



OPRT

Sankaido Bldg. (9th Floor)1-9-13 Akasaka,
Minato-ku ,Tokyo, Japan 107-0052

Tel: 03-3568-6388; Fax:03-3568-6389

Website:<http://www.oprt.or.jp>

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FOR CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF TUNAS

Control of Tuna Fishing Capacity

Concrete Measures Should Be Introduced to Reduce Excessive Tuna Fishing Capacity

Dr. Ziro Suzuki, Tuna Scientist

It seems that major reasons for slow progress in the management of tuna resources are that tuna resources are utilized by many countries internationally and the concepts of resource management differ from one country to another, and, even in one country, they differ from one type of fisheries to another. To date, scientists have been disappointed by the fact that only scanty attention has often been given to recommendations for regulation from the Scientific Committees of the regional tuna fisheries management organizations, and there have been confrontations among Parties in the positions regarding regulations, sometimes with no agreed management measures. What fishery administrators call uncertainties in stock assessment cannot be said to be a major issue. It is the view of most scientists that any further increase in catch quota is out of question even for the species for which stringent regulations have not been introduced (e.g. bigeye and yellowfin tunas in the Central and Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean). Rather, most scientists believe the reduction of fishing efforts is necessary.

Management of tuna resources is one form of North-South issues

As long as management of tuna resources is one form of North-South issues (i.e. confrontation between interests of developing countries and advanced nations), it is clear to every one's eyes that the solution of the issue is by no means easy. For example, the FAO Methodological Workshop on the Management of Tuna Fishing Capacity of May 2006 concluded that over fishing capacity has occurred in all tuna fishing at all oceans. The workshop recommended to limit the entry of any additional tuna fishing capacity as the first step to address the issue. These conclusion and recommendation are agreed in general. But when it comes to particular issues, things do not move ahead as each country insists on securing its own

rights.

Dr. Ray Hilborn, Professor of University of Washington, recently wrote several papers on key elements of success for fishery management. One of them, entitled "Moving to sustainability by learning from successful fisheries: (Ammbio. Vol.36, No.4, June 2007)," specifies fundamental needs for moving the present fishery management into new directions. However, when his paper comes to a section of international fisheries operated in the high seas such as tuna fisheries, a clear manner of descriptions so far referred to other successful fisheries changes suddenly into a pessimistic tone and he anticipates the prospect of success of the tuna fishery management is almost none unless a new order is formulated. The new order he referred to is, in one word, nothing so different from what Ambassador Arbid Pardo of Malta called for in the early days of the 2nd round of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Ambassador Pardo made a famous statement that the resources in the open seas belong to all peoples of the world and should be used for all of them. Professor Hilborn briefly mentioned the idea, noting this was not necessarily his own, that is, in essence, the management of the open sea resources be handled by a single central organization through international bidding for entry fee or something of that sort. I was not so impressed by this idea because we already heard of this quite a few years ago and there seems to be no



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possibility to realize this in the near future. Professor Hilborn also hinted in passing that the present chaotic situation might be alleviated only by soaring oil prices that would reduce the fishing activity to some extent.

The present situation is so difficult to solve that even Professor Hilborn with excellent knowledge seems to have no good prospect of how to cope with it. Aside from this, I encourage readers of this Newsletter to read his paper because it contains various invaluable information with respect to successful fisheries management.

Issue of excessive tuna fishing capacity

However, there remains the need to find some means to cope with the issue of excessive tuna fishing capacity. This issue was discussed at the Joint Meeting of the Regional Tuna Fisheries Management Organizations held in Kobe, Japan, in January this year. It is my view that serious efforts should be continued patiently to find better measures in the international society that carries with it wide-ranging diversity of interest as well as national egotism. I do not have any effective measures to offer, but I believe that, unless advanced nations move first to compromise, we may not be able to proceed toward solution of the issues because developing nations have little or nothing to compromise. For example, they do not have any historical catch quotas. While admitting that developing countries' claim for their rights cannot be accommodated unconditionally, it is quite reasonable to think that quotas should be reduced in some parts when they are increased in other parts because the total quotas have been established. The situation is structurally similar to the case where advanced nations cannot gain consent

of developing countries to bear the equal burden in reduction of carbon dioxide emissions while the advanced nations themselves remain reluctant to carry it out. Needless to say, we cannot make a generalization here because approaches differ both among advanced nations and among developing countries. But at any rate, it may be important for all the countries concerned to reach a broad-based agreement (albeit loosely-knit obligation) on the reduction of tuna fishing capacity. If this is not possible, an international consensus should be formed as soon as possible at least for introducing a moratorium on new entry of large-scale tuna fishing vessels.

Starting with control of fishing capacity of bigeye tuna proposed

While I admit that it would not be easy to give a concrete shape to this concept, I consider that a considerably large number of people embrace a similar concept. As a tangible step, I would like to propose beginning with management of bigeye tuna resources, which is clearly perceived as an issue to be solved at present. It is necessary to introduce simultaneously the regulation of the use of FAD by purse-seine fishing vessels and the limit of new entry of semi-large scale longline fishing vessels of just under 24 meters in length, having the almost similar fishing capacity as a large scale longline fishing vessels (which are said to be increasing recently). It is clear that some one should take the initiative to solve these difficult issues. It is my sincere hope that administrators of advanced tuna fishing nations (Japan, the United States and the European Union) will cooperate in starting substantial talks at an earliest possible date with a view to develop an international agreement.

OPRT 2007 Business Plan

OPRT responds to rising interest in responsible tuna fishing

OPRT held its Ordinary General Meeting for fiscal 2007 on May 30 to discuss and decide on its 2007 Business Plan. At the outset of the meeting, OPRT President Isao Nakasu stated: "We are witnessing drastic changes in the situation surrounding tunas as follows. (1) Concerns are rising around the world about sustainable use of tunas as the most commercially important tuna stocks in the world are fully or excessively exploited. (2) Demand of tuna resources in the world is increasing as shown in the fact that the sashimi tuna market has been expanding to countries other than Japan. (3) In general, tuna fishers are facing an ever more stringent business situation in face of increasing operation costs caused by soaring fuel prices.

The issues facing us amid such circumstances include how pole-and-line, longline and purse-seine fisheries can continue operation without resorting to excessive catch. Also there is a difficult issue of resource allocations between advanced and developing countries, and at the same time, interest in, and recognition of importance of, responsible tuna fisheries have been rising.

Although OPRT is in a very tight financial and other management conditions, it will not spare its efforts

toward realization of responsible tuna fisheries so that sustainable use of tunas can be secured worldwide.”

The number of OPRT members is 16, with 1,176 fishing vessels. The number of the vessels has shown a decrease from last year's 1,305 due to such factors as the restructuring of Japan's tuna industry as well as the progress in the implementation of vessel reduction programs of Chinese Taipei. The scale of OPRT membership now accounts for more than 90% of large-scale tuna longline vessels operating throughout the world.

For the current business year, OPRT decided to cope with the following tasks: (1) monitoring of the state of tuna resources and the trend in resource management; (2) promotion of prevention and elimination of IUU fishing activities; (3) promotion of control of ever expanding tuna fishing capacity, e.g. by large-scale purse-seine fishing vessels; and (4) campaign on the use of frozen wild sashimi tunas. (For details, see the 2007 Business Plan).

On May 29, on the eve of the General Meeting, OPRT held a meeting of its overseas and Japanese members for exchange of views. This meeting was aimed to promote communication and cooperation among members to move toward the goal of responsible tuna longline fishing amid increasingly stringent environment surrounding tuna longline fishing, such as decreasing resources and excessive fishing capacity. The meeting lasted for three hours, with participants actively exchanging their views.

What follows is a full text of the Business Plan.

OPRT's Business Plan for 2007

[Situation surrounding tuna resources and tuna fisheries]

(1) In January 2007, the regional tuna fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) of the world gathered for the first time in Kobe to discuss the present state of the world's tuna resources and the issue of resource management. At the meeting, issues with which RFMOs should cope in the years ahead in order to ensure sustainable utilization of tuna resources were clarified, and measures to be implemented were summarized and adopted as the Course of Actions. Progress with regard to the measures provided for in the Course of Actions will be assessed at the second Joint Meeting to be held in 2009.

(2) The issues clarified at the meeting can be summarized in the following three points: (i) restraint of excessive fishing capacity; (ii) further efforts to eliminate illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing activities; and (iii) reduction of by-catch of marine species (sea turtles, seabirds and sharks) which are caught incidentally in tuna longline fishing.

(3) Regarding the issue of excessive fishing capacity, the participants recognized that the world's tuna fishing capacity is in an excessive state, and should not be increased any further but should be reduced. With respect to purse-seine fishing, the need for an approach to technological development to reduce by-catch of small-size tunas was stated explicitly in the Course of Actions.

(4) Regarding the issue of IUU fishing, the meeting made clear the actions to reinforce the measures to prevent and eliminate IUU fishing activities. Those actions included the development of global lists, common to all the RFMOs, of legitimate fishing vessels and IUU vessels; improvement of the

Statistical Documentation System to grasp the actual situation of market distribution of tunas; and identifying the real and actual operators of IUU fishing (multinational companies).

(5) Regarding the issue of by-catch, the participants recognized the need to reduce the impact of incidental catch by longline fisheries on sea turtle, seabirds and sharks. They also recognized the need for longline fishers to take realistic measures such as the use of the device to reduce by-catch (e.g. circle hooks and Tori Pole), and development of fishing methods designed to avoid by-catch.

(6) The impact of rapidly developing tuna farming on tuna resources in recent years cannot be overlooked, although this issue was not discussed at the Kobe meeting. Participants recognized that bluefin tuna farming in the Mediterranean can threaten the resource management scheme of ICCAT, as seen in the case of Libya's objection to ICCAT's resources management recommendations. Further, questions have been raised on whether management of quotas is carried out appropriately for southern bluefin tuna farming. It was noted that there is a need to strengthen management of tuna farming.

(7) In line with the progress of globalization of tuna fishing and market, it has become increasingly difficult to solve the above issues solely by the efforts of producers. It is ever more important that not only the international organizations and governments but also all stakeholders in tuna fishing, including traders, distributors and consumers, should coordinate and cooperate among themselves for the solution of the tuna issue.

(8) Last year, there were many mass media reports on the issue of tuna in connection with international organizations' decisions to reduce catch quotas for southern bluefin tuna and East Atlantic bluefin tuna as well as large-scale reduction of tuna fishing vessels

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by Chinese Taipei. As a result, the public awareness on tunas has been heightened. However, a number of media reports went so far as to assert excessively that “we can no longer eat tunas.” In order to secure sustainable utilization of tuna resources and maintain tuna longline fishing, further efforts are needed to arouse the interest and gain understanding of the general public regarding the tuna issue through positive publicity on accurate information and other activities.

[Business Plan]

Based on the observation of the above circumstances, the OPRT will undertake in fiscal 2007 the following projects with a view to ensure sustainable utilization of tuna resources and to contribute to the development of tuna fishing that fulfills the international and social responsibility.

1. Monitoring of the present state of tuna resources and the trend in resources management

Monitoring of trend in regional tuna fisheries management organizations such as ICCAT

2. Promotion of control of tuna fishing capacity

(1) Control of OPRT-registered fishing vessels and restraint of increase of longline fishing vessels

(2) Restraint of fishing capacity of large-scale purse-seine fishing vessels

3. Promotion of prevention and elimination of IUU fishing activities

(1) Monitoring of longline fishing vessels exporting frozen tunas to the Japanese market

(2) Implementation of the measures to prevent tuna laundering

-Experiment to control at-sea transshipment in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean

-Implementation of DNA inspection

(3) Survey on the state of longline fishing vessels exported from Japan

(4) Monitoring of the trend of tuna farming subject to catch regulations

(5) Reimbursement of the fund for the FOC fishing vessels scrapping project

4. Promotion of responsible fisheries for conservation of the marine ecosystem

(1) Promotion of implementation of the “2005 Yokohama Declaration”, including the reduction of incidental catch of sea turtles and seabirds

(2) Participation in the meetings relating to the issue of by-catch

5. Implementation of publicity activities for the promotion of responsible tuna fisheries

(1) Publication and distribution of newsletters, and publicity through website

(2) Holding of seminars and discussion meetings

(3) Promotion of recruitment of Supporting Members

(4) Implementation of publicity activities to consumers through promotion of consumption of natural and

frozen sashimi tunas

(5) Formation of the public opinion through coordination and cooperation with friendly organizations

6. Promotion of coordination and cooperation among OPRT Members

7. Cooperation by OPRT Members for expansion of healthy sashimi tuna market.

Moves of International Tuna RFMOs

<Eastern Pacific - IATTC>

Management recommendations for 2008 delayed

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission held its 75th annual meeting at Cancun, Mexico, 25-29, 2007. Management recommendations for yellowfin and bigeye tuna for 2008 were not adopted because of no agreement among parties. For 2007, 45 days closure of the purse-seine fishery and bigeye tuna catch limit of major longline fisheries were recommended. The Ad Hoc meeting will be arranged to discuss the management measures for next year but the timetable has not yet been decided. The measures to reduce catches of juvenile yellowfin and bigeye tuna were not addressed, either. It is hoped that the IATTC may timely determine the appropriate management measures to ensure sustainability of resources in the area.

<Mediterranean - ICCAT>

EU purse-seine fleets found operating in violation of ICCAT'S closed-season rules

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has recently disclosed that purse-seine fishing fleets from the European Union (EU) targeting bluefin tuna engaged in illegal activities by continuing operation even after the closed season took effect. The WWF said in its website that it has confirmed fishing fleets, which appeared to be flying the Italian flag, left Malta, and engaged in fishing from July 1 and afterwards in the area of the Sicilian Strait. It was also made clear that the fleets were using spotter planes for searching fish schools, which have been banned by ICCAT. Upon receipt of notification from the WWF, the EU Fisheries Committee started investigations into the alleged violation.

Tuna purse-seine operation in the Mediterranean is mostly aimed at catching bluefin tuna for farming. As stock status has been deteriorating rapidly in recent years, ICCAT decided on extension of the closed season. Specifically, ICCAT established the closed season for purse-seine fishing in the Mediterranean for the period between July 1 and December 31 from the 2007 fishing season.