THE ORGANIZATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF RESPONSIBLE TUNA FISHERIES

OPRT

NEWSLETTER INTERNATIONAL DEC. 2014, No. 51

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

FOR CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF TUNAS

## Southern bluefin tuna

# CCSBT decides to increase annual TAC for 2015-2017

The 21st Annual Meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) concluded its session on October 16, 2014 in Auckland, New Zealand with the confirmation that it would increase the three-year TAC for 2015-2017 and the national allocations accordingly – as was agreed in 2013. This decision, taken pursuant to the advice of its Scientific Committee, purports to increase the annual TAC by 2,198 tons to 14,647 tons from next season.

The southern bluefin tuna stock has shown recovery as a result of catch cutback, and subsequently the TAC was increased by gradual steps to 10,499 tons in 2012 and to 12,449 tons in 2013. At this year's annual meeting, the Commission confirmed the three-year TAC starting in 2015, as agreed in 2013 based on the results of the stock survey. The Scientific Committee determined that the proposed catch would not cause any adverse impact on the stock, and the Commission established the TAC for that period, as agreed last year.

The issue of South Africa's membership was not finalized at this year's annual meeting, and the national allocation to that country for next year was kept unchanged from that of this year at 40 tons. When South Africa's membership is endorsed, the country will receive a national allocation of 150 tons.

Regarding the use of stereoscopic cameras at the time of the introduction of tunas into farming cages in Australia, it was reported that a development project for this purpose is underway but the time of the actual use of the device was not explicitly stated.

**SBT TAC and national allocations** Unit: tons

| | 2015–2017 (annual) | (Reference) 2014 |
|---|---|---|
| Japan | 4,737t | 3,403t |
| Australia | 5,665t | 5,193t |
| Korea | 1,140t | 1,045t |
| Taiwan | 1,140t | 1,045t |
| Indonesia | 750t | 750t |
| New Zealand | 1,000t | 918t |
| South Africa | 150t(*) | 40t |
| Philippines | 45t | 45t |
| EU | 10t | 10t |
| Research mortality | 10t | – |
| Total (TAC) | 14,647t | 12,449t |

*The increased allocation for South Africa is conditioned on the country's membership to the CCSBT.

## ICFA

### Tuna issues discussed at ICFA

The International Coalition of Fisheries Associations (ICFA) held its annual meeting in Rome on September 25. Members reviewed various issues related to fisheries. Mr. Toshiro Shirasu, President of the Japan Fisheries Association (JFA) representing Japan's fisheries industry, updated the 2011 Earthquake-Tsunami disaster and the Fukushima nuclear power plant situation and stressed that expanded export of seafood products produced from the Tohoku region is of great importance to the restoration of the fisheries related industries in the affected region. In this connection, he elaborated on how the safety of Japan's seafood is ensured in Japan and asked for ICFA members' understanding and cooperation towards the promotion of imports of Japanese seafood to their respective countries.

The following Tuna issues were also presented from the Japanese side:

i) Strengthened draft Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) on Pacific bluefin tuna adopted in September by the Northern Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) (this draft CMM is expected to be adopted at WCPFC 11 in December); ii) Control on overfishing capacity of large scale purse seiners: CMM2013-01(multi-year management program for 2014-2017 on tropical tunas) adopted by WCPFC10 last December includes epoch-making provisions such as the reduction of the number of large scale purse seiners by certain members to the 2012

year-end level. The Commission shall develop a scheme for the reduction of overcapacity, etc. in order to attain the objectives of this CMM. All members concerned shall cooperate in fully implementing this CMM; iii) Rejecting the entry of products from IUU fishing activities into major markets is obviously effective in tackling IUU fishing. In this regard, lists of legitimate fishing vessels maintained by RFMOs and documentation systems (in which documents containing information on harvest are issued by the relevant authorities of exporting countries and forwarded to the relevant authorities of importing countries) are of paramount importance; iv) Introduction of IMO vessel number to be used as Unique Vessel Identifier (UVI) in tuna related RFMOs as an additional means for tackling IUU fishing; and v) As for sharks, inappropriate and excessive control measures should not be taken under the name of protection of sharks. Ensuring adequate management of shark stocks and full utilization are important.

(ICFA is a coalition of the national fish and seafood industry trade associations from the world's major fishing nations. The group was formed in 1988 to provide decision-makers a unified voice on global fish and seafood issues. ICFA members advocate policies for the long-term sustainable use of living marine resources for the benefit of global food security and prosperity. ICFA members are deeply committed to science-based and fully participatory fishery conservation and management processes.)

## IATTC

### IATTC sets 2015 bluefin tuna TAC at 3,300 tons, with Mexico agreeing to slash its bluefin catch by 40%

The (resumed) 87th Meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) was held on October 27-30 in La Jolla in the United States to discuss the recovery of the Pacific bluefin tuna. At the meeting, member countries agreed, inter alia, to set in principle an annual maximum commercial catch for 2015 and 2016 each at 3,300 tons--which was a 40% cut from 2014. This decision was taken with the aim to manage the Pacific bluefin tuna stock in a way that the combined catch for the two-year period may not exceed 6,600 tons.

The IATTC also agreed that member countries should make efforts to reduce the catch rate of small-size tunas weighing less than 30 kilograms to 50% of all catches.

Regarding sport fishing for which there has been no regulation under the current management scheme, the Commission decided that it would apply equal reduction measures as those for commercial catch in 2015.

The overall TAC for the Eastern Pacific bluefin tuna in 2014 was set at 5,500 tons, of which a special quota of 500 tons is allocated to the United States, a country traditionally fishing this species. Mexico catches the bulk of the remaining 5,000 tons.

The annual upper limit of 3,300 tons, which was agreed at the IATTC meeting for 2015 and 2016, corresponds to a 40% reduction from the current TAC.

The spawning biomass of the Pacific bluefin tuna is now at a historical low level. The member countries of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), which manages tuna stocks in the Western Pacific, have agreed to reduce from next year the catch of small-size tuna weighing less than 30 kilograms to half of the average catch in 2002-2004.

Japan does not catch bluefin tuna in the Eastern Pacific, but the bulk of tunas caught by Mexico are exported to Japan.

## Pacific bluefin migration

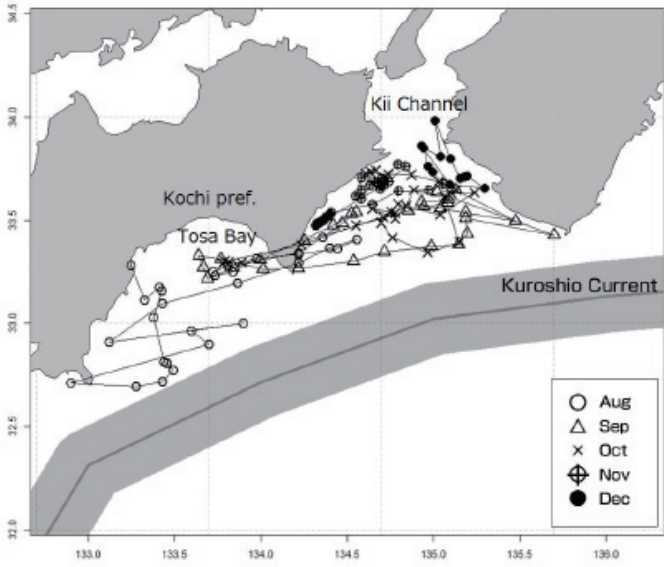
### Migration patterns of age-0 Pacific bluefin tuna obtained from the individual tracks using archival tags off Kochi Prefecture, Japan.

Results of the most recent stock assessment conducted by the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species (ISC) indicate that the current (2012) Pacific bluefin tuna biomass level is near historically low levels. Therefore, it is of urgent necessity to introduce appropriate management measures that will ensure the sustainable utilization of this stock.

In this connection, since Pacific bluefin are utilized by a variety of fisheries from the earliest stage of their life, it is desirable to implement management measures taking into account the recruitment level for Pacific bluefin tuna by year including the level for those born in the current year. Each year such recruitment level (the total number of recruited juveniles) should be determined at the earliest stage possible.

In order to precisely estimate the number of recruited juveniles, it is necessary to understand migration conditions such as when, where, under which environmental conditions and how long they stay. As a means to directly investigate the migration of fish in the sea, tagging surveys utilizing electronic tags may be considered. In such surveys, by attaching an electronic tag to the fish, data on temperature and depth of the sea where the fish occurred are obtained, and geographic positions and the course of migration may be estimated through illumination data. The fish to be selected for our survey are age-0 Pacific bluefin of approximately 20 cm in length and 2- or 3-month-old (hereinafter "juvenile bluefin") and since they are fragile as well as small, electronic tags have seldom been applied. We attempted to innovate on electronic tagging technologies so as to apply this methodology to such small fish and we succeeded in releasing small fish attached with an electronic tag in good condition for the very first time in the world (Ref. Report on the OPRT News Letter in Japanese No. 57). In the following, the information is summarized on the migration pattern of the juvenile Pacific bluefin obtained from the results of our surveys.

Pacific bluefin mainly spawn in the waters off the Nansei Islands (near Ryukyu Islands) in spring. In addition, spawning is also occurring in the Sea of Japan on a smaller scale. Larvae are transported by the Kuroshio Current and those that have escaped starvation and predation can reach the coastal waters off Kochi or Nagasaki, where they




**Route of migration for the individual juvenile bluefin which had been released in August, 2012 in waters off Kochi prefecture and was recaptured in December, 2012 in the Kii Channel area.**

stay and utilize as growing areas during summer. By using juvenile bluefin that have reached such growing areas, we investigated their subsequent movement including where they stay, how they migrate, etc. In August, 2012, for each of the juveniles bluefin caught by trolling in waters off Kochi and found in good condition for the tagging, an electronic tag (archival tag – weight in air: 2.3g, diameter: 7.8mm and length: 26mm) was placed in its abdominal cavity.

Before their release they were kept in cage in the sea to observe their condition for 3 to 6 days. A total of 137 individuals were released with electronic tags from 2012 to 2013. Out of them, 20 individuals were recaptured (recapture rate is 15%).

We retrieved the electronic tag data obtained from the juvenile bluefin recaptured and plotted the route of migration for each individual by estimating daily geographical positions for the period from release to recapture (Ref. Figure). The individual for which the figure illustrated its movement had the longest period from release to recapture. It stayed in the Tosa Bay during summer and from autumn to winter migrated eastward to the Kii Channel. This individual showed a seasonal movement from west to east.

Furthermore, the core area of their distribution is limited to coastal areas and so far no offshore migrations have been recorded for any of the juveniles recaptured. It is indicated that juvenile bluefin are distributed in the range of waters from the coast to the Kuroshio Current.

Other surveys that dealt with stomach contents of juvenile Pacific bluefin which were caught in the region mentioned above and were sent to the neighboring markets indicate that main prey species of juvenile Pacific bluefin is Japanese anchovy (*Engraulis japonicus*). It is estimated that juvenile Pacific bluefin migrate in coastal waters between the Tosa Bay and the Kii Channel while preying on Japanese anchovy.

# ICCAT

## ICCAT agrees to increase Eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna TAC by 10 thousand tons in three years

The 19th Special Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), held in Genoa, Italy, November 10-17, agreed to increase the TAC of the Eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna–a stock showing remarkable recovery–by about 10,000 tons over the three-year period from next year to 2017. The substantial TAC increase was realized thanks to the Commission's stringent stock management, which resulted in a rapid increase of the stock.

The TAC for 2015 will be set at 16,142 tons, up 20% from the current level, with that for 2016 to be set at 19,296 tons and that for 2017 at 23,155 tons. However, the TAC for each year can be subject to review in accordance with the Scientific Committee's recommendations.

In consideration of the proportion of national allocations, some amounts of quota were set aside for Algeria and Turkey, taking their special situations into consideration. Then, the overall TAC, minus these quotas, is allocated among the member countries and territories at the current allocation rates, based on their past record of performance.

The annual TAC for Western Atlantic bluefin tuna will also be increased from the current 1,750 tons to 2,000 tons each for 2015 and 2016.

In 2010, a proposal to include the Atlantic bluefin tuna in Appendix I was tabled at the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) on the ground that the stock had been deteriorating. Although the proposal was rejected, the ICCAT member countries took this occasion to further strengthen its stock management, under the leadership of Japan, the world's largest consuming nation. There was once a period when the actual catch of Atlantic bluefin tuna was estimated at 60,000 tons, but in 2011 the TAC for the Eastern Atlantic–the area that accounts for 90% of the entire fishing ground–was curtailed down to 12,900 tons.

In the Eastern Atlantic, in particular, the catch, retention and landing of bluefin tuna less than 30 kg were prohibited, and no-fishing periods ranging from six to 11 months were established. At the same time, the installment of stereoscopic cameras in all the farming cages and reporting on the number and weight of the fish at the time of stocking were required.

As a result of the continuous stringent management measures, the stock recovered at a rapid pace. At the annual meeting last year, the recovery of the stock was recognized but an increase in the TAC was postponed. At a meeting of the Scientific Committee in October this year, a recommendation to allow an increase of TAC to 23,000 tons was suggested, giving the prospect for a substantial TAC increase.

The next annual meeting will be held in the Republic of Malta in November 2015.

## WCPFC

### WCPFC fails to strike agreement on tropical tuna management at its annual meeting

The 11th annual meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC11) was held in Apia, Samoa, December 1-5, in which the conservation and management measures for Pacific bluefin tuna for 2015 and thereafter–agreed at a meeting of the WCPFC's Northern Committee in September this year–were adopted. On the other hand, no agreements were reached on the issues that lead to the effective implementation of prescribed provisions incorporated in the multi-year management program (for 2014-17) for tropical tunas adopted by the Commission last year (CMM2013-01).

**Catch of bluefin tuna weighing less than 30 kg to be halved**

Regarding the conservation and management measures for the Pacific bluefin tuna, the WCPFC adopted the following:

(1) to aim for the immediate future to recover the spawning biomass (approx. 26,000 tons), which now stands near its historic low level, to the historic median value (approx. 43,000 tons) during the decade from 2015;

(2) to reduce the catch volume of juvenile fish weighing less than 30 kg by 50% from the average level of 2002-2004 (i.e. from 9,450 tons to 4,725 tons for the entire Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO). The catch volume for Japan will be reduced from 8,015 tons to 4,007 tons);

(3) to implement every possible measure not to increase the catch volume of large-size fish of 30kg or over from the 2002-2004 annual average (i.e. 6,591 tons for the entire WCPO, and 4,882 tons for Japan);

(4) members shall cooperate toward effective implementation of the conservation and management measures adopted at this meeting, including reduction of the catch of juvenile fish; and

(5) the Northern Committee shall develop at its 2015 and 2016 annual meetings the long-term stock management policy after the recovery of the stock.

**Current conservation and management measures for bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack for purse seine fishing will be continued**

As a result, the 2014 conservation and management measures for purse seine fishing vessels in the tropical area (i.e., a 4-month ban on setting Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) or a 3-month ban on FAD sets and restrictions on the corresponding number of FAD operations) will be continued into 2015. In the current multi-year management measures (2014-2017), which were adopted last year, it was decided to add from 2015 the one-month ban on FAD sets or restrictions on the corresponding number of FAD sets, and all settings on FADs for all members are subject to national limits. These strengthened measures will take effect when the arrangements that cope with the disproportionate burden issues are agreed at WCPFC11. However, the Commission failed to attain such arrangements. On the other hand, as for the current management measures for longline fishing, it has been decided that the catch limits for bigeye will be reduced for the major 5 members by 40% from the 2001-2004 annual average by gradual steps starting in 2015.

Reinforcement of the regulations on FAD operations by purse seine fishing vessels in the multi-year management measures had been planned to start in 2015. By the decision to delay the reinforcement this year, the situation of 2013 where the bigeye catch by purse seiners surpassed that by longliners is to continue.

The provision related to capacity control for purse seine fishing vessels that "CCMs other than SIDS shall jointly develop a scheme to jointly reduce the capacity of large scale purse seine vessels (20°N-20°S) to the level of 31 December 2012 and submit it to WCPFC11 was not realized. Furthermore, the measures included the provision that the Commission shall develop a scheme for reduction of overfishing capacity, etc. For this goal, some members presented a concrete proposal, but no conclusion was attained.

In the bigeye stock assessment carried out by the Scientific Committee in August this year (the first assessment in three years), the Committee noted for the first time that the stock is "overfished," in addition to the issue of continued overfishing. The Committee recommended a 36% reduction in fishing mortality from the 2008-2011 annual average.

In these circumstances, it had been deemed necessary to adopt and implement reinforced measures at this year's annual meeting. Considering these developments, the effectiveness of this Commission at this year's annual meeting is considered questionable.

The next annual meeting of the WCPFC will be held in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2015.

## EDITORIAL

### The WCPFC should have addressed tropical tuna stock management in a serious and responsible manner at WCPFC11

This year's Regular Session of the WCPFC (WCPFC11) was closed on December 5, 2014 in Apia, Samoa with no progress that would enable the effective implementation of Conservation and Management Measures (CCM) 2013-01–a multi-year management program for tropical tuna stocks including bigeye in the western and central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) adopted at WCPFC10–. Prior to the WCPFC, the Scientific Committee (SC) in its report of the meeting held in August (SC10) indicated warning results from the stock assessment for bigeye: in addition to its long-standing observations of "overfishing is occurring", the SC concluded for the first time that the stock has been categorized as "overfished"; the spawning biomass (SSB) breached the biomass limit reference point (LRP:20% of $SSB_{F=0}$) in 2012; and rebuild-

ing the SSB to be above the biomass LRP will require a reduction in fishing mortality. The SC made the following management recommendations: i) a 36% reduction in fishing mortality from the average level for 2008-2011 would be expected to return the fishing mortality rate to $F_{MSY}$; ii) future status quo projections (assuming 2012 conditions) indicated that regardless of the difference in the assumptions of recruitment levels, it was virtually certain that the stock would remain subject to overfishing; iii)the catch of yellowfin should not be increased from 2012 levels which exceeded MSY; and iv) the Commission take actions to avoid further increases in fishing mortality and keep the skipjack stock around the current levels, etc.

In addition, we must remember that CMM2013-01 includes a number of fundamental provisions that enable the implementation of this CMM to become effective, each of those requiring an endeavor to develop a draft scheme or arrangements, and reach agreements among the members, and adoption thereof at WCPFC11 unless described otherwise. Such provisions are as follows: i) The Commission shall at WCPFC11 adopt arrangements coping with the disproportionate burden issue. Expanded and strengthened FAD closures with national FAD set limits for purse seiners in 2015 and thereafter shall only take effect when these arrangements are agreed (paragraph 15.); ii) CCMs other than SIDS, shall jointly develop a scheme to jointly reduce the capacity of large scale purse seine vessels (LSPSVs) to the level of 31 December 2012 and submit it to WCPFC11 (para.54); iii) The Commission shall develop a scheme for the reduction of overcapacity with certain conditions and transfer of capacity (para.53); and iv) At WCPFC11, with respect to yellowfin the Commission will formulate and adopt appropriate limits for the Commission members, Cooperating Non-Members and participating Territories(CCMs), based on recommendations from the SC 10 (paras.28 & 43).

No single resolution was attained for any of these critical provisions at WCPFC11, although some constructive proposals had been prepared and submitted by certain CCMs for the deliberations by the Commission at WCPFC11.

Ironically, the reductions in catch quotas for longline fisheries of the major 5 CCMs will be implemented as originally described in the paragraph 40 of CMM2013-01. The imbalance of the burden between longline and purse seine fisheries brought about by the consequences from WCPFC11 may have to be rectified and/or compensated for in future years.

The 2013 purse seine catch estimate for bigeye (82,151t) was clearly the highest on record and exceeded the provisional longline bigeye catch (62,641t) for the first time. No progress at the WCPFC11 for the conservation and management of the bigeye stock in the WCPO will allow for such continued high fishing mortality by the purse seine fishery and ignore the assessments and recommendations from SC10 where new assessments for bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack stocks in the WCPO were conducted. Such recommendations shall provide the basis for the Commission's decision-making for CMMs.

CMM2013-01 stipulates that the objective of this CMM is to ensure that "the fishing mortality rate for bigeye tuna will be reduced to a level no greater than $F_{MSY}$ , i.e., $F/F_{MSY} \leqq 1$. This objective shall be achieved through a step by step approach through 2017 in accordance with this Measure"(para.3.).

In this connection, according to the report of SC10, the rate of $F/F_{MSY}$ for bigeye has increased from 1.46 (Base case 2011) to 1.57 (Base case 2014). This trend is the other way around compared to what the CMM intends and more strict measures will be required if the Commission respects the timeframe (achievement of $F/F_{MSY} \leqq 1$ by 2017) because CMM2013-01 was developed based on the SC's stock assessment for bigeye conducted in 2011.

On top of that, since the Commission was not able to make progress in the effective implementation of CMM2013-01 at this year's (2014) meeting, as a matter of course much more strict measures become necessary in later years.

# Topics

## IOTC Executive Secretary visits OPRT

Mr. Rondolph Payet, Executive Secretary of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), visited the OPRT office on October 22, 2014. The main purpose of his visit to Japan this time was to attend the 10th meeting of "the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch" held in Yokohama during the last week of October.

Mr. Payet expressed his appreciation for OPRT's cooperation with the IOTC and asked OPRT to further encourage its members to ensure all the vessels registered to OPRT comply with IOTC management measures related to, in particular, the transhipment at sea. He also mentioned that the IOTC Secretariat has provided training services to developing IOTC member coastal states for implementation of the Port State Measures adopted by the IOTC a few years ago and those states would soon commence the implementation of those measures.

Mr. Nagahata, Managing Director of OPRT, welcomed Mr. Payet and expressed willingness to continue OPRT's cooperation with the IOTC, as necessary. Nagahata requested Mr. Payet's endeavor to maintain the bigeye stock in the Indian Ocean at a healthy condition and level and, in any case, to avoid such deterioration of that stock as occurring in the neighboring Ocean, i.e. the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, chiefly due to the increased catch of juvenile bigeye by fish aggregating device (FADs) sets by purse seine vessels.

## The situation of overfishing of bigeye tuna reported at OPRT seminar; Participants are briefed on the up-to-date international tuna scientific bodies' assessments and advices for tuna stock management

On October 30, OPRT held its second seminar in fiscal 2014, under the theme "Basic Scientific Knowledge of International Tuna Conferences

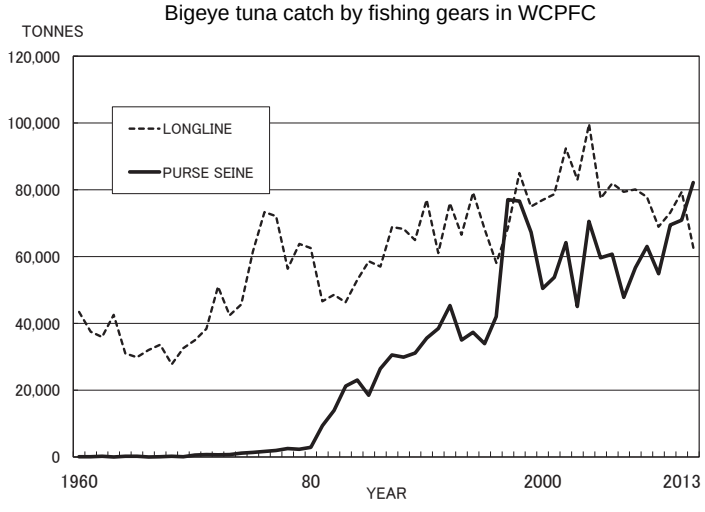
This Autumn and Winter." Two scientists from the National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries, Fisheries Research Agency, Japan, reported on the latest trend on the deteriorating status of bigeye tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) and the eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna stock which is on a track toward recovery.

Dr. Hiroaki Okamoto, Head of the Institute's Tuna and Skipjack Resources Group, commented on the bigeye tuna stock in the waters of the WCPO for which stock deterioration has long been reported. In August of this year, the WCPFC Scientific Committee reported that the current catch is largely exceeding the level of the sustainable use of the resources. The committee noted that the state of the WCPO bigeye stock has shifted from "overfishing is occurring but the stock is not overfished" to "overfishing and overfished."

As management measures for the bigeye stock, the WCPFC has established in recent years no-fishing periods ranging from three to four months for the operation using Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) by purse seiners. But the number of purse seiners operating within the tropical areas of the WCPO kept increasing, intensifying fishing pressures on the resources. Okamoto noted that the catch of bigeye tends to increase conspicuously in the first and second months after the end of the no-fishing period. He said that despite the implementation of management measures including no-fishing periods, the fishing pressure does not decrease at all because the number of purse seine fishing vessels keeps increasing. There is a need to limit the catch by setting overall quota for FAD sets by purse seiners, he added.

Mr. Hiroyuki Shimada, Director of the Bluefin Tuna Resources Division, spoke about the eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna stock which is recovering. At the Scientific Committee (SCRS) meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) in October this year, it was recommended that the total allowable catch (TAC) of bluefin tuna could be increased to the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) level (approximately 23+ thousand tons) under the scenario of the lowest possible recruitment, provided such increase should be more gradual in steps over two or three years. However, although, no agreement was reached on the concrete TAC figures because of the opposition of some scientists who viewed the future forecast as too optimistic.

Bigeye tuna catch by fishing gears in WCPFC




## OPRT carries out the 2014 Sashimi Tuna Campaign

During October 1-13, OPRT carried out the 2014 Sashimi Tuna Campaign with the cooperation of approximately 230 fish retailers in major cities of Japan. This was the 11th nationwide campaign conducted by OPRT. October 10 was specially featured as "the Day of Tuna." The Day was originally established by the Federation of Japan Tuna Fisheries Cooperative Association in 1986 based on a poem in Japan's oldest anthology "Man'yoshu" compiled by the Imperial command during the Nara Era (710-794 ).

With the support of 19 OPRT members including tuna longline fishing organizations in major countries as well as distributor and consumer organizations in Japan, OPRT distributed posters and pamphlets, which were designed to appeal "the Day of Tuna and more consumption of wild sashimi tuna" to customers.

OPRT also distributed the campaign materials to the restaurants, fish markets and fisheries cooperatives that had expressed their hope to use them in their independent sashimi tuna campaigns.

Through the campaign, OPRT stressed the importance of the sustainable use of tuna resources and the promotion of responsible tuna fisheries.

Further, as part of this campaign, OPRT held a seminar on October 10 in Tokyo. The event featured a talk show with Mr. Sotaro Usui, president of Usufuku Honten Co., in Kesennuma, Miyagi Prefecture, and Mr. Tsurizao Morita, owner of a specialized southern bluefin tuna store, Izugin, in Chiba Prefecture and the leader of a fish rock music band, "Gyoko." Mr. Usui presented his school lunch-related programs and wide-ranging tourism activities, in which his company organized hour-long cruises in the port area of Kesennuma over a 2-day period last April using a newly-built ship, in tie-up with JTB Corporation, a major tour agency.

After the seminar, a sampling and get-together party was held, in which tuna dishes, such as swordfish croquettes, that Usui's company provides for local school lunch, were offered. At the opening of the gathering, OPRT Managing Director Daishiro Nagahata said: "Consumers have an important role in ensuring sustainable tuna fisheries. OPRT has members not only from Japan but also from overseas. Longline fishing vessels registered with OPRT are operating in compliance with various regulations established to ensure the sustainable use of tuna resources. The members are supplying sashimi-grade tuna products to the Japanese market by bearing the costs for the stock conservation. We hope that consumers support such activities of OPRT-registered vessels by buying at least one more piece "saku" of wild tuna sashimi than usual during the campaign period."

The OPRT NEWSLETTER INTERNATIONAL was first published by the Organization for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fisheries in July 2003. Editor-in-chief: Daishiro Nagahata