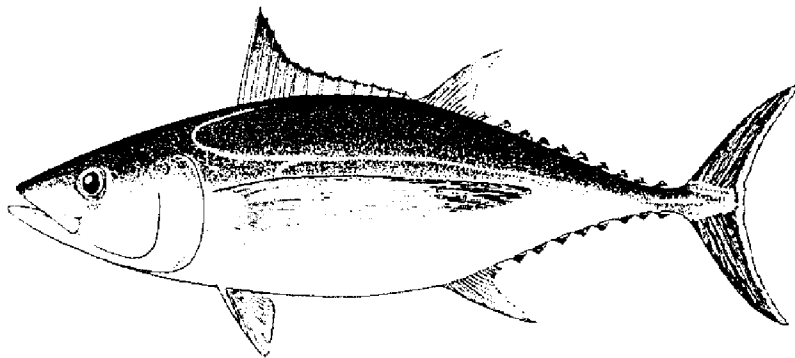


SCTB17 Working Paper

**NFR-30**

## **Vanuatu Tuna Fisheries Report**



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August 2004



**National Tuna Fishery Report for Vanuatu**  
**SCTB17**  
**9-18 August 2004**  
**Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands**

Introduction

The Vanuatu Tuna industry had its beginnings in the late 1950s with the development of transshipment base on Espiritu Santo. When it was operational an average 14,000 tons of tuna were being offloaded in Vanuatu. However since 1986 the base has closed down and to this day the tuna industry continues to be based offshore with fish being landed elsewhere. It is estimated that somewhere between 2,000 – 3,000 tons of tuna are being caught in Vanuatu waters annually. Apart from the longline fishery there exists also a very small domestic tuna industry involving the artisanal fleet and game-fishing/charter boats and catching somewhere between 50 – 60 tonnes of tuna per year. The target species are yellowfin, skipjack, marlin, mahi mahi, wahoo etc.

From the analysis of historical tuna catches in Vanuatu waters, it has been estimated that the main tuna species can be sustainably harvested if the total allowable catch per species are observed. It was estimated that the maximum sustainable yield for Albacore, Bigeye, and Yellowfin were 3,500 MT, 2,000 MT and 2,500 MT respectively. A total allowable effort of 100 tuna longline of vessels has been recommended.

Total catch of all species and gears combined for 2001 – 2003

As shown below in *table 1.*, during this period the total catch has increased a little with an average catch per unit of effort) cpue of 1.91 fish per 100 hooks. It is to be noted that this information only pertains to the tuna longline fishery. There was no reported catch by the US purse seine fleet in Vanuatu waters during this period.

Table 1. - Total Catch of all species & gears combined

Year	Total Catch	CPUE
2001	1,856	1.95
2002	2,996	2.06
2003	3,159	1.79

Longline Fleet Structure between 2001- 2003

30 Fiji domestic and joint ventures with Fiji,  
 29 TW DW fleet  
 11 Vanuatu flag fleet  
 29 Korean  
 42 Chinese  
 100 local skiffs  
 11 local charter/gamefishing boats

Most of the above longline fleets are Fiji-based. Eighty percent (80%) of the longliners fishing in Vanuatu waters are over the 100 gross registered tonnage

It is observed that during this period there has been a decrease in numbers of Taiwanese distant water fleet, a marked increase of the Chinese, Korean and Fiji fleets. The decrease in the number of Taiwanese fleet can be attributed to the more stringent compliance measures being imposed now on fishing vessels wishing to fish in Vanuatu.

Catch by species for gear types

During the period 2001 to 2003 it is observed that the even though the number of licensed vessels has been stable, the albacore catch has generally declined but bigeye and yellowfin tunas have generally increased (*table 2*). This is presumably because of increased targeting for the sashimi market by Fiji based vessels. The catch of other species has also increased. The cpue for albacore has declined generally while cpues for bigeye and yellow fin have increased slightly.

Table 2. Annual longline catch by all fleets in the Vanuatu EEZ, 1999-2003

Source of data: Unraised logsheet data held by SPC; Data covers fleets from Vanuatu, Fiji and distant-water Taiwanese  
 Legend: MT–Metric tonnes; CPUE–Number of fish per 100 hooks

Year	ALBACORE		BIGEYE		YELLOWFIN		OTHER	TOTAL	
	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	CPUE	MT	MT	CPUE
1999	858	3.14	18	0.04	26	0.06	51	953	3.35
2000	2,672	2.65	82	0.06	466	0.35	230	3,449	3.20



2001	1,445	1.62	57	0.04	252	0.17	102	1,856	1.95
2002	2,022	1.49	153	0.08	515	0.22	306	2,996	2.06
2003	1,810	1.11	211	0.09	791	0.32	346	3,159	1.79

The Vanuatu tuna long line fleet is based in Fiji and number about eleven (11) tuna longliners. Their catch and effort distribution in the region can be noted in *table 3* and *figure 1* respectively.

Table3. Annual Catch estimates for the Vanuatu longline fleet in the western and central Pacific Ocean (WCPO), 2002–2003  
Source of data: Logsheet and unloadings data held by SPC

YEAR	VESSELS ACTIVE	ALBACORE			BIGEYE			YELLOWFIN			OTHER	TOTAL	
		CATCH	CPUE	%	CATCH	CPUE	%	CATCH	CPUE	%	CATCH	CATCH	CPUE
1999	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
2000	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
2001	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
2002	13	513	1.64	66	31	0.09	4	137	0.40	17	102	783	2.76
2003	19	1,823	1.25	81	102	0.17	5	134	0.25	6	181	2,240	1.96

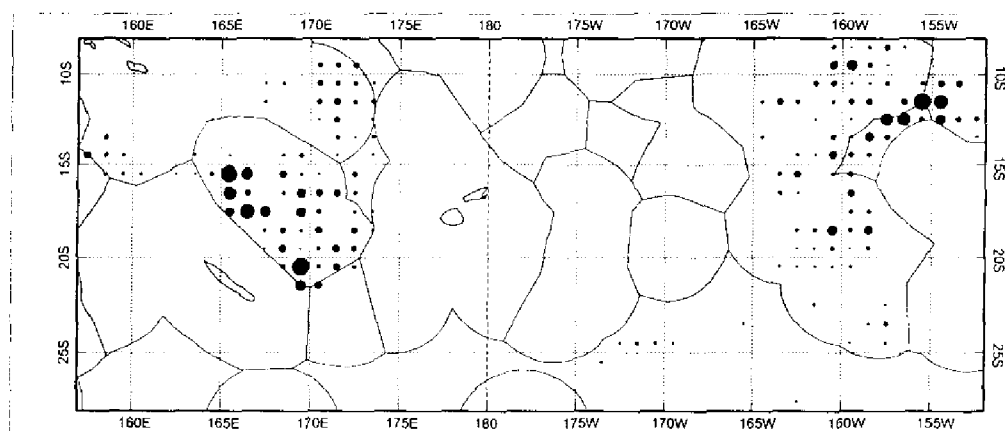


Figure 1. Distribution of effort within Vanuatu waters and by Vanuatu longline fleet during 2003.

#### Onshore development

In late 2003 a local was established company and chartered about 6 foreign fishing vessels to fish in the territorial seas of Vanuatu. Authorized species were tuna, tuna-like species and sharks. Since then the first transshipment took place in December 2003 involving 5 long liners and the second in May 2004 involving 6 longliners. The catch composition is given in *table 4*. Note that a lot of sharks were taken. From the reported shallow sets they were employing, the skipjack baits, and the coastal fishing activity, it appeared they could have really been targeting sharks.

Some port sampling was done during the transshipments using two experienced Vanuatu US treaty observers. The information will be compiled and sent to SPC for their deliberation.



Table 4. The total transshipped catch in Vanuatu during 2003-2004

Species	Weight (MT)		Total
	Dec 2003	May 2004	
Yellowfin	12.47	18.55	31.02
Marlin	16.88	22.70	39.58
Shark	198.30	125.20	323.5
Others	8.86	10.50	19.36
	236.51	176.95	413.46

#### Future prospects & Developments

It is hoped that there will be increased data coverage from charter boats in future as they will all now need to have a fishing license and be obliged to provide catch data. Before they used to operate a tourism charter license and the supply of catch data was voluntary. This is significant as they produce a substantial amount of pelagic fish annually relative to the skiffs.

Vanuatu doesn't have a national observer program still and is working closely with Fiji to have Fiji observers authorized as Vanuatu observers aboard Vanuatu flag vessels and Vanuatu licensed vessels based in Fiji. This will happen once an agreement is finalized within the next year.

Bilateral talks have also taken place between the Vanuatu and Fiji and including France for a joint monitoring control and surveillance program to deter any IUU activities in the Vanuatu waters and particularly along the respective EEZ boundaries.

Fully implement the Vanuatu Tuna Management Plan so that further resource can be allocated to enhance domestic development (more FAD deployments etc), fisheries research, and fisheries management activities of the tuna fishery.