



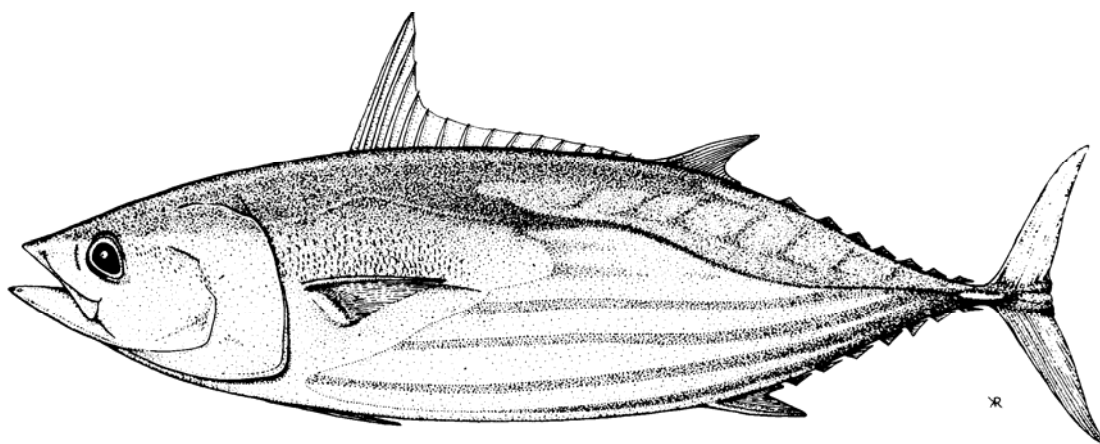
**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
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**NATIONAL TUNA FISHERY REPORT
REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

WCPFC-SC2-2006

Marshall Islands Tuna Fisheries



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) has an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of around 2,131,000 km². The tuna fishery is the most important fishery both in terms of scale and economics in the RMI, with a recorded high catch in 1999 at 80,000 tons of mixed tuna (~ US\$4 Million in national revenue).

The Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA) is charged with the responsibility and development of the tuna fishery in the RMI. The fishery comprises longline, purse seine, and pole-and-line vessels fishing under various access arrangements. The Marshall Islands is a party to a number of regional and international management arrangements such as Parties to Nauru Agreement (PNA) and Federated States of Micronesia Arrangement (FSMA). With the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) in place, Marshall Islands is obliged to comply with management measures of the Commission.

In 2005, the catch by RMI purse seine fleets increased by ~17% from 2004 catch throughout the WCPFC Convention Area. Within the RMI EEZ, catch by foreign purse seine and pole-and-line vessels decreased by ~4% and 60%, respectively, while there was a significant increase in the longline catch. Additionally, there was no fishing activity reported for the domestic longline fleet in 2005.

2. NATIONAL FLEET ACTIVITY IN THE WCPFC CONVENTION AREA

2.1 *Fleet structure*

Table 1 provides a list of Marshall Islands flagged vessels active in the WCPFC Convention Area over the past five years. There are a number of locally-based longline vessels managed by a joint venture Marshall Islands company which are not included in this list, but may be included in the future once the relationship with respect to nationality of catch is resolved. The national purse seine fleet is based out of Majuro and fishes throughout the region under the FSM Arrangement.

Table 1. Number of Marshall Islands longline and purse-seine vessels active in the WCPFC Convention Area, 2001-2005.

Year	RMI	
	Longline	Purse seine
2001	0	5
2002	0	5
2003	1	6
2004	1	6
2005	1	6

2.2 *Coverage of data for national fleets*

The categories for the coverage of fishery data collected for national fleets are described in Table 2, and a description of the coverage for the Marshall Islands fleets is contained in Table 3. Coverage of data collected from the Marshall Islands purse seine fleet satisfies the coverage levels recommended by the WCPFC. Coverage of logsheet data collected for the locally-based longline fleet is not yet at the recommended level, but is expected to improve in the coming year. The coverage of unloadings data from the locally-based longline fleet is close to 100%.

Table 2. Categories of coverage for catch, effort and size data.

Category	Catch/Effort data coverage	Size data coverage
HIGH	> 80%	> 15%
MEDIUM	50-80%	5-15%
LOW	0-50%	0-5%
-	No data	No data

LEGEND :

- ❑ “**Catch/Effort data coverage**” is determined by the comparing the annual catch from operational (logsheet) data to the **total** annual catch, as determined by unloadings or other types of data/information.
- ❑ “**Size data coverage**” is determined by comparing the number of trips covered by port sampling and observers (collecting size data) with the estimated number of **actual** trips undertaken by this fleet during that year.

Table 3. Estimated annual coverage of catch, effort and size data for Marshall Islands fishing fleets in the WCPFC Convention Area, 2003–2005.

Gear	Fleet	Year	Catch/Effort data	Size data
LONGLINE	MARSHALL ISLANDS	2003-2004	medium	high
		2005	medium	high
PURSE SEINE	MARSHALL ISLANDS	2003-2004	high	high
		2005	high	high

2.3 National purse seine fleet catch/effort

Table 4 shows the estimated target tuna catch and effort for the Marshall Islands purse seine fleet throughout the Convention Area, and Figure 1 shows the distribution of effort for this fleet over the past three years. Catches have consistently increased each year over the past five years with 2005 having the highest totals (56, 164 metric tonnes). Moreover, it is interesting to note that the increase in catch of 2005 is associated with lower effort, suggestive of high catch rates (good fishing) during the year. The fleet almost exclusively fishes on associated schools (drifting FADs, etc.) and the effort is usually concentrated in Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, and adjacent high seas areas. This is understandable as Majuro is the preferred port of unloading.

Tables 4. Annual catch and effort estimates for the Marshall Islands purse-seine fleet, by species in the WCPFC Convention Area, 2001-2005. (Source : Raised logsheet data; Data for 2005 are unraised and provisional, but coverage is “HIGH”; Bigeye catches have been estimated based on the expected proportion of bigeye in the logsheet-reported catch of yellowfin+bigeye by set type)

Year	Effort			Catch (metric tonnes)				
	Days Fishing & Searching	UnAss. Sets	Assoc. sets	SKJ	YFT	BET	OTH	TOTAL
2001	1,202	341	650	32,583	3,141	50	0	35,774
2002	1,272	255	1,007	37,732	1,092	128	0	38,952
2003	1,525	109	1,405	35,272	2,603	0	0	37,875
2004	1,474	64	1,405	42,078	2,102	2,492	0	46,672
2005	1,290	68	1,219	47,565	5,935	2,664	0	56,164

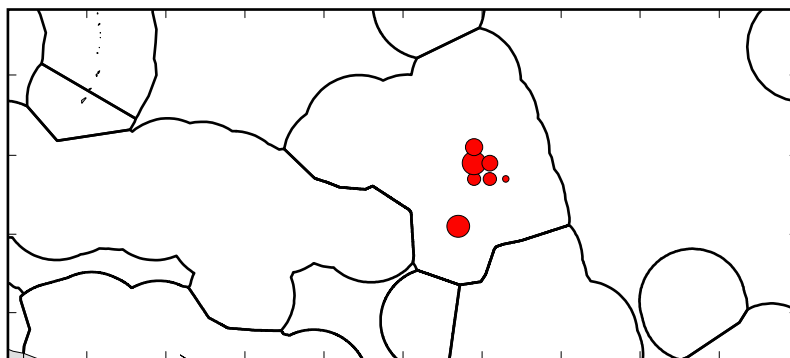


Figure 2. Annual distribution of effort (100s of hooks) for the Marshall Islands longline fleet throughout the WCPFC Convention Area for 2004

Table 6 (and Figure 3) shows the estimated total catch of non-target species (and species groups) by Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, according to observer data collection. Rainbow runner is typically the main non-target species taken by this fleet, but the following species/species groups are also commonly taken – small baitfish, silky (and other) sharks, blue and black marlin, triggerfish and mahi mahi.

Table 7 (and Figure 4) shows the estimated total catch of non-target species (and species groups) by Marshall Islands-based longline vessels, according to observer data collection. As in the purse seine fishery, the target tuna species comprise most of the catch, but the proportion of non-target species catch is higher in the longline fishery. During 2004 and 2005, billfish catch comprised ~17% and 13%, respectively, shark ~ 27% and 13%, respectively and other finfish 6% and 5%, respectively. Observer data suggest that, for locally-based longline vessels the most predominant species in each category are: Blue marlin (billfish), Blue shark (sharks and rays), wahoo (“other” finfish).

Table 6. Estimated annual total catches of non-target species and species groups, by Marshall Islands purse seine fleets, 2003-2005. (Source of data : Data collected under the FSM Arrangement Observer Programme, managed by FFA; Coverage of observer data : 2003– 12.3%; 2004–19.8%; 2005–30.2%; Coverage has been estimated by comparing observer-recorded target species catch to annual catch estimates for this fleet; ‘%’ represents percentage of total catch which includes target tuna species catch)

Species	Catch Estimates					
	2003		2004		2005	
	MT	%	MT	%	MT	%
Skipjack	35,272	93.13%	42,078	90.16%	47,565	84.69%
Yellowfin	2,249	5.94%	3,504	7.51%	6,132	10.92%
Bigeye	354	0.93%	1,090	2.34%	2,467	4.39%
Blue marlin	17	0.05%	1	0.00%	6	0.01%
Black marlin	6	0.02%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%
Billfish	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	16	0.03%
Total Billfish	24	0.06%	3	0.01%	22	0.04%
Blue shark	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Mako sharks	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Oceanic whitetip shark	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Silky shark	45	0.12%	5	0.01%	9	0.02%
Other sharks and rays	15	0.04%	3	0.01%	12	0.02%
Total Sharks and Rays	61	0.16%	8	0.02%	21	0.04%
Bullet/Frigate tunas	0	0.00%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%
Kawakawa	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Rainbow Runner	629	1.66%	34	0.07%	65	0.12%
Wahoo	2	0.00%	2	0.00%	0	0.00%
Common dolphinfish	6	0.02%	1	0.00%	5	0.01%
Triggerfish	44	0.12%	11	0.02%	9	0.02%
Barracudas	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Escolars	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Lancetfishes	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Ocean sunfish	2	0.01%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%
Oilfish	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Opah	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Pomfrets	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Small baitfish	220	0.58%	5	0.01%	9	0.02%
Other fish	355	0.94%	6	0.01%	60	0.11%
Total Other finfish	1,259	3.32%	60	0.13%	150	0.27%
Total non-target species	1,345	3.55%	72	0.15%	193	0.34%

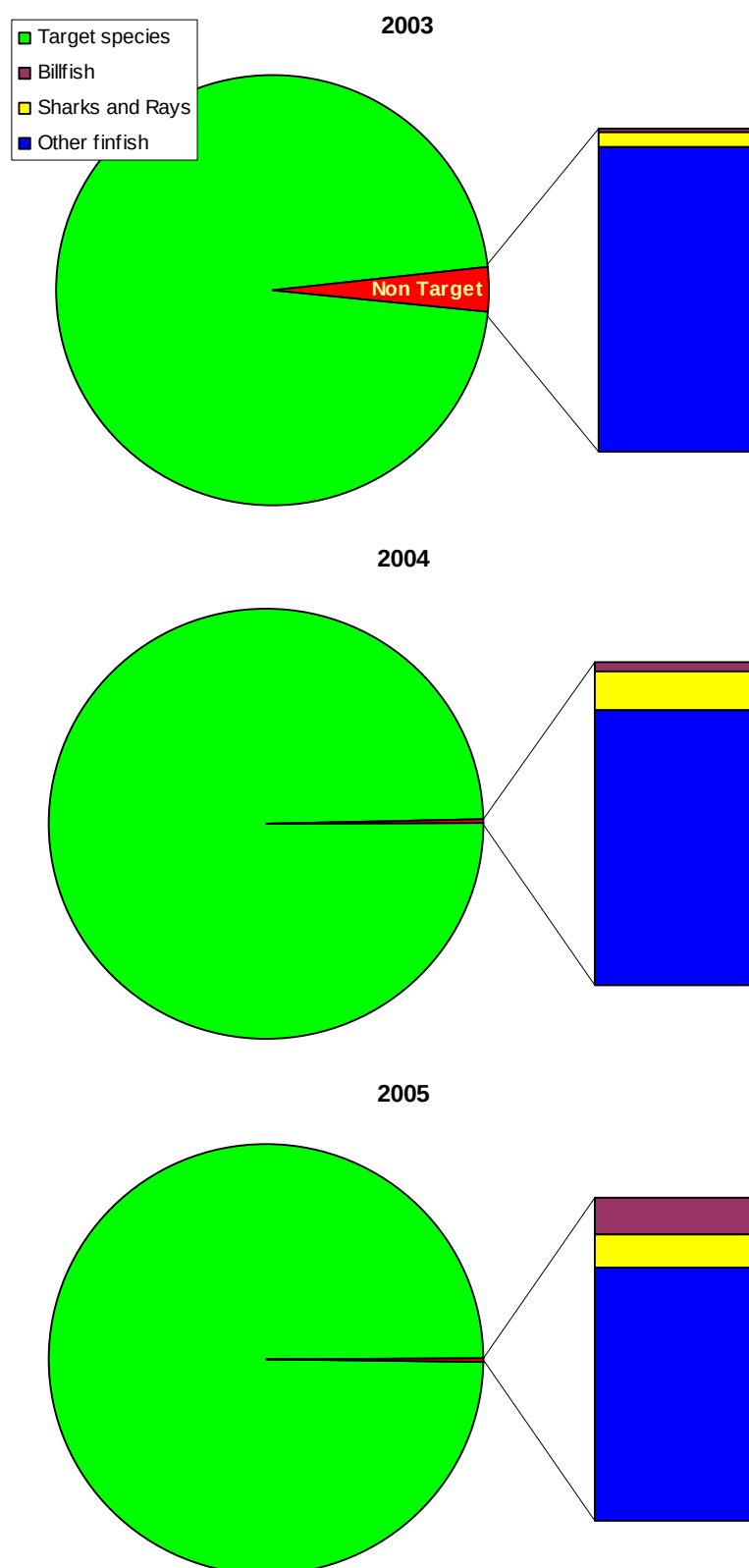


Figure 3. Proportion of non-target species groups in the catch of Marshall Islands purse seine vessels, by year, 2003–2005. (Source of data : Data collected under the FSM Arrangement Observer Programme, managed by FFA)

Table 7. Estimated annual total catches of non-target species and species groups, by Marshall Islands-based longline fleets, 2004-2005. (Source of data : Data collected under the Marshall Islands Observer Programme, managed by MIMRA; Coverage of observer data : 2004–3.1%; 2005–6.1%; Coverage has been estimated by comparing observer-recorded target species catch to annual catch estimates for the locally-based fleets; ‘%’ represents percentage of total catch which includes target tuna species catch)

Species	Catch Estimates			
	2004		2005	
	MT	%	MT	%
Albacore	0	0.00%	13	0.34%
Yellowfin	451	12.28%	913	24.22%
Bigeye	1,385	37.72%	1,632	43.32%
Blue marlin	307	8.36%	333	8.83%
Black marlin	86	2.33%	12	0.32%
Striped Marlin	70	1.92%	95	2.51%
Swordfish	116	3.17%	60	1.59%
Billfish	22	0.60%	18	0.49%
Total Billfish	602	16.39%	518	13.75%
Blue shark	471	12.83%	239	6.35%
Mako sharks	31	0.85%	18	0.48%
Oceanic whitetip shark	138	3.75%	47	1.25%
Silky shark	234	6.38%	117	3.10%
Other sharks and rays	134	3.65%	83	2.20%
Total Sharks and Rays	1,008	27.46%	504	13.38%
Bullet/Frigate tunas	0	0.00%	1	0.02%
Kawakawa	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Rainbow Runner	1	0.02%	1	0.02%
Wahoo	88	2.39%	66	1.75%
Common dolphinfish	12	0.34%	24	0.64%
Triggerfish	0	0.00%	0	0.01%
Barracudas	5	0.15%	4	0.12%
Escolars	22	0.59%	5	0.13%
Lancetfishes	6	0.16%	8	0.21%
Ocean sunfish	27	0.73%	3	0.07%
Oilfish	18	0.49%	6	0.17%
Opah	4	0.11%	8	0.22%
Pomfrets	1	0.02%	3	0.07%
Small baitfish	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Other fish	43	1.16%	59	1.56%
Total Other finfish	226	6.15%	188	5.00%
Total non-target species	1,835	49.99%	1,211	32.13%

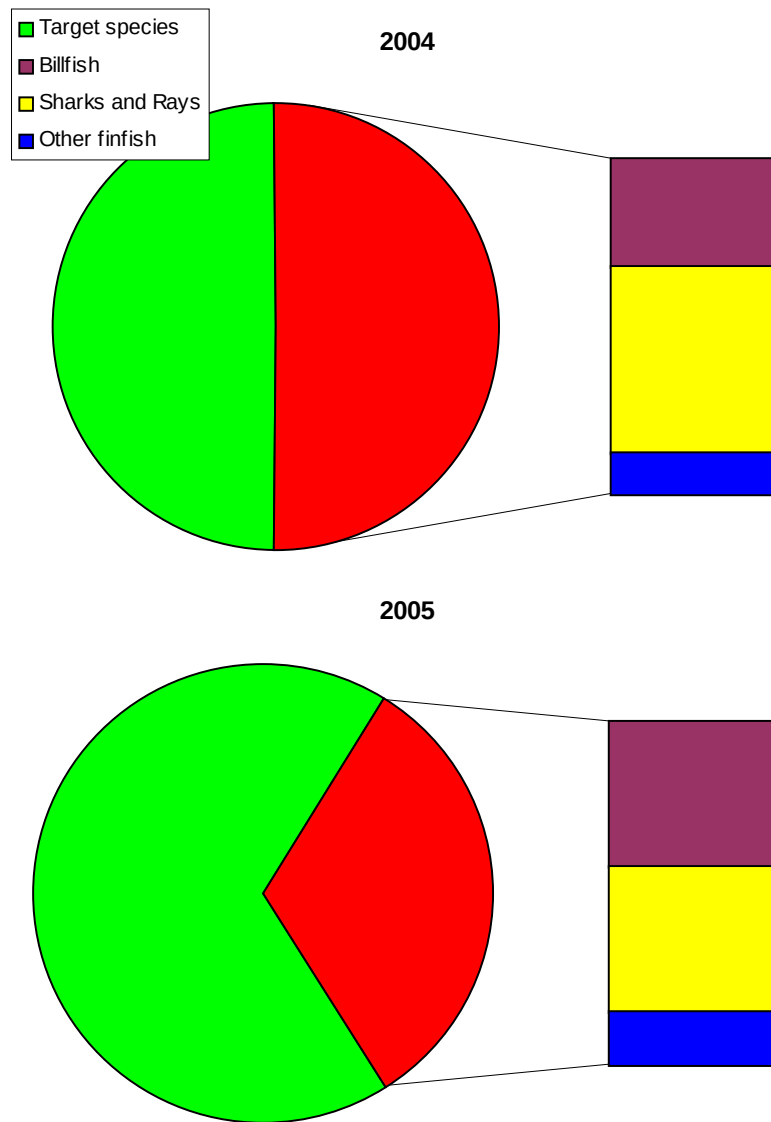


Figure 4. Proportion of non-target species groups in the catch of Marshall Islands-based longline vessels, by year, 2004–2005. (Source of data : Data collected under the Marshall Islands Observer Programme, managed by MIMRA)

3. FOREIGN FLEETS FISHING IN MARSHALL ISLANDS WATERS

3.1 Structure of foreign fleets fishing in Marshall Islands waters

Tables 7–9 provide a description of foreign-flagged fleets licensed to fish in Marshall Islands waters over the past five years. The 2005 period experienced an increase in numbers of both longline and pole-and-line vessels, whereas purse seine numbers showed a slight decrease. Longline fleets 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 Marshall Islands.

In 2006, the RMI began implementing measures adopted through the WCPFC, and have subsequently revoked licenses issued to vessels that are neither a member nor a cooperating non-member of the Commission.

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

Year	Longline						TOTAL
	CHINA	FSM	JAPAN	KOREA	CH-TAIPEI	OTHERS	
2001	7	0	38	0	11	1	57
2002	29	2	30	1	10	1	73
2003	32	4	24	1	10	2	73
2004	39	4	17	1	3	8	72
2005	44	6	25	2	5	10	92

Table 8. Number of foreign pole-and-line vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by year and flag

Pole-and-line	
Year	JAPAN
2001	46
2002	42
2003	23
2004	23
2005	43

Table 9. Number of foreign purse seine vessels licensed to fish in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by year and flag

	YEAR				
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
CHINA	6	5	5	4	4
FSM	3	7	8	6	6
JAPAN	36	34	35	34	34
KIRIBATI	1	1	1	1	1
KOREA	27	27	27	29	27
NZ	0	0	4	4	3
PNG	5	9	16	17	17
CH-TAIPEI	39	39	38	34	35
VANUATU	1	2	2	7	8
SOLOMON	1	2	0	0	3
USA	31	29	25	21	15
	150	155	161	157	153

3.2 Coverage of data for foreign fleets

A description of the coverage of data collected from foreign fleets licensed to fish in Marshall Islands waters is contained in Table 10. Coverage of catch/effort data collected from the purse seine fleets licensed to fish in Marshall Islands waters generally satisfies the coverage levels recommended by the WCPFC. Coverage of logsheet data collected for the locally-based longline fleet is not yet at the recommended level, but is expected to improve in the coming year. The coverage of unloadings data from the locally-based longline fleet is close to 100%. Size data collected from the locally-based longline fleets is at the level recommended by the WCPFC.

Table 10. Estimated coverage of catch, effort and size data for bilateral-arrangement, foreign fleets fishing in Marshall Islands's EEZ

Gear	Fleet	Year	Catch/Effort data	Size data
LONGLINE	JAPAN	2003-2004	high	-
		2005	high?	-
	CHINA	2003-2004	medium	high
		2005	medium	high
	Chinese Taipei	2003-2004	medium	high
		2005	medium	high
POLE-AND-LINE	JAPAN	2003-2004	high	-
		2005	high	-
PURSE SEINE	CHINA	2003-2004	high	med-high
		2005	high	med-high
	JAPAN	2003-2004	high	-
		2005	high	-
	KOREA	2003-2004	high	med-high
		2005	high	med-high
	Chinese Taipei	2003-2004	high	med-high
		2005	high	med-high
	VANUATU	2003-2004	high	med-high
		2005	high	med-high

3.3 Foreign purse seine fleet catch/effort

Catch and effort by foreign fleets show a decrease in 2005 catch compared to 2004 (Table 11). Purse seine catch dropped from 14,499 t to 13,979 t. Skipjack continues to be the dominant catch accounting for ~90% of the total catch.

Thus far, catch rates in 2001 remain the highest over the five past years with Asian fleets accounting for most of the catch.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of effort for the main purse seine fleets. Effort is generally restricted to the southern areas of the EEZ. Figures 5 and 6 show the skipjack and yellowfin catch rates (respectively) for the main purse seine fleets operating in the Marshall Islands EEZ. Skipjack catch rates in 2005 were generally higher than average.

Table 11. Annual catches by purse seine fleets in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by flag and species, 2001-2005 (Source : Unraised logsheet data collected by MIMRA)

FLEET	YEAR	Catch (metric tonnes)				TOTAL
		SKJ	YFT	BET	OTH	
China	2001	0	0	0	0	0
	2002	15	0	0	0	15
	2003	0	0	0	0	0
	2004	345	0	0	0	345
	2005	0	0	0	0	0
FSM	2001	868	136	0	0	1,004
	2002	246	73	0	0	319
	2003	0	0	0	0	0
	2004	0	0	0	0	0
	2005	699	101	0	0	800
Japan	2001	5,598	847	1	351	6,797
	2002	8,010	825	5	238	9,078
	2003	458	71	0	21	550
	2004	2,416	263	6	38	2,723
	2005	1,255	136	22	77	1,490
Korea	2001	12,803	605	0	0	13,408
	2002	8,790	275	5	0	9,070
	2003	50	75	0	0	125
	2004	1,205	100	0	0	1,305
	2005	1,725	15	0	0	1,740
RMI	2001	3,413	295	0	0	3,708
	2002	2,620	35	35	0	2,690
	2003	1,095	245	0	0	1,340
	2004	4,772	235	265	0	5,272
	2005	2,350	305	140	0	2,795
New Zealand	2001	0	0	0	0	0
	2002	0	0	0	0	0
	2003	3	35	0	0	38
	2004	0	0	0	0	0
	2005	254	36	0	0	290
PNG	2001	1,375	80	0	0	1,455
	2002	1,710	225	0	0	1,935
	2003	45	0	0	0	45
	2004	1,886	79	5	1	1,971
	2005	2,475	165	0	0	2,640
Solomon	2001	0	0	0	0	0
	2002	49	1	0	0	50
	2003	0	0	0	0	0
	2004	0	0	0	0	0
	2005	0	0	0	0	0
Chinese Taipei	2001	6,445	1,629	20	0	8,094
	2002	5,331	300	21	0	5,652
	2003	782	50	11	1	844
	2004	1,335	20	0	1	1,356
	2005	1,434	13	3	1	1,451
USA	2001	1,315	60	3	0	1,378
	2002	27	5	0	0	32
	2003	366	22	21	0	408
	2004	133	13	0	0	146
	2005	2,758	406	98	0	3,262
Vanuatu	2001	140	20	0	0	160
	2002	45	30	0	0	75
	2003	30	0	0	0	30
	2004	1,382	0	0	0	1,382
	2005	2,065	86	0	1	2,152
TOTAL EEZ	2001	31,957	3,672	24	351	36,003
	2002	26,843	1,768	66	238	28,915
	2003	2,829	498	32	22	3,381
	2004	13,474	710	276	39	14,499
	2005	12,539	1,099	263	79	13,979

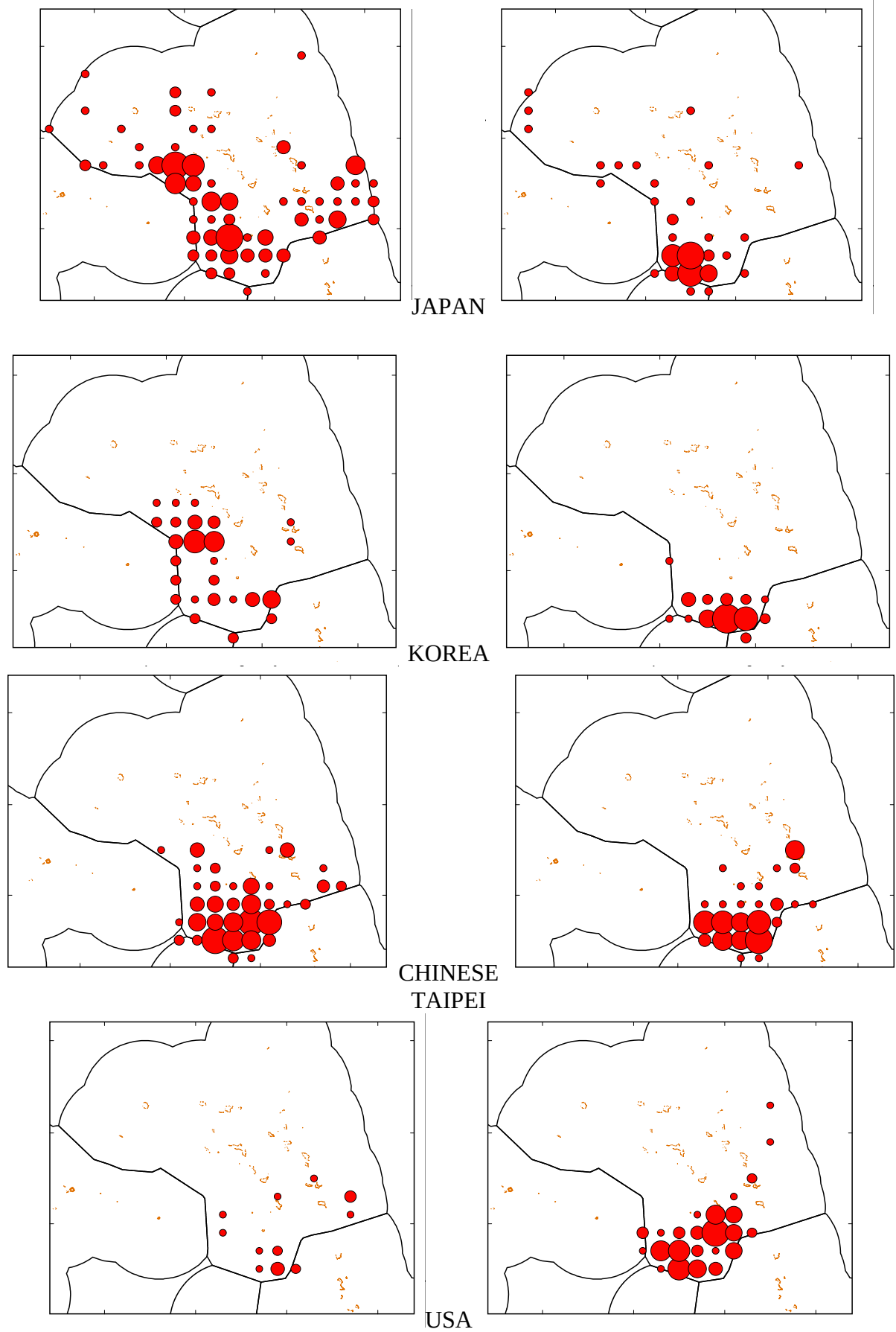


Figure 4. Annual distribution of effort (days fishing and searching) by the main foreign purse seine fleets active in the Marshall Islands EEZ for 2004 (left) and 2005 (right)

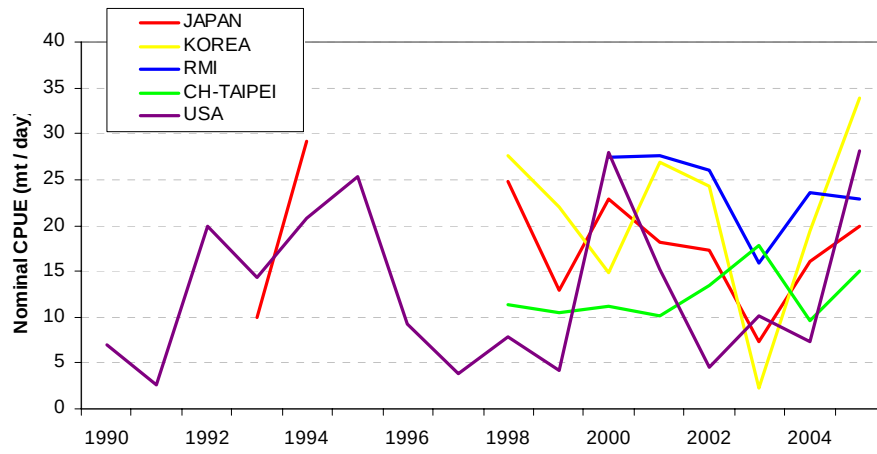


Figure 5. Trends in nominal catch rates of SKIPJACK TUNA taken by purse-seine fleets operating in the Marshall Islands EEZ, 1990-2005

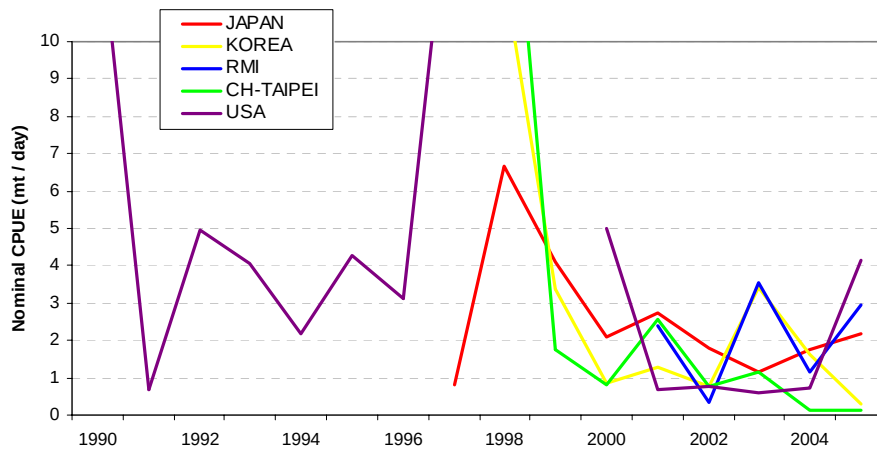


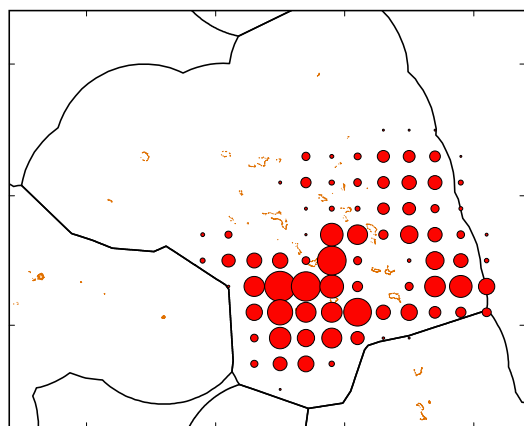
Figure 6. Trends in nominal catch rates of YELLOWFIN TUNA taken by purse-seine fleets operating in the Marshall Islands EEZ, 1990-2005

3.4 Foreign longline fleet catch/effort

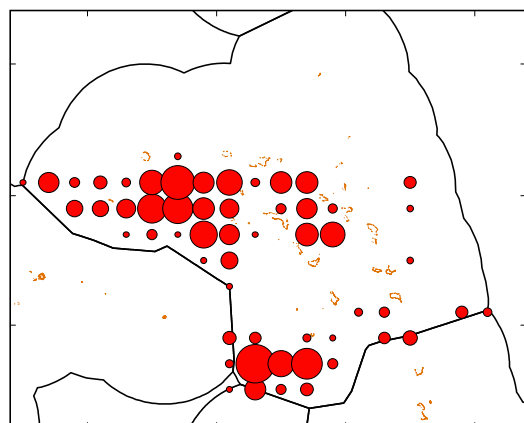
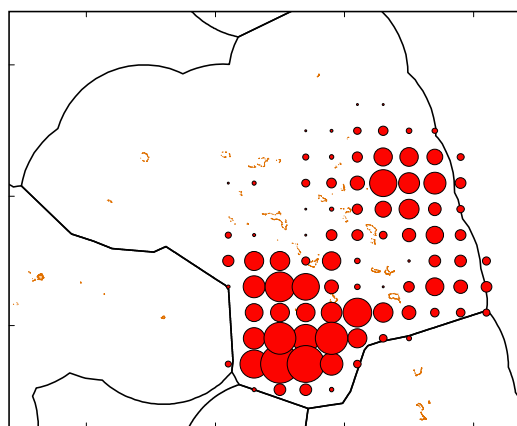
The domestically-based longline fleets comprise of vessels from China, FSM and Chinese Taipei, the former two categories managed and operated through a local joint-venture fishing company. Japanese longline vessels offload their catch in ports in Japan. The actual 2005 catch by foreign longline fleets is higher than shown in Table 12 (which represent unraised catches) since logsheet coverage is not complete (Table 10) – the 2005 catch for domestically-based fleets, according to unloadings data, was around 4,370 t for all species, including 2,161 t.–bigeye and 1,283 t.–yellowfin. Bigeye catch usually forms the major part of the target catch composition (~62% in 2005).

Tables 12. Annual catches by foreign longline fleets in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by flag and species, 2001-2005 (Source : Unraised logsheet data collected by MIMRA)

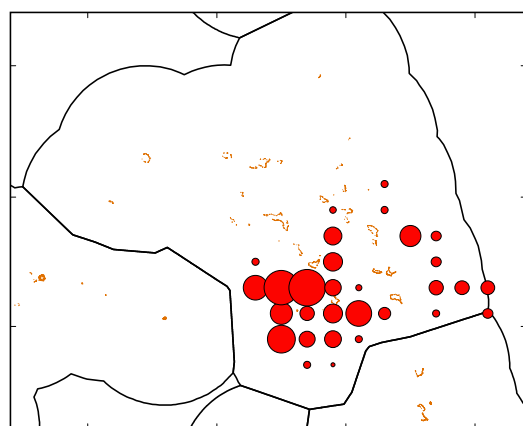
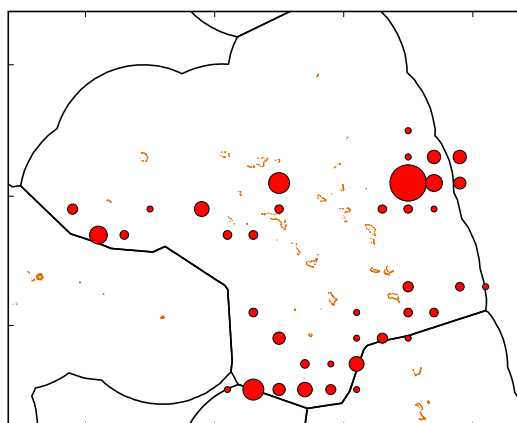
Fleet	YEAR	Catch (metric tonnes)			
		BET	YFT	OTH	TOTAL
China	2001	0	0	0	0
	2002	390	89	2	481
	2003	707	298	3	1,008
	2004	911	316	1	1,228
	2005	1,012	590	2	1,604
FSM	2001	0	0	0	0
	2002	103	21	0	124
	2003	135	51	0	186
	2004	218	74	0	292
	2005	133	71	1	206
Japan	2001	2,722	1,264	2	3,988
	2002	1,148	321	0	1,470
	2003	1,351	544	5	1,900
	2004	491	96	7	593
	2005	96	35	0	131
Chinese Taipei	2001	0	0	0	1
	2002	12	3	0	15
	2003	4	1	0	5
	2004	37	16	0	53
	2005	35	21	0	56
TOTAL EEZ	2001	2,723	1,264	2	3,989
	2002	1,653	435	3	2,090
	2003	2,197	894	8	3,100
	2004	1,656	502	8	2,166
	2005	1,276	717	3	1,996



CHINA



JAPAN



CHINESE
TAIPEI

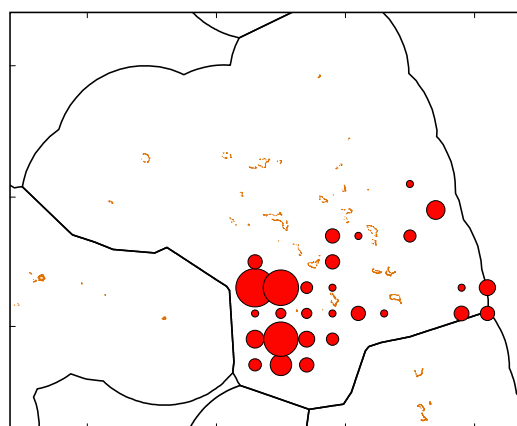


Figure 7. Annual distribution of effort (100s of hooks) by the main foreign longline fleets active in the Marshall Islands EEZ for 2004 (left) and 2005 (right)

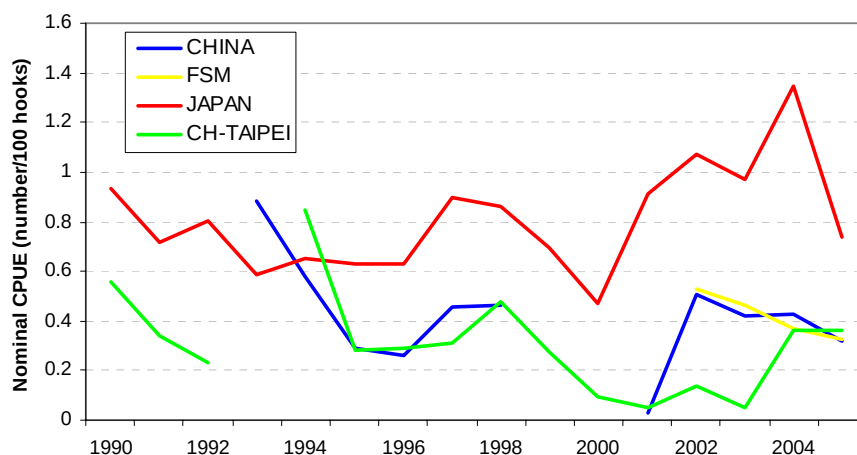


Figure 8. Trends in nominal catch rates of BIGEYE TUNA taken by longline fleets operating in the Marshall Islands EEZ, 1990-2005

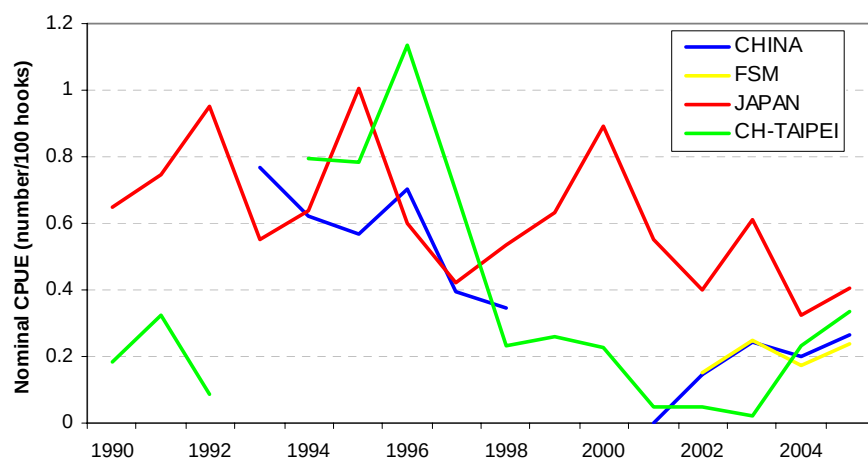


Figure 9. Trends in nominal catch rates of YELLOWFIN TUNA taken by longline fleets operating in the Marshall Islands EEZ, 1990-2005

3.5 Foreign pole-and-line fleet catch/effort

Catch by pole-and-line fleets decreased from 1,171 t in 2004 to 466 t in 2005 (Table 13). Skipjack is the main species making up the catch composition for this fleet.

Tables 13. Annual catches by foreign pole-and-line fleets in the Marshall Islands EEZ, by flag and species, 2001-2005 (Source : Unraised logsheet data collected by MIMRA)

Fleet	YEAR	Catch (metric tonnes)			
		SKJ	YFT	OTH	TOTAL
Japan	2001	16,207	29	7	16,243
	2002	7,312	4	0	7,316
	2003	92	2	0	94
	2004	1,152	9	11	1,171
	2005	466	0	0	466

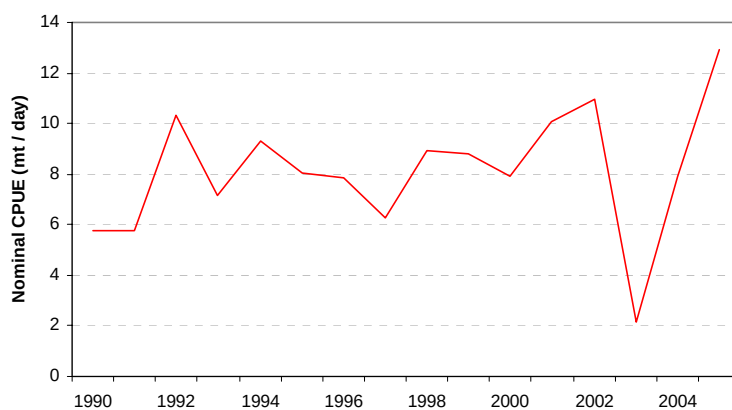


Figure 9. Trends in nominal catch rates of SKIPJACK TUNA taken by Japanese pole-and-line fleets operating in the Marshall Islands EEZ, 1990-2005

4. FINAL MARKET DESTINATIONS OF CATCHES

The Marshall Islands Fishing Venture (MIFV) operates the Longline Fishbase with locally-based foreign longline vessels. Compared with 2004 records, 2005 records revealed an increase of ~30% and 50% for export and local markets, respectively (Figures 14-15). The MIFV exports mainly fresh chilled tuna species to markets in Japan, the US, and Canada. Frozen fish (rejects and bycatches) are shipped to Taiwan by carriers and sold locally.

Tables 14. Total unloadings for domestically-based longline vessels, 2004

SPECIES	EXPORT	LOCAL	TOTAL
	(metric tonnes)		
Bigeye	1,247	137	1,384
Black marlin	35	57	92
Blue marlin	0	131	131
Swordfish	9	15	24
Wahoo	0	0	0
Yellowfin	337	113	450
Other	0	2	2
	1,628	455	2,083

Tables 15. Total unloadings for domestically-based longline vessels, 2005

Species	Unloaded Catch (metric tons)		
	EXPORT	LOCAL	TOTAL
Albacore	0	16	16
Bigeye	2,015	146	2,161
Black Marlin	95	397	492
Blue Marlin	0	98	98
Mahi Mahi	15	8	23
Sailfish	0	17	17
Shark	0	124	124
Short-billed spearfish	0	0	0
Swordfish	14	34	48
Wahoo	64	44	108
Yellowfin	906	377	1,283
	3,109	1,261	4,370

5. ONSHORE DEVELOPMENTS

The Joint Venture between MIMRA and Koo's Fishing Company, Ltd. (KFC) is now fully operational with the vessel, *Marshalls 201*, newly-registered and fishing under the FSM Arrangement.

Another recent and noteworthy domestic development issue is that of the RMI's effort to revitalize the former PMOP loining plant, which at one time had provided much-needed employment opportunities and contributed around \$5-6 million annually to the RMI GDP. It is part of the RMI's national aspirations to further ensure economic development by once again creating job opportunities.

The RMI recently signed a sub-lease agreement with Shanghai Deep Sea Fisheries Company, Ltd. to rehabilitate the loining plant. While it is only in its initial phase, future plans include the securing of raw materials for processing and this will entail the development of a locally-based fleet.

6. TUNA RESEARCH AND STATISTICS

6.1 Port Sampling Programme

Due to the limited number of active observers, sampling activities declined in 2005 compared to 2004 (Figures 16-17). However, MIMRA has increased focus on these activities with the assignment of two observers who have assumed port sampling duties at the MIFV fish base, covering almost all vessels that are unloading. Collated data are sent directly to SPC on a bi-weekly basis for analysis.

Tables 16. Port sampling 2004

MONTH	PORT	ALB	BET	YFT	OTH	TOTAL
January	Majuro	0	513	465	2	980
February	Majuro	0	172	63	0	235
March	Majuro	0	86	51	0	137
April	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
May	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
June	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
July	Majuro	0	2,199	631	620	3,450
August	Majuro	3	2,051	828	324	3,206
September	Majuro	0	1,331	396	37	1,764
October	Majuro	0	1,457	367	32	1,856
November	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
December	Majuro	1	350	402	13	766
		4	8,159	3,203	1,028	12,394

Tables 17. Port sampling 2005

MONTH	PORT	ALB	BET	YFT	OTH	TOTAL
January	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
February	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
March	Majuro	0	102	76	10	188
April	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
May	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
June	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
July	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
August	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
September	Majuro	6	1,069	645	0	1,720
October	Majuro	0	1,431	663	0	2,094
November	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
December	Majuro	ND	ND	ND	ND	0
		6	2,602	1,384	10	4,002

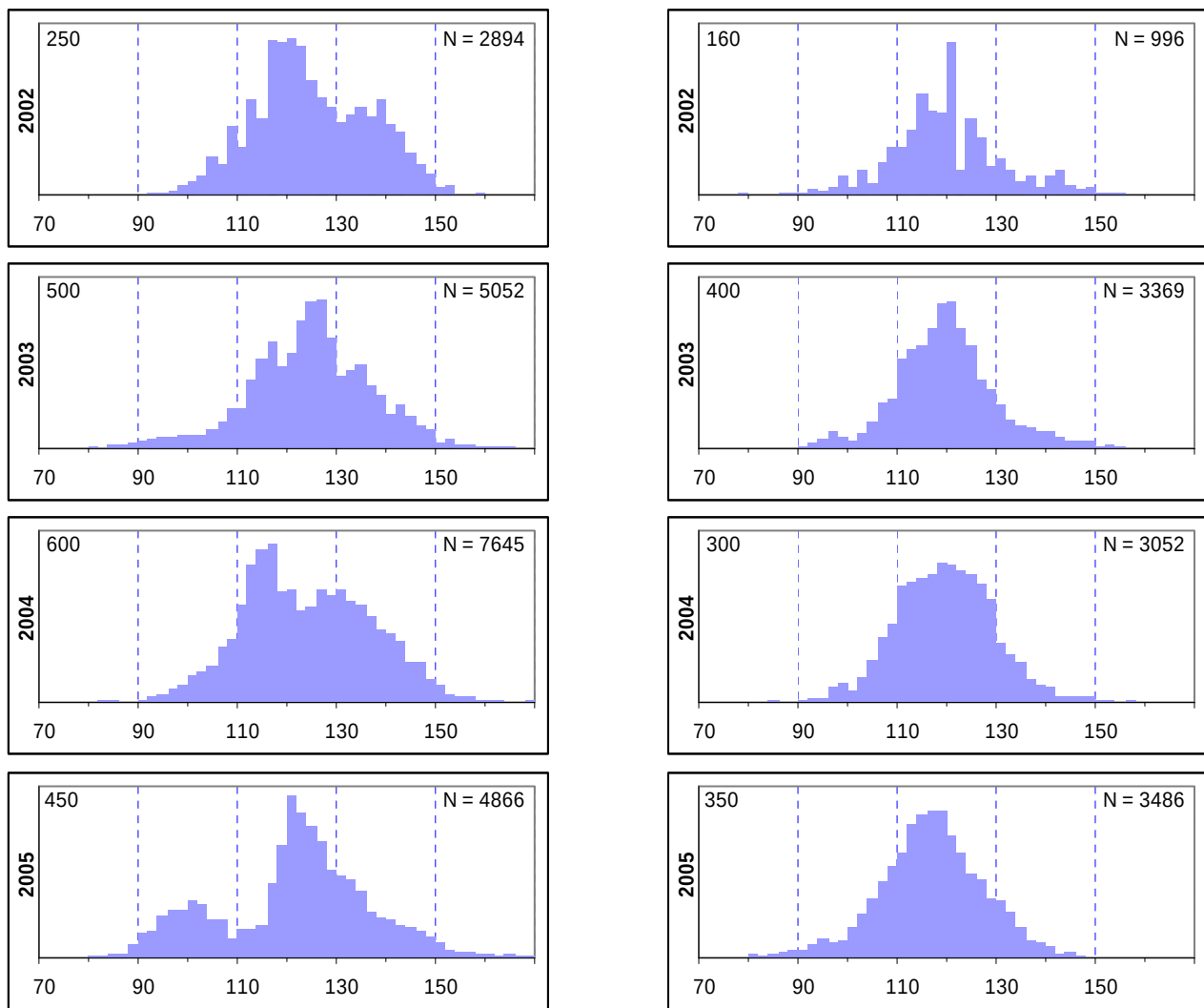


Figure 10. Annual size composition of longline-caught bigeye (left) and yellowfin (right) taken in Marshall Islands waters, 2002–2005 (Source : Port sampling data collected by MIMRA)

6.2 Observer Programme

MIMRA continues to build on the revised Observer Program, initiated with the assistance of the SPC OFP. The program is still in its infancy and needs increased support to improve its effectiveness as more demands are placed upon it. With only 9 active observers during 2005, the observers completed a total of 1,058 days at sea, 619 and 439 on purse seines and longlines, respectively (Table 19). A summary of 2004 observer trips is included for comparison. Locally-based foreign longline vessels and domestic purse seine continue to dominate observer trip coverage due to the convenience for placements. (Note: 23 active observers in 2006)

The number of observers needs to be increased to 30 in order to maintain coverage at the target of 20%. The MIMRA observer program can also expect to be called upon to support the observer program of the Commission throughout the Convention area. This implies increased workload in training, deployments, communications, briefing, debriefing, analysis, and data entry. It also implies the observer program needs an expanded base to work from, a base that includes adequate working space and environment for carrying out the observer program tasks and the anticipated expansion.

The mandate of the program needs to be expanded to include making enforcement observations and collecting information for follow up by Sea Patrol, the authorized fisheries enforcement agency. This may be accomplished with some coordination with Sea Patrol and an additional training module for observers to incorporate basic enforcement observations in their inspection routine.

Tables 18. Observer trips 2004

MONTH	Number of Trips				Number of Sea Days			
	LL	PL	PS	TOTAL	LL	PL	PS	TOTAL
January	1	0	0	1	13	0	0	13
February	2	0	0	2	27	0	0	27
March	3	0	2	5	43	0	61	104
April	4	0	0	4	58	0	0	58
May	4	0	0	4	47	0	0	47
June	5	0	0	5	75	0	0	75
July	0	0	1	1	0	0	33	33
August	2	0	1	3	27	0	88	115
September	2	0	0	2	51	0	0	51
October	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
November	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
December	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	23	0	4	27	341	0	182	523

Tables 19. Observer trips 2005

MONTH	Number of Trips				Number of Sea Days			
	LL	PL	PS	TOTAL	LL	PL	PS	TOTAL
January	4	0	0	4	53	0	0	53
February	1	0	0	1	14	0	0	14
March	1	0	1	2	14	0	23	37
April	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
May	5	0	0	5	50	0	0	50
June	2	0	5	7	29	0	189	218
July	3	0	0	3	46	0	0	46
August	1	0	3	4	12	0	83	95
September	0	0	2	2	0	0	77	77
October	0	0	3	3	0	0	94	94
November	3	0	1	4	76	0	25	101
December	6	0	3	9	145	0	128	273
	26	0	18	44	439	0	619	1,058

7. TUNA MANAGEMENT PLAN

The MIMRA adopted its (revised) Tuna Management Plan in mid-2005. Since then, MIMRA has undergone significant changes, particularly in its implementation. As reported previously in the Observer Program, the level of observer coverage continues to expand with the inclusion of longline vessels. MIMRA will work with the Japanese Bilateral partners to cover their fleet in the coming years. As such, the Observer program, while building and expanding its efforts, looks forward to collaborating and cooperating with the Observer program of the WCPFC.

Other changes through the TMP includes the level of access fee applied particularly to purse seine vessels in the RMI. The new fee reflects an adjustment to changes in the value of fishery, taking into account historical efforts of the licensed purse seine fleet and it's estimated CPUE in the RMI EEZ.

The development of its data and statistical capability continues at the MIMRA with assistance from the SPC, FFA and Japan. The SPC-OFP has been very instrumental in the Oceanic data efforts in the RMI, with the recent database development in the RMI. Japans Overseas Fisheries Cooperation Foundation (OFCF) will assist the MIMRA with a project starting next year, to develop the national fishery data center, with a view to integrate all fishery data, coastal and oceanic into a database

network. In view of the Oceanic sector, OFCF will work initially with the Coastal Fishery to develop its data and statistical capabilities.

8. FUTURE PROSPECTS

The WCFPC will no doubt change the dynamics of fisheries management and operation in the region. With this in mind, the RMI will need to develop further capacity, including internal organizational structure, to cope and take advantage of the opportunities that will transpire from its (WCPFC) development.

The RMI is a party to the Nauru Agreement, in which the Vessel Day Scheme is expected to apply. While this scheme awaits further development within parties, it is expected to roll out in December 2007.

The RMI is working closely with its Domestic Based Foreign fleet management, for a possible charter arrangement. While this work is still at large, the outcome will take into account the procedures and adherence to the Commissions rules and requirements.

While the RMI admits to constraints in the overall development of national fishery, including and not limited to the Commissions rules and requirements, the RMI also hopes to take advantage of the opportunities, as a small island developing state party to the WCPFC.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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