
Full Retention in tuna fisheries: Benefits, costs, and unintended consequences

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Abstract

Calls for full retention of target and non-target species by longline and purse seine gear types have been made throughout the tuna world by a variety of influential actors and institutions. For example a recent draft conservation and management measure for yellowfin, skipjack and bigeye tuna in the western and central Pacific ocean (WCPO) included a provision calling for full retention of all species caught by longline and purse seine gear types. ISSF's resolution 11-03 also calls for "total retained catch on board except those individuals that are released alive or those whose retention is prohibited by a RFMO resolution or a flag state's national law". Full retention policies may be considered by several of the tuna regional fisheries management organizations in the coming year.

This paper will review the benefits and costs of a retain-all strategy for tuna fisheries in the WCPO. Using bycatch data from observers and logbooks from the United States purse seine and longline fleets operating in the WCPO, we will explore the types and magnitude of fish discarded. For the purse seine fishery, this information will be used to estimate direct impacts of off-loading at the initial point of landing in key Pacific Island ports. We will explore implications by drawing on experience from U.S ports in the region. We will also examine implications of a retain-all strategy on WCPO longline fisheries. The intent of this effort is to allow participants in tuna RFMOs the ability to more fully consider the implications of retain-all policies.

Keywords: Western and Central Pacific Ocean, Purse Seine, Longline, Bycatch

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