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National Fishery Report
French Polynesia

Background information

French Polynesia have established its own commercial tuna fleet since 1991. The fishing vessels are mainly longliners ranging from 13 to 25 m. The 25 m vessels have a large range allowing them to troll albacore in the 40°S between december and april. The main product still consist with fresh fish sold to the local market and progressively to export markets. But frozen fish, whole or in fillets, is increasing.

The catch of the artisanal fishery including pole and line and handline is still an important component of the local market despite the increasing catch of the commercial vessels.

DWFN's fleet, exclusively Korean longliners, still operate in French Polynesia waters in the context of annual fishing agreements.

Total catch and effort

The total catch for 1996 has reached 7 500 tonnes all fleets (DWFN and domestic) included with a significant increase of the catch of domestic longliners (table 1).

The figures for the bonito boat and artisanal fleet are still estimated but probably more accurate than in the past. Since 1993, the figures are estimated for the whole active commercial fleets from the surveyed vessels, except for the figure of 1994.

In general way, the catch of surface tunas remains stable while the longline and deep handline catch are increasing.

The total effort in days fished has increased from 17 400 days in 1995 to 19 300 days in 1996. This increase is mainly due to the domestic longliners making longer trips despite less active vessels.

Composition of the fleet

In 1994/1995 season, 46 korean vessels have been licensed to fish in the EEZ while in 1995/1996 season, 64 vessels have been licensed to fish in French Polynesia waters. This increase did not cause any significant change in the fishing effort and the total catch.

The number of domestic longliners has increased from 72 vessels in 1995 to 75 vessels in 1996. However the number of active vessels has decreased from 65 to 58, mainly due to bonito boats whichs were equiped with longline these last few years returned to pole and line in 1996.

This partially explained the increase of number of pole and line vessels, 92 units, but it is also due to a better and complete survey of the whole fleet.

217 small artisanal fishing vessels using deep handline, trolling or pole and line, were licensed in 1996.

Catch by gear type

It is very difficult to separate the catch for the artisanal fleet in pole and line, deep handline or troll catch. However, the figures for the albacore tuna in table 1 for this fleet are certainly deep handline catch as well as the figures for skipjack are mainly troll and pole and line catch. Catch of yellowfin tuna cannot be separated in surface or deep sea catch..

The total catch for pole and line vessels remains relatively stable for each specie except for yellowfin tuna catch which has significantly decreased.

For domestic longliners, the catch of albacore has doubled from 1995 to 1996 while the catch of other species are stable (small increase for yellowfin tuna).

The catch of yellowfin tuna for the Korean vessels has tripled while the catch of big eye tuna has decreased.

Market progress

Most of the fish, more than 95%, are consumed locally. The local consumption is important but due to the small number of inhabitants the local market is nearly saturated when large amount of fish arrive at port. Although the local market can expand a little more export market is the main target.

If the amount of export fish still remained marginal in 1995 and 1996, around 100 tonnes, the export market offers more and more opportunities to the local operators. In 1997 the quantity of exported fish should increase largely. Fish are exported in whole fresh, whole frozen, fresh fillets or frozen fillets. The main destinations are United States, Europe and Japan.

Land operations

There is no serious tuna processing project currently. The labour and energy cost are not favorable to a tuna process industry. The port equipment and facilities are focused in export facilities for fresh and fiozen tuna and also improvements of the quality of the fish. Small quantity of fish is smoked and sold in the local market.

Transhipments still continue in the port of Papeete.

Research and studies

The research programme on the behaviour and distribution of deep sea tunas (ECOTAP) is on its end. The field survey will stop on august 1997. Some interesting results on fish behaviour and gear behaviour could be distributed to the fishermen very soon. The final results of this programme will be published at the end of 1998.

Other studies on local and export market have been done or will start this year.

Future

The fishing industry is definitely aiming the export market as the local market is nearly saturated. Good commercial contacts have been established between local and international operators. The next step of the fishing industry will be to assume quantity and quality of fish.

To this end, the operational vessels, mainly longliners, will probably have to increase their fishing effort and to improve quality of fish. New fishing vessels will be built within the next two years : twelve coastal longliners (13 m) and four deep sea longliners (25 m). Complementary port equipments will be set up in the next two years.

Fish quality control should be considered very seriously to satisfy the international standard requirements (HACCP, European standard, ...)

Training sessions on fish handling, managements, should take place.

Technical and economical studies have to be surveyed to respond to the needs of professionnals.

Table 1 : CATCH (in metric tonnes)
BY FLEET IN FRENCH POLYNESIA WATERS FROM 1992 TO 1996

Year	Fleet	N° act. ves.	Days fished	Skipjack	Albacore	Yellowfin	Big eye	Billfish	Others	Total
1992	DWFN longline	63	2,427		231	513	1,305		255	2,304
	Domestic longline	25		7	195	150	57		180	589
	Pole & line	111		1,096		233			77	1,406
	Artisanal fleet	106		16		34			83	133
	Troll 40°S	2	117		72					72
TOTAL		**307**	**2,544**	**1,119**	**498**	**930**	**1,362**	**0**	**595**	**4,504**
1993	DWFN longline	50	1,226		100	321	706		176	1,303
	Domestic longline	50	5,442		714	366	163	275	183	1,701
	Pole & line	70	7,800	613		218			99	930
	Artisanal fleet	152	3,414	14	41				71	126
	Troll 40°S	4	122		45					45
TOTAL		**326**	**18,004**	**627**	**900**	**905**	**869**	**275**	**529**	**4,105**
1994	DWFN longline	* 64	2,019		133	532	1,231		234	2,130
	Domestic longline	66	7,290		913	275	165	560	739	2,652
	Pole & line	70	7,180	892		126			49	1,067
	Artisanal fleet	88	3,954							184
	Troll 40°S	0								0
TOTAL		**224**	**20,443**	**892**	**1,046**	**933**	**1,396**	**560**	**1,022**	**6,033**
1995	DWFN longline	* 46	2,412		121	328	1,336		264	2,049
	Domestic longline	65	5,659	10	772	297	182	586	607	2,454
	Pole & line	77	9,129	1,278		319		17	27	1,641
	Artisanal fleet	159		100	74	101	1	22	86	384
	Troll 40°S	4	243		183					183
TOTAL		**305**	**17,443**	**1,388**	**1,150**	**1,045**	**1,519**	**625**	**984**	**6,711**
1996	DWFN longline	* 64	1,865		104	911	879		180	2,074
	Domestic longline	58	8,969	26	1,463	380	184	595	724	3,372
	Pole & line	92	8,370	1,159		159		17	45	1,380
	Artisanal fleet	217		119	158	126	1	24	172	600
	Troll 40°S	4	142	68						68
TOTAL		**371**	**19,346**	**1,372**	**1,725**	**1,576**	**1,064**	**636**	**1,121**	**7,494**

** Number of licensed vessels*

Figures for artisanal fleet include handline, troll and pole and line