



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
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**ANNUAL REPORT – PART 1
INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH, AND STATISTICS**

WCPFC-SC3-AR PART 1/WP-5

COOK ISLANDS

WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC FISHERIES COMMISSION

Third Scientific Committee Meeting

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Honolulu, HAWAII

COOK ISLANDS

National Fisheries Report

1. Fleet information

A total of 36 longline vessels were licensed to fish within the Convention area. Table 1 shows the number of active vessels fishing within the WCPFC area. In the southern Cook Islands (south of 15° latitude south), the 7 vessels in the 0-50 GRT class (in table 1) fished exclusively in waters surrounding the island of Rarotonga, whilst 21 vessels (greater than 51 GRT) fished predominantly in the northern Cook Islands waters (above 15° latitude south). The remainder fish outside the Cook Islands EEZ.

Table 1. Number of active longliners licensed to fish within the WCPFC area.

GRT Class			TOTAL
0-50	51-200	201-500	
7	18	5	30

2. Catch information

Total catch shows a decrease in catch within the WCPFC area compared to 2005. Albacore remains the dominant catch species, with the majority of this caught in the northern Cook Islands waters.

Table 2. Annual catch and effort estimates for the Cook Islands longline fleet, by species in the WCPFC Convention Area, 2001-2006 (Source: Logsheets data)

Year	Effort (hhks)	Catch (metric tonnes)								TOTAL
		ALB	BET	YFT	BLM	BUM	MLS	SWO	OTH	
2001	266	1.8	0.6	1.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.4	1.7	5.8
2002	11,371	490.0	55.9	42.3	0.3	13.6	13.8	12.5	75.1	703.5
2003	52,940	1358.2	203.5	178.5	5.8	47.7	40.7	157.3	277.6	2269.3
2004	78,248	1868.8	394.5	506.0	9.9	54.3	37.4	160.7	333.7	3365.3
2005	79,238	2371.2	220.2	412.7	8.3	140.9	42.9	102.8	251.0	3550.0
2006	61,529	2222.7	165.7	262.1	6.5	20.1	14.5	83.1	228.9	3003.6

Aside from environmental influences, the 15.4% drop in total catch and 22.3% reduction in effort (hook numbers) in 2006, compared to 2005, may be contributed to by the removal of 5 longliners ranging from 70-80 GRT from the Cook Islands fleet in August of 2005.

Figures 1 to 3 show the nominal catch rates for albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tuna by quarter from the year 2001 to 2006, within the Cook Islands Exclusive Economic Zone.

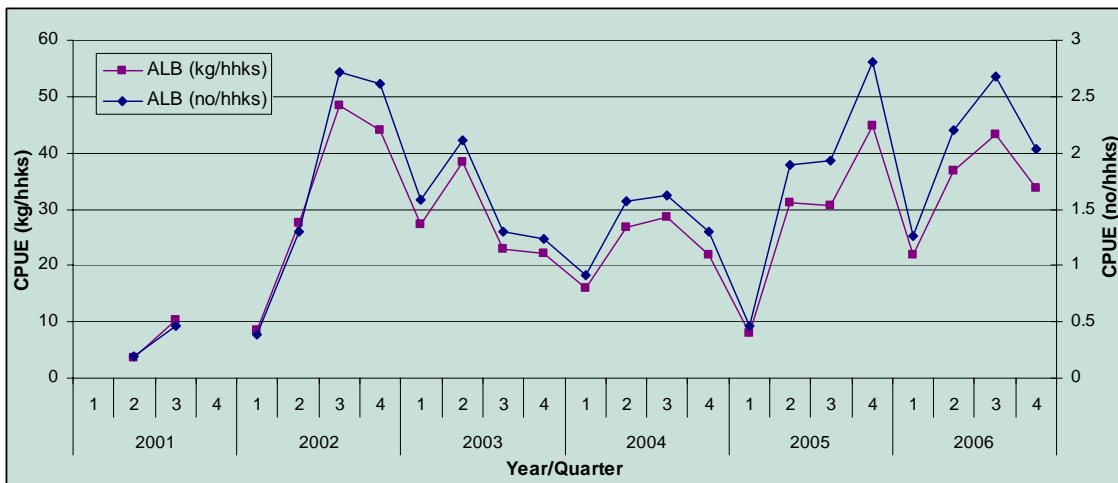


Figure 1. Trends in nominal catch rates of ALBACORE TUNA taken by longline fleets operating in the Cook Islands EEZ

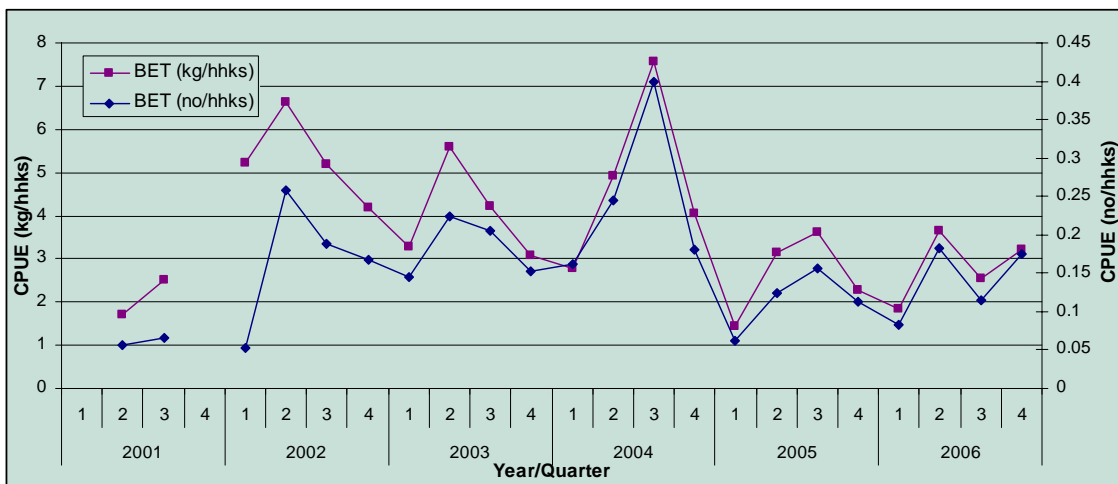


Figure 2. Trends in nominal catch rates of BIGEYE TUNA taken by longline fleets operating in the Cook Islands EEZ

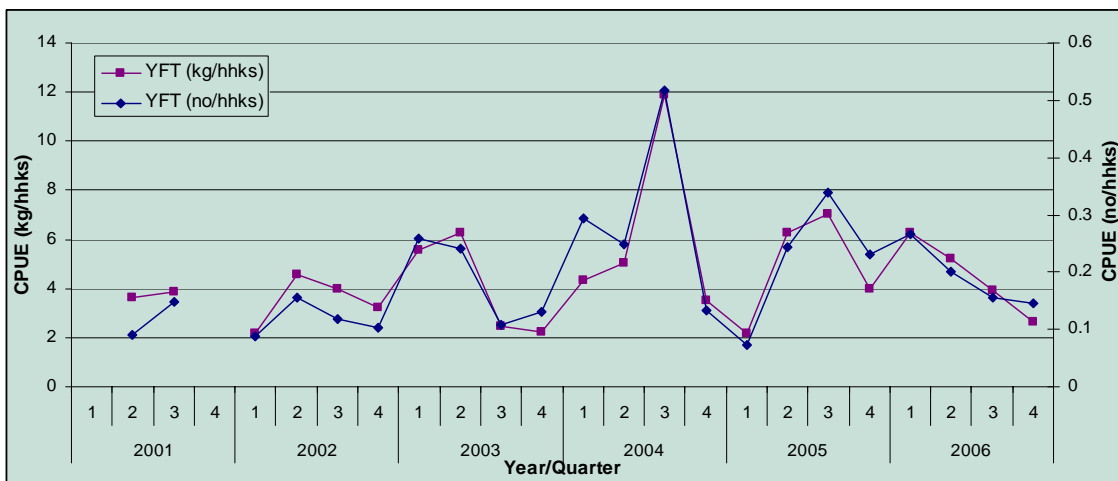


Figure 3. Trends in nominal catch rates of YELLOWFIN TUNA taken by longline fleets operating in the Cook Islands EEZ

3. Statistics

Monitoring programmes

3.1 *Summary of port sampling and observer programmes*

Very little port sampling was done in 2006 due to few staff members to carry out this task. Less than 5% of vessels unloading in Rarotonga were sampled. In March of 2007, a full time port sampler was employed to improve the amount of this data collected and to raise coverage rates.

Only 1 observer trip was done in 2007, due to the unavailability of trained observers and the difficulty in retaining them to the programme. Efforts are now being made to recruit observers from other Pacific Islands nations, with the assistance of OFP, SPC. There is a small amount of observer data from 2003 to 2005, and there have been no recorded incidental catches of sea birds, turtles and marine mammals, however, shark catches are underestimated and some finning occurred during this period.

2.2. *Statistical data collection systems in use*

The data collection systems currently in use are Logsheet forms (SPC), Unloadings Forms, Trip Completion Report forms, Observer Data Forms (SPC), Port Sampling Data forms (SPC).