



OPRT

NEWSLETTER INTERNATIONAL

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>

Augst 2012, No. 40

FOR CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF TUNAS

WCPFC

OPRT expresses concern over the present management of WCPFC

On August 1, OPRT sent a letter to Professor Glenn Hurry, Executive Director, Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, expressing concern over the present situation of tuna resource management in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. Its summary is as follows.

OPRT held its members meeting on 16th May, 2012, in Tokyo and exchanged views on the matter and recognized that the following problems are causes of concerns shared by all of our members. (Comments were sent by those who could not participate the meeting.)

1. Management measures by WCPFC for bigeye tuna for this year are simple roll over the measures last year despite the need to develop more effective measures to recover the stock.
2. No measures have been taken to address over fishing capacity of large scale purse seine vessels despite of the recommendation adopted by Kobe III* (Joint tuna RFMOs meeting held in La Jolla last July).
3. The recent increase of fishing capacity of small scale logline vessels having capacity equivalent to the large scale logline vessels may cause significant pressure to the resources.

OPRT hoped the above stated concerns might be solved at the next annual meeting scheduled in December by the leadership of WCPFC Executive Director. The letter was circulated by WCPFC secretariat to all of its parties for consideration.

(*Note: The Gist of the Recommendation:

Developed fishing members freeze large scale purse seine capacity under their flag. Each RFMO should consider a scheme for: Reduction of over capacity in a way that does not constrain the access to development by developing coastal states; and transfer of capacity from developed fishing members to developing coastal fishing members.)

IUU Fishing

Japan, EU sign joint statement on elimination of IUU fishing

European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Maria Damanaki met Akira Gunji, Japan's Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, in Tokyo on July 11 and signed a joint statement for the elimination of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities. It covers 11 items including development of cooperation for management of fishing capacity in the world, improvement of catch documentation scheme and so forth.



Damanaki (right) and Gunji

Photo provided by the SUI-KEI, a fisheries daily in Japan

Damanaki also met Japan Fisheries Association (JFA) President Toshiro Shirasu at the JFA office on the same day and exchanged views concerning the common fisheries issues facing Japan and the European Union (EU), centering on the elimination of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities.

Shirasu pointed out that the true cause of IUU fishing activities is the overcapacity of fishing vessels. In the international community, it is recognized that the overcapacity is created by the move to build large-scale purse-seine fishing vessels. He noted that the tuna regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) recommended at their joint meeting held last July the

freezing of the capacity of large-scale purse-seine fishing vessels of developed fishing nations. Damanaki shared Shirasu's view and made clear the EU's policy to tackle the capacity of large scale purse-seine fishing vessels.

Tuna imports to Japan

Japan requests Korea to restrict fishing of Pacific Bluefin tuna

Fisheries Agency of Japan (FAJ) reported that this year's import of fresh Pacific bluefin tuna from Republic of Korea reached to 1,338 tons as of July 18, showing a drastic increase (total import last year was 522 tons.) Besides, 96% of the bluefin imported were immature fish, namely younger than 3 years and less than 30 kilo in weight. WCPFC (Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission) has introduced measures in 2010 to restrain increase of the catch of bluefin and in particular to restrict fishing of immature fish. On July 13, FAJ requested the Korean government to refrain from increasing catch of bluefin tuna. FAJ further requested the importers and dealers in Japan to voluntarily restrain import of bluefin tuna from Korea.

(WCPFC management measures for Pacific bluefin require members to ensure that the total fishing effort shall stay below the 2002-04 level for 2011 and 2012 and also to reduce juvenile mortality to 2002-2004 level except for Korea until sufficient information is gathered for her bluefin catch. Korea is implementing a prohibition on juvenile catch with several exemptions.)

Jiro's critical eyes

Large scale drift gillnet and FADs

Jiro Suzuki
National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries

Large scale drift gillnet (referred to as LDG hereafter) and Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) share one aspect in common, that is, both have been criticized due to their bycatch problems. In case of LDG, UN General Assembly banned its use in the high sea although there was some doubt if sufficient scientific study of the impact caused by LDG was made. In the mean time, use of FADs is still maintained although the international concern is growing for its use. Why does such difference happen? In my view, answer is that many fishing nations are involved in FADs operation, while only a few distant water fishing

nations in LDG operation. Many countries including developed and developing countries currently conduct tuna fishing by use of FADs because it assures catching massive amount of tunas efficiently. Economic benefit brought about by FADs operation is so large. It is a fact



that the use of FADs contributed to develop tuna fisheries in the Western and Central Pacific, the world largest tuna fishing ground. However, it should be noted that, according to scientific analyses, the use of FADs, currently being far larger scale than the LDG, now has become the largest factor for aggravating the bigeye stock in the Pacific, especially because of their catch of large amount of juvenile as bycatch.

In fact, many scientists have been working hard for seeking measures to mitigate catching juvenile bigeye and other bycatch species. But, no effective measure is found yet. Considering such circumstance, it would be worth while to introduce some precautionary measure, such as more strict control of using FADs operation until scientists come up with finding some breakthrough in the mitigation measures in order to avoid what happened to the LDG case

In any event, one thing for sure is that it is necessary to urgently implement overall effective management measures to stop the overfishing status of bigeye tuna in the Pacific. I am concerned with ongoing increase of the capacity of large scale purse seine vessels including FADs operation and also the substantial increase of capacity by small scale longline fishery that has been increasing the tuna catches substantially in recent years.

Dr. Jiro SUZUKI is a leading tuna scientist who had worked for National Research Institute of Far Sea Fisheries in Japan more than 30 years. He has participated the scientific meetings of all tuna RFMOs. His critical eye to the issues of tuna resources management as a scientist is appreciated internationally as a vivid and constructive voice.

Jiro's Critical Eye is now on OPRT's web (www.oprt.or.jp)

Topics

Action introduced to discourage adding new purse seiners

About 2.8 million tons of tuna are caught each year by the world's purse seiners. It is 65 % of the global catch. Further increase of their catch, if continued, would cause difficulty in maintaining sustainable tuna fisheries. The International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) adopted a measure to address excess fishing by the global large-scale tropical tuna purse seine fleets. On the need of introducing the measure, ISSF states that new, larger and more efficient vessels keep being built, proliferating excessive fishing capacity much faster than it shrinks through scrapping or sinking old vessels.

The measure was introduced by the resolution.

According to the ISSF Resolution to Manage Fishing Capacity by the Tropical Tuna Purse Seine Fleets, by January 1, 2013; "All processors, traders, importers, transporters and others involved in the seafood industry must refrain from transactions in skipjack, bigeye and yellowfin tuna caught by large scale purse seine vessels that are not actively fishing for tuna December 31,2012, except for those vessels under contract for construction on or before December 31, 2012 with construction completed by June 30, 2015."

"The status of tuna stocks may further deteriorate. Need to improve management," FAO reports

UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) published "the State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2012" on July 9. The report is worth while reading to know the present problems we should cope with. Following is the excerpt of the section dealing with the tunas.

Among the seven principle tuna species, one third were estimated to be overexploited, 37.5 percent were fully exploited, and 29 percent non-fully exploited in 2009. Although skipjack tuna continued its increasing trend up to 2009, further expansion should be closely monitored, as it may negatively affect bigeye tuna and yellowfin tunas (multispecies fisheries). In the long term, the status of tuna stocks (and consequently catches) may further deteriorate unless there are significant improvements in their management. This is because of the substantial demand for tuna and the significant overcapacity of tuna fishing fleets. Concern about the poor status of some bluefin stocks and the inability of some tuna management organizations to manage these stocks effectively led to a proposal in 2010 to ban the international trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna under the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and, although the proposal was ultimately rejected, the concern remains.

IUU fishing is still the global concern.

The FAO report also touches upon illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing as its activities threaten

efforts to secure long-term sustainable fisheries and promote healthier and more robust ecosystems. It states that IUU fishing continues to be the grave concern of the international community, pointing out that developing countries, often with limited technical capacity, bear the brunt of the IUU fishing. It further states that the frustration of the international community is deepened by the failure of many flag states to meet their primary responsibilities under international law, .

Tuna farming

Kindai holds a symposium on export-oriented bluefin tuna farming

Kindai University (Kindai) held a symposium on the theme of "promoting export-oriented bluefin tuna farming" at the 14th Japan International Seafood & Technology Expo in Tokyo on July 19. The symposium, which included presentations by six professors, was crowded with full audience.

In an opening speech, Prof. Hidemi Kumai, head of Kindai's fisheries laboratory, stated: "We have succeeded in raising the fourth-generation bluefin tuna in full-scale farming. Last year, we were able to produce 57,507 juvenile seeds artificially. On the basis of the research and technological results we have achieved so far, we hope to make this symposium an occasion to explore the future direction of bluefin tuna farming on a global perspective, not limiting the potential only to the Japanese market."

During the session, six major subjects were addressed, including "artificial bluefin tuna seed production rate," "the possibility of enhancing the efficiency of feed," and "the possibility of launching large-scale offshore bluefin tuna farming."



Prof. Kumai delivering opening speech (Photo by the SUI-KEI)

Following is a summary of the presentation by Prof. Shigeru Miyashita, head of Kindai's aquaculture seed center, at the symposium..

The research on artificial hatching and breeding of juvenile bluefin tuna started in 1979. Initially, we were not able to raise the fish to the length beyond 10 centimeters. The experiment was discontinued temporarily, but in our efforts to raise juveniles in 1994 and afterwards, the way was opened toward establishing the technology for

breeding the tuna for the period after the juvenile stage. In 1994, only 43 tunas of age 70 days (body length of 20 centimeters) were obtained out of 2.64 million fertilized eggs, with the survival rate standing at 0.0016%. The results of breeding at that time clarified (1) initial decrease until age of 10 days; (2) cannibalism around the age 10-30 days; and (3) the fact that collision deaths that followed in about one month and the three major decrease periods occurred continuously. Since then, development of technology on reducing the decrease has been advanced. At present, the survival rate in seed production stands at around 3% in the land-based aquariums, and about 30% in the intermediate breeding period after the fish are moved to the ocean pens—which is a drastic improvement over 15 years ago. However, the survival rate for the whole period of farming still remains at around 1%, a level conspicuously lower compared with 60-70% for red sea bream and 20-30% for amberjack. For all that, it is safe to say that the commercialization of full-scale farmed bluefin tuna has finally come within the range of realization. Expansion of farming facilities and cooperation with other related organizations are considered indispensable for the further expansion of production, Prof. Miyashita said.

Editorial

Catch Quota of Eastern Pacific Bluefin

At the annual meeting of IATTC held at the end of June in the U.S.A., the catch quota of Bluefin tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean was set for the first time. The quota totals 10,000 tons over the 2 years, for 2012 and 2013.

At the annual meeting in 2011, the management measures for Bluefin tuna were not decided because Mexico opposed against the joint proposal submitted by Japan, the U.S.A., Canada, etc. However, the catch quota seemed to be adopted without any conflicts of interests at this annual meeting. It is uncertain why Mexico changed her attitude, but I was impressed by how IATTC could manage to set the catch quota. The catch quota, if it is once set, possibly leads into the declining trend gradually unless the stock condition shows recovery. It is natural for fishermen to believe that they eventually face the strict regulation and they want to avoid such management measures.

Bluefin tuna harvest in IATTC water recently remains at the level of 4,000 tons annually while the harvest had reached to 7,800 tons in 2010 and down to 3,200 tons in 2011. Thus, this catch quota does not cause any actual pain for fishermen. In addition, most of the harvest is used for the farming business in Mexico which aims mainly to export the products to Japanese market. This new quota is unlikely to reduce the supply to Japan. Moreover, this

regulation does not force to re-arrange the production or distribution. However, this catch quota has a significant meaning as I noted below.

First of all, it has brought about the establishment of the conservation management systems for all waters in which Pacific Bluefin Tuna migrates. Pacific Bluefin tuna is a highly migratory resource which widely migrates from the east to the west in the North Pacific. Thus, IATTC which manages tunas in eastern Pacific and WCPFC managing western Pacific need to cooperate and work together in order to manage Pacific Bluefin effectively. Over highly migratory species, it is not effective to manage the resource only in the limited area. The management measures need to cover the entire migratory area.

In 2009, WCPFC adopted measures to ensure that fishing effort of Bluefin tuna in western Pacific shall not be increased from the level of 2002-2004 based on the advice from International Scientific Committee. In addition, it adopted the measures to reduce the catch of immature fish from the level of 2002-2004, as well as expressed the need to promote cooperation with the IATTC over the resource management of Pacific Bluefin tuna. As IATTC set the catch quota this time, I expect that it stimulates the cooperation with WCPFC and establishes sufficient conservation measures for Pacific Bluefin Tuna.

In 2010, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was likely to adopt a proposal to designate the Atlantic Bluefin tunas as an endangered species and to ban the international trade completely. On the background, there were strong doubts from resource conservation groups against the management ability of regional fisheries management organizations.

IATTC failed to settle the management measures of Bigeye and Yellowfin tunas a few years ago, but this time, quota setting for Bluefin tuna could be said to show the improvement of its ability to manage the resources. Especially in the past, catch quota was set after the resource level was fallen to the endangered level, but this time, the quota was set well in advance. This approach would lead to restraint excessive increase of fishing capacity with no limitation.

On the other hand, what I am concerned is declining capability of WCPFC to manage the resource. The revision of conservation management measure for Bigeye and Yellowfin tunas was shelved due to unsettled discussion at the last annual meeting. In addition, it failed to restrain the increasing number of larger scale purse-seiners, drawing the abnormal situation. WCPFC might need to settle this issue at the annual meeting to be held in December this year. It would be not such easy to overcome essential problems of WCPFC such as the conflicts between island nations in the South Pacific and distant water fishing nations. However, if these issues are not settled, there is no doubt that all relevant parties including industries eventually find out themselves in pain.

(This article is a translation from Minato Fisheries Daily in Japan.)