

Greenpeace and the ISSF Environmental Stakeholder Committee

It is widely acknowledged that many tuna fisheries worldwide are poorly managed. As a result, overfishing is leading to serious impacts at the ecosystem level which are already damaging the health of the world's oceans. Alongside the poor results of independent reviews into the performance of several Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), who are responsible for maintaining healthy stocks, the depletion of some tuna stocks such as bluefin, big eye and yellowfin tuna serves only to illustrate the need for urgent and far-reaching reform of the global tuna industry.

Destructive and wasteful fishing operations have further damaged the ocean through high levels of bycatch – the capture of non-target species like sharks, rays, turtles and other fish, as well as juveniles of vulnerable tuna species. We urgently need to reform the tuna industry to stop fishing on overexploited stocks, remove overcapacity in fishing fleets and ban fishing methods that have proved to be wasteful due to high bycatch rates.

In this context, Greenpeace has welcomed the fact that many of the world's major tuna companies have acknowledged the crisis and formed the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation to try and tackle it. It has been encouraging to hear ISSF's concerns about the ongoing mismanagement of the world's tuna stocks by RFMOs because of these organisations' routine ignorance of the scientific advice.

However, while Greenpeace has maintained an open dialogue with the ISSF about ways to improve the global tuna industry, there are some significant policy issues on which we disagree and for these reasons we have declined an invitation to join their Environmental Stakeholder Committee.

Fish Aggregation Devices and bycatch

Above all, Greenpeace is not prepared to accept the ISSF's position on the use of Fish Aggregation devices (FADs) in purse seine fisheries, which are associated with high levels of wasteful bycatch – where species such as sharks, rays, turtles and non-target fish are also caught in the nets. We believe that the ISSF's position on FADs is formed by economic interest enabling high volume, cheaper fishing and not on the science that clearly shows the benefits for our ocean environment of not using FADs with purse seining.

It is clear from the available science that the continued use of FADs is a major barrier to achieving sustainability in the sector. Despite the fact that many major retailer and tinned tuna brands have now undertaken to ban the use of tuna caught using purse seine nets with FADs (including ISSF member *Princes*), it is clear that

the ISSF is now acting as a block to further reduce and eliminate this fishing method, by providing a common position opposed to banning FADs behind which ISSF member companies can shelter. Far from being led by science, this move now risks seriously undermining the prospects for rapid transformation in the industry.

The ISSF defends FADs by citing a bycatch rate that appears to be low – in the Western Pacific for example, they claim that the bycatch of non-target species is just 1.7% of the total catch. The ISSF have in fact selected the lowest figure on a range of possible bycatch levels (the bycatch can be much higher, up to 10%). They have also completely left out of the figure the high bycatch rates of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna that are associated with the use of purse seining around FADs.

Purse seine fisheries for skipjack are one of the largest volume fisheries in the world, second only to the Peruvian anchovies fisheries. Given the large volume of these fisheries, even a 1% bycatch rate can have an enormous impact on marine life and vulnerable species. It's worth looking more closely at what 1% bycatch actually looks like. The total catch in the Western Pacific in 2009 was 1,789,979 tonnes. Of this, 1,585,307 tonnes were caught by purse seines. According to some reports, about 70% of purse seines targeting skipjack use FADs – around 1,109,715 tonnes. Even if we underestimate bycatch with FADs at just 1%, that would create 11,097 tonnes. Given that the average weight of a small tin of tuna is 95 grams, this means that the use of FADs in the Pacific tuna industry generates 116,810,526 tins of bycatch. The reality is that bycatch levels are far higher than 1%, especially if you take into account the bycatch of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna that are not included in the figures.

We are surprised that an organisation claiming to work for sustainability can support a form a fishing with levels of waste that are this high. Greenpeace cannot. We are encouraging industry to ban the use of FADs in skipjack fisheries in favour of pole and line fishing and purse seining without the use of FADs.

Pole and Line fishing

Pole and line fishing is *part* of a sustainable solution, it is not the only solution. Fishing with purse seine nets but without the use of FADs is also a significant improvement because the bycatch levels are much lower. Already many major retailers have committed to banning FADs and moving to these better fishing methods. They include Tesco (the world's third largest retailer), Walmart-owned ASDA and major tinned tuna brand *Princes*. Interestingly, *Princes* are a member of the ISSF. If they can do it, why can't other ISSF members?

As with all sustainable fishing operations, great care needs to be taken to ensure pole and line operations and purse seining without FADs are run sustainably and responsibly.

Marine Reserves

It's easy for seafood companies to say they support marine reserves in theory, but the debate has moved on. Now, progressive companies are helping to make the theory a reality by agreeing not to take fish from specific areas so that they are protected. Far from trying to close areas of the ocean by arbitrary percentages, businesses, NGOs, community groups and other decision-makers are now involved in identifying specific sites for protection that will help tuna stocks recover.

Pacific Island nations are leading the campaign for the protection of five large areas known collectively as the Pacific Commons. These protected areas are already being supported by several major international retailers and ISSF members *Bolton*, *Princes* and *John West*, who have agreed to stop fishing there. If ISSF members are serious about progressing the creation of marine reserves they should urgently lend their support to the Pacific Island countries to protect these areas and ensure they do not source any tuna from these areas.