China National Report for the Fifth Meeting of the Interim Scientific Committee (ISC) for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean

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1. Fisheries and Catches

Mainland China began to develop the distant water longline fishery in the late 1980's. In 1988, seven longliners, reconstructed from China's inshore trawlers, arrived in WCPO waters. This fleet rapidly increased to a peak of 457 vessels in 1994 that caught a nominal 12,885 metric tons. The fleet then steadily reduced, due to inefficient fishing and poor returns, until in 1998 it bottomed out at 66 vessels that caught 1024 tons. Since 1999 the fleet has been more stable at around 110-120 vessels and in the year 2001 there were 117 vessels. In 2002, 125 tuna fishing vessels including two purse seiners were in active in WCPO. In 2003, 183 tuna fishing vessels including 4 purse seiners were operated in WCPO.

Total catch of tuna and tuna-like species caught by Chinese fleet in the North Pacific Ocean from 1999 to 2003 is shown in table 1. Big increase of the total catch in 2003 compared with that in 2002 was mainly attributed to the increase of fishing boats (56 longliners more than that in 2002) and the PS catch.

Table 1 Nominal Catch of tuna and tuna-like species in NPO waters from 1999-2003 Unit: MT

Year BET SWO BIL YFT ALB OTH **TOTAL** 79.6 1999¹ 30.5 1196.9 1309 783.8 38.2 44.7 700.9 2000¹ 2002.5 1079.2 118.9 485.1 4113.2 151 276.5 20012 2002² 1573.1 862.2 173.5 210 122.7 178.6 3120.1 2003³ 258 2367 4022 272 396 151 **7466**

1:North of 20°N Catch; 2:Except the PS Catch; 3:Including the PS Catch (except the Skipjack).

Mainland China began to develop north Pacific Albacore fishery in 1999. In 1999, there were 12 fishing vessels involved in this fishery, those fishing vessels targeting Albacore with the Bigeye tuna, Yellowfin tuna, Swordfish etc. as the bycatch. Those fishing vessels are large scale normal freezer (-36°C) tuna longliners operated 2800 – 3300 hooks every day, with 19--23 hooks per basket depending on the fishing ground condition. Those fishing vessels are seasonal shifting the fishing ground targeting Albacore from the North Pacific Ocean to the South Pacific Ocean. The size of the longliners ranged from 334 to 2340GRT, with 493-855 GRT in dominance.

Albacore caught by those vessels generally operating in the high seas of the North Pacific Ocean were usually sold to the processing plant for canned products.

2. Fisheries Monitoring, Data Collecting and Reporting

Fisheries Monitoring

The Bureau of Fisheries of China issues the fishing permit to the fishing vessel and reviews the fishing activities of fishing company every year, including the quality of catch data submitted. Submitting the required catch data on time to the tuna working group will be taken as one of the most important records when issuing the fishing permit next year. If any violation is found against fishing activity, the penalty will be imposed on violator, the most severe one will include the cancellation of fishing permit.

Data collecting and reporting

"Tuna Working Group" is constructing tuna fishery database. All the fishing companies report by month the catch data to tuna working group office for analysis. The technical tuna-working group of Shanghai Fisheries University will further arrange and analyze the data from the "Tuna working group" and submit them to regional tuna fisheries management organization as required. So far, except the data collected by observer program, there lack of size frequency data from fishing companies. Some efforts, such as observer program are needed to collect such kind of size frequency data.

3. Research

Under the support of the Ministry of Agriculture, a comprehensive research project on the tuna and tuna fisheries in the Pacific Ocean (mainly in the East Pacific Ocean) was carried out in 2003. The main contents of the project include the collection of environmental information on the fishing ground, biological information of the catch. Scientists on board the fishing boats also recorded details about the sharks, discards, and incidental catch of sea turtles, if any.

Reference

1. SONG Liming, XU Liuxiong, Dai Xiaojie, 2004. National Fishery Report of China in WCPO. SCTB17 working paper. NFR-4.