

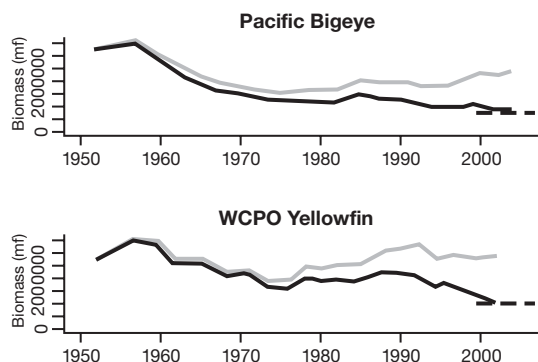
## Pacific tuna faces crisis

**Our ocean unites us and sustains us. Every second breath we take is thanks to our ocean.**

The Pacific Island countries depend on tuna resources both as a source of income and food. The Western & Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) tuna fishery is the most productive in the world. Around half of the total global tuna supply was caught here annually from 1994- 2004.

This fishery supplies:

63% of global skipjack catch, 35% of yellowfin, 55% of global albacore, and 25% of bigeye.<sup>1</sup>



Graph 1: The bottom lines in the graphs at left show the actual levels of bigeye and yellowfin based on catch data, compared with the top, grey line, which estimates the level the stock would be at in the absence of industrial fishing. The straight line at far right on each graph shows the point beyond which they will become overfished. according to SPC data in 2006  
[http://www.spc.int/oceanfish/Docs/Research/sibert2006\\_tuna\\_biomass.pdf](http://www.spc.int/oceanfish/Docs/Research/sibert2006_tuna_biomass.pdf)



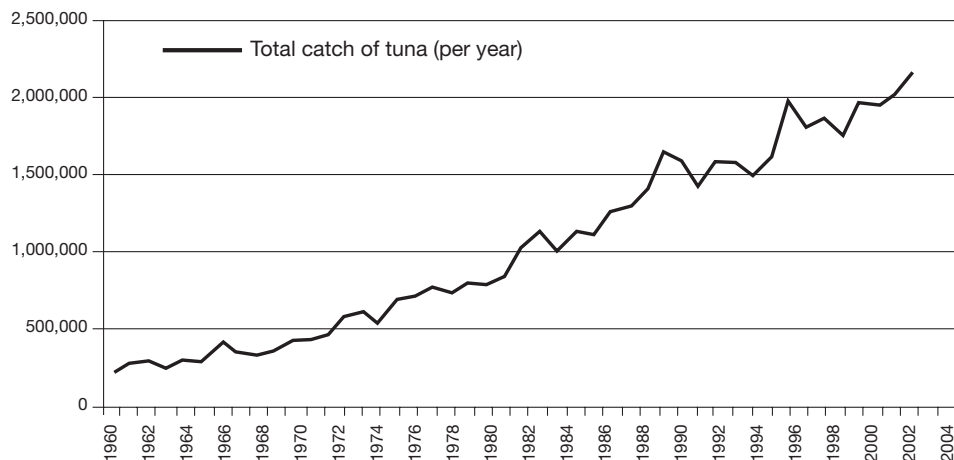
**Big Eye being processed for export in Marshall Islands**

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### Graph 1: Bigeye and Yellowfin catches

Alarming fisheries scientists have found that two principal tuna stocks – bigeye and yellowfin - have suffered considerable reduction in biomass. Pacific bigeye stock is at only 39% of unexploited biomass, and yellowfin is at only 36%.<sup>2</sup>

How did this stark decline happen? Since 1960 the official catch taken from the region rose nearly ten-fold from 265,249 tons in 1960 to more than 2 million tons in 2005.



**Graph 2: Shows the official catch increasing steadily from 200,000 tons in 1960 to well over 2 million tons by 2005**

### HOW PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES CAN SAVE PACIFIC TUNA

- Demand and then implement an immediate effort reduction of 50% in tuna fishing effort
- Negotiate all fisheries agreements in a unified block to maximise their trading power
- Close pirate fishing loopholes and ban all transshipment and refuelling at sea
- Set up no-take marine reserves in high seas areas, and set aside up to 40% of the Pacific Ocean as marine reserves in the long term



Because of the steady decline of yellowfin and bigeye stocks, fisheries scientists have warned since 2001 that strong measures are needed to conserve stocks. The fishing industry has been very slow to respond to these warning signals and have made no moves to reduce fishing effort and modify fishing practices.

**Greenpeace supports the resolution of the Forum Fisheries Committee (FFC) in June this year to implement effort reduction of 10% for yellowfin and 25% for bigeye. But we believe that even greater reductions are needed to preserve the tuna stocks. With scientists warning that stocks could be in serious trouble within 3 years, Greenpeace urges effort reductions of 50% across all Pacific tuna fisheries be implemented, with particular focus on purse seine fisheries.**



**Purse seiner in high seas area hauling in a tuna catch from a FAD**

© Greenpeace/Grace 2004

### **Less fishing means more money**

For many Pacific Island Countries (PICs) dependent on the revenue from access fees, the prospect of making such a huge reduction is daunting. But effort reduction is in fact the key to increasing fishery revenue in the short term as well as securing the survival of the industry in the long-term.

Studies show that effort reduction, achieved by cutting the number of fishing vessels given access to the Pacific tuna fishery, could result in increases in profits between 10% and 40% of gross revenue. A recent study shows that a 36% effort reduction in the Pacific purse seine effort and 12% and 19% reductions in the frozen and fresh long-line fisheries in the short term, would increase the profitability of the fishery by 30% in the long term.<sup>3</sup>

Effort reduction can therefore lead to more profitable returns to the foreign fleets, which should increase the returns they pay to the PICs accordingly. Ideally returns to PICs should increase from the current 6% to 30%-50% of the value of the fishery.

### **Netting juvenile yellowfin and bigeye tuna with skipjack**

The large industrial purse seiners that go after Skipjack have increased their efficiency enormously in the last decade. In addition Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs), are now used extensively in the Pacific. These are floating platforms to which tuna are instinctively drawn, that seine fleets place on the ocean surface. In targeting skipjack schooling under FADs, seiners therefore also end up catching large

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**Stolen fish – foreign fishers plundering the pacific**

The tuna fishery is one of the Pacific’s most important sources of income, responsible for around 11% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the combined regional economy, and at least half of the region’s exports.

The value of access agreements to Pacific Island Countries in 2003 was conservatively estimated at over US\$70 million<sup>4</sup>, and is now close to \$80million. This represents around 6% of the landed catch value – of around \$US3 billion.<sup>5</sup>

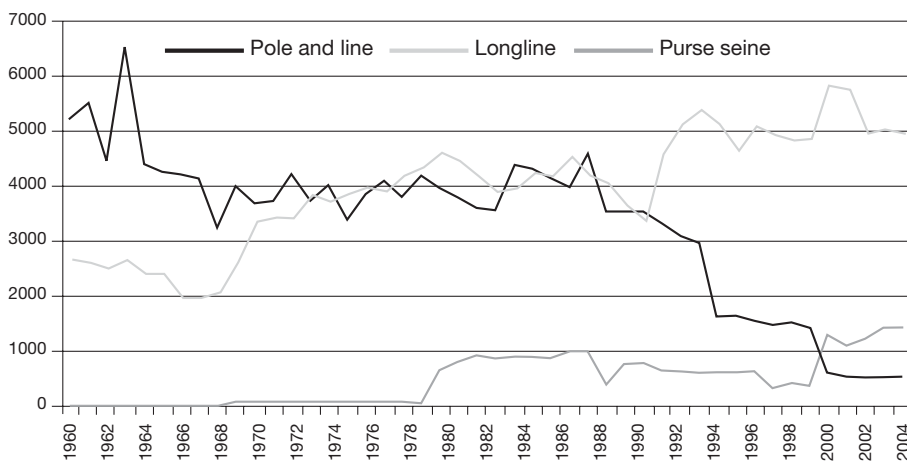
The industrial fishing methods used by the foreign fleets are highly efficient at stripping fish from our ocean. For example a modern super-seiner can take up to 11,000 tons of fish per season. In comparison - a fleet of small aluminium boats and outrigger canoes in Niue caught an estimated 100 tonnes of the main tuna species for the whole of 2003 – a super seiner would catch this much fish in just two days.

On top of the inequity of fishery agreements and methods, the Pacific is losing even more of the wealth of the fishery through pirate fishing.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates that world-wide, pirate fishing takes about a quarter of the annual global fish catch

In the Pacific, a conservative estimate puts the catch loss to pirate fishing at 5-15 per cent of the total catch - that’s up to 300,000 tons of tuna, worth between US\$134 to US\$400 million per year.<sup>6</sup> This is up to 4 times the revenue earned by Pacific Island states from access fees.<sup>7</sup> Not only do PICs lose this income, they receive no tax income, suffer the loss of a diminished resource and lost potential catches.

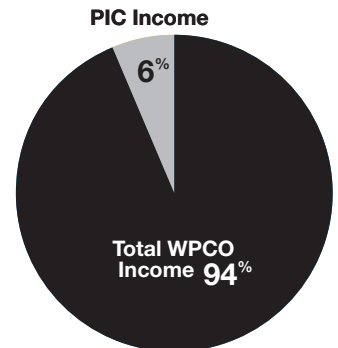
**The rush for the last fish**



**Graph 4: Shows huge increase in high-take purse seine and long-line vessels (and decline in less intensive Pole and Line vessels) Ref: WCPFC Yearbook, 2005**

The UN states that 75% of the world’s fisheries are fully exploited, over-exploited or depleted. In some regions such as West Africa these fishery crises due to industrial fishing practises by distant water fleets are seriously undermining local food security and employment. As fish stocks collapse in the north, foreign fleets are moving to the Pacific, rather than fixing the problems in their own waters. More and bigger ships are entering the Pacific fishing grounds each year.

**TOTAL FISH INCOME US\$3 billion**



**Graph 3: The Pacific only keeps 6% of the value of our \$US3billion tuna industry**



**Greenpeace exposed a pirate vessel in Suva harbour disguising its name so it can continue to fish illegally in Pacific waters.**  
© Greenpeace/ Turaganivalu October 2006

**INCREASED SIGHTINGS OF ILLEGAL FISHING VESSELS**

There’s been a dramatic increase in the number of sightings of unauthorised fishing vessels in the western and central Pacific Ocean in the last three months. And it is alarming fisheries officials in the Pacific Islands region.

Speaking at a regional meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency in Wellington, New Zealand, the Executive Director of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, Andrew Wright, said there is strong evidence of a significant increase in illegal fishing ranging throughout the central Pacific through French Polynesia, Cook Islands and Kiribati.

The majority of reports received so far concern large purse seiners flagged to Latin American countries. These vessels normally operate in the eastern Pacific. But as fishing conditions for tuna in that region are reported to be depressed this year.

[http://www.islandsbusiness.com/islands\\_business/](http://www.islandsbusiness.com/islands_business/) - March 2007

Since the 1960s the number of long-liners licensed to fish in the WCPO has nearly doubled from 2,726 to 5,015 vessels and the number of purse seiners has increased from 0 to 1,430. The purse seine fleet increase is significant because each purse seiner can take between 2,000 to 10,000 tons of fish per season.

"Historically, the dominant foreign purse seine fleets were owned by companies in Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and the the US, but since the 1990s onwards new entrants have played an increased role, namely the Philippines and, to a lesser extent, China, EU and New Zealand."<sup>8</sup>

With the new Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU under negotiation, we can expect at least several more large purse seiners and other types of vessels that have been refused licenses in other oceans to seek entry into the Pacific.

The June 2007 FFA list has 2 Spanish flagged seiners, 3 longliners and 2 Dutch owned seiners with a Netherlands Antilles flag of convenience. Recently an EU license application was filed with Kiribati for one of the largest purse seiners in the world, the Spanish Albatun Tres.

Currently the bulk of the EU fleet is still based in the Atlantic, Indian and Eastern Pacific Oceans. But the EPA negotiations will result in many more of these vessels heading to the WCPO. PICs must conduct these negotiations with their eyes wide open, and fully aware of the EU's poor track record in these oceans.

### How we can save Pacific tuna

It's not too late. The Pacific can be saved from empty nets by taking the following action now:

- Pacific Island Nations must demand and then implement an immediate effort reduction of 50% in tuna fishing effort in the Pacific with a focus on the purse seine vessels at the tuna commission meeting in December 2007.
- Pacific Island Countries must negotiate all fisheries agreements as a unified block to maximise their negotiating power with distant water fishing nations and according to Greenpeace fair fisheries principles.
- Eliminate pirate fishing and ban all transshipment and refuelling at sea. Pacific Island countries must demand more enforcement and surveillance resources from key foreign fishing nations, and aid partners.
- Demand that the WCPFC immediate establish no-take marine reserves in the enclosed high seas areas bound by Pacific Island Countries.. And in the long term establish up to 40% of the Pacific Ocean as no-take marine reserves, to safeguard the rich marine life of the Pacific Ocean and to ensure sustainably and livelihoods to the future generations.
- Negotiate intra-regional cooperation for the development of domestic fishery industries



**Slim pickings for one purse seiner in the Pacific**

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