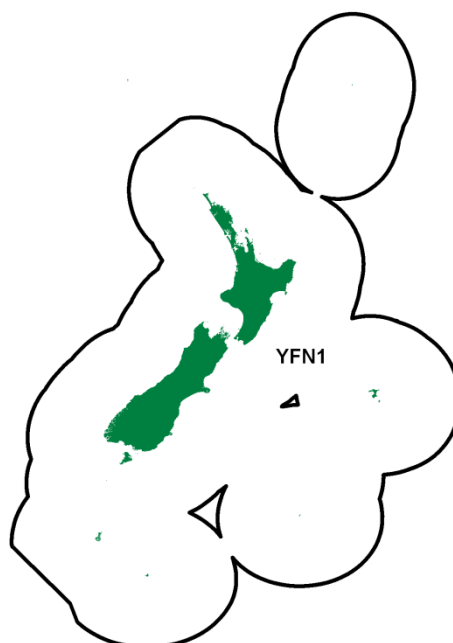# YELLOWFIN TUNA (YFN)

(Thunnus albacares)

1. FISHERY SUMMARY

Yellowfin tuna were introduced into the QMS on 1 October 2004 under a single QMA, YFN 1, with allowances, TACC, and TAC in Table 1.

Table 1: Recreational and Customary non-commercial allowances, TACC and TAC (all in tonnes) for yellowfin tuna.

Fishstock	Recreational Allowance	Customary non-commercial Allowance	Other mortality	TACC	TAC
YFN 1	60	30	5	263	358

Yellowfin tuna were added to the Third Schedule of the 1996 Fisheries Act with a TAC set under s14 because yellowfin tuna is a highly migratory species and it is not possible to estimate MSY for the part of the stock that is found within New Zealand fisheries waters.

Management of the yellowfin stock throughout the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) is the responsibility of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). Under this regional convention New Zealand is responsible for ensuring that the management measures applied within New Zealand fisheries waters are compatible with those of the Commission.

At its second annual meeting (2005) the WCPFC passed a Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) (this is a binding measure that all parties must abide by throughout the convention area including EEZs) relating to conservation and management of tunas. Key aspects of this resolution were presented in the 2006 Plenary document. That measure was reviewed by the Scientific Committee (SC) and further recommendations were made such that at its third annual meeting (2006) the WCPFC passed an additional CMM relating to conservation and management of yellowfin tuna (http://www.wcpfc.int/). A further measure CMM2008-01 was agreed to in December 2009, the aim of which was to:
- "Ensure through the implementation of compatible measures for the high seas and EEZs that bigeye and yellowfin tuna stocks are maintained at levels capable of producing their

maximum sustainable yield; as qualified by relevant environmental and economic factors including the special requirements of developing States in the Convention area as expressed by Article 5 of the Convention.

- Achieve, through the implementation of a package of measures, over a three-year period commencing in 2009, a minimum of 30% reduction in bigeye tuna fishing mortality from the annual average during the period 2001–2004 or 2004;
- Ensure that there is no increase in fishing mortality for yellowfin tuna beyond the annual average during the period 2001–2004 average or 2004; and
- Adopt a package of measures that shall be reviewed annually and adjusted as necessary by the Commission taking account of the scientific advice available at the time as well as the implementation of the measures. In addition, this review shall include any adjustments required by Commission decisions regarding management objectives and reference points."

This measure is large and detailed with numerous exemptions and provisions. Despite this, effort reductions are being attempted through seasonal FAD closures, high seas area closures (in high seas pockets) for the purse seine fleets, and longline effort reductions as well as other methods. At the 2009 meeting the Scientific Committee recommended that this measure would need to be strengthened if it was to achieve its objectives.

1.1 Commercial fisheries

Most of the commercial catch of yellowfin takes place in the equatorial Western Pacific Ocean (WPO) where they are taken primarily by purse seine and longline. Commercial catches by distant water Asian longliners of yellowfin tuna, in New Zealand waters, began in 1962. Catches through the 1960s averaged 283 t. Yellowfin were not a target species for these fleets and catches remained small and seasonal. Domestic tuna longline vessels began targeting bigeye tuna in 1990–91 in northern waters of FMA 1, FMA 2 and FMA 9 (Table 2). Catches of yellowfin have increased with increasing longline effort, but as yellowfin availability fluctuates dramatically between years, catches have been variable. In addition, small catches of yellowfin are made by pole-and-line fishing (about 4 t per year) and also by trolling (about 14 t per year). Figure 1 shows historic landings and longline fishing effort for YFN stocks.

Catches from within New Zealand fisheries waters are very small (0.07% average for 2000–2011) compared to those from the greater stock in the WCPO (Table 3). In contrast to New Zealand, where yellowfin are taken almost exclusively by longline, 50% of the WCPO catches of yellowfin tuna are taken by purse seine and other surface gears (e.g., ring-nets and pole-and-line).

Table 2: **Reported catches or landings (t) of yellowfin tuna by fleet and Fishing Year. NZ: New Zealand domestic and charter fleet, ET: catches outside these areas from New Zealand flagged longline vessels, JPNFL: Japanese foreign licensed vessels, KORFL: foreign licensed vessels from the Republic of Korea. LFRR: Estimated landings from Licensed Fish Receiver Returns and MHR: Monthly Harvest Return Data from 2001–02 onwards [Continued on next page].**

| Fishing Year | YFN 1 (all FMAs) | | | | LFRR | NZ ET |
	JPNFL	KORFL	NZ/MHR	Total		
1979–80	10.1			10.1		
1980–81	79.1	29.9		109		
1981–82	89.4	6.7		96.1		
1982–83	22.4	6.6		29		
1983–84	46.1	12.8		58.9		
1984–85	21.3	64.5		85.8		
1985–86	92.5	3.3		95.8		
1986–87	124.8	29		153.8		
1987–88	35.2	37.3		72.5		
1988–89	11.5	1.8		13.3	19	
1989–90	29.1		4.3	33.4	6.3	
1990–91	7.4		10.7	18.1	19.9	
1991–92	0.2		16.1	16.3	11.8	
1992–93			10.1	10.1	69.7	0.2
1993–94			50.5	50.5	114.4	1.5
1994–95			122.2	122.2	193.4	0.3

Table 2 [Continued]: Reported catches or landings (t) of yellowfin tuna by fleet and Fishing Year. NZ: New Zealand domestic and charter fleet, ET: catches outside these areas from New Zealand flagged longline vessels, JPNFL: Japanese foreign licensed vessels, KORFL: foreign licensed vessels from the Republic of Korea. LFRR: Estimated landings from Licensed Fish Receiver Returns and MHR: Monthly Harvest Return Data from 2001–02 onwards.

1995–96	251.6	251.6	156.7	7.4
1996–97	144.1	144.1	105.3	0.2
1997–98	93.6	93.6	174.7	2.3
1998–99	136.1	136.1	100.6	0.3
1999–00	77.8	77.8	168	2.1
2000–01	123.5	123.5	62.5	3.1
2001–02	64.5	56.7	61.9	1.9
2002–03	41.8	39.7	42.1	2.1
2003–04	57.7	21.1	21.4	36.6
2004–05	42.0	36.1	41.4	6.0
2005–06	9.3	9.2	8.8	0.1
2006–07	18.8	17.3	19.7	1.0
2007–08	22.2	22.4	22.3	0.2
2008–09	5.4	43.6	43.3	3 200
2009–10	6.2	6.2	48.2	1 264
2010–11	2.8	2.8	234.8	818
2011–12	2.2	2.3	742.6	966
2012–13	0.6	0.6	249.1	1 042

Table 3: Reported total New Zealand within EEZ landings, catch made by New Zealand vessels outside New Zealand fishery waters (NZ ET)* and WCPO landings (t) of yellowfin tuna from 1991 to 2013.

Year	NZ landings (t)	WCPO landings (t)	Year	NZ landings (t)	NZ ET landings (t)	WCPO landings (t)
1991	6	403 152	2001	138	955	492 971
1992	20	413 882	2002	25	3 531	463 860
1993	34	351 556	2003	38	3 646	517 362
1994	53	391 108	2004	20	2 658	513 200
1995	141	381 423	2005	36	2 486	545 391
1996	198	351 762	2006	14	2 679	493 261
1997	143	457 984	2007	25	2 329	500 120
1998	127	550 299	2008	12	3 200	580 241
1999	154	479 090	2009	3	1 264	529 426
2000	107	523 956	2010	6	818	542 438
			2011	3	966	518 611
			2012	2	1 042	639 912
			2013	1	837	529 437

Source: Ministry of Fisheries Licensed Fish Receiver Reports, Solander Fisheries Ltd, Anon. 2006, Williams & Terawasi 2011; WCPO landings sourced from WCPFC Yearbook 2012 (Anon 2013).
*New Zealand purse seine vessels operating in tropical regions catch moderate levels of yellowfin tuna when fishing around Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) and on free schools. These catches are only estimates of catch based on analysis of observer data across all fleets rather than specific data for New Zealand vessels. In addition, catches of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin tuna are often combined on catch effort returns due to difficulties in differentiating the catch.
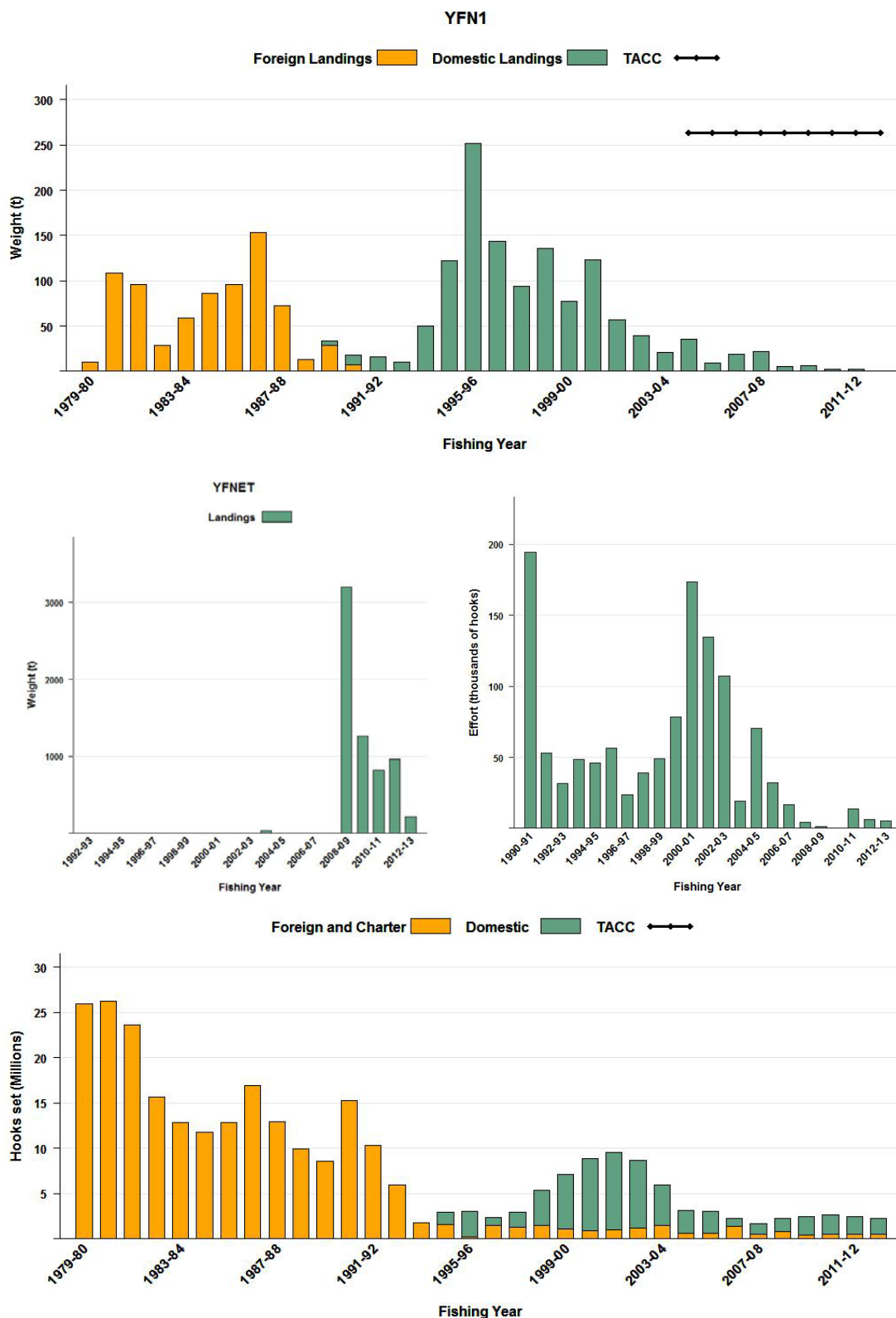
Figure 1: [Top] Yellowfin catch by foreign licensed and New Zealand vessels from 1979–80 to 2012–13 within New Zealand waters (YFN 1), and [middle] 1992–93 to 2012–13 on the high seas (YFN ET). [Middle] Fishing effort (number of hooks set) for all high seas New Zealand flagged surface longline vessels from 1990–91 to 2012–13. [Bottom] Yellowfin effort by domestic vessels (including effort by foreign vessels chartered by New Zealand fishing companies) from 1979–80 to 2011–12.

The majority of yellowfin tuna are caught in the bigeye tuna surface longline fishery (67%) (Figure 2), however, across all longline fisheries albacore make up the bulk of the catch (33%) and yellowfin tuna make up only 2% of the catch (Figure 3). Longline fishing effort is distributed along the east coast of the North Island and the south west coast of the South Island. The west coast South Island fishery predominantly targets southern bluefin tuna, whereas the east coast of the North Island targets a range of species including bigeye, swordfish, and southern bluefin tuna (Figure 4).
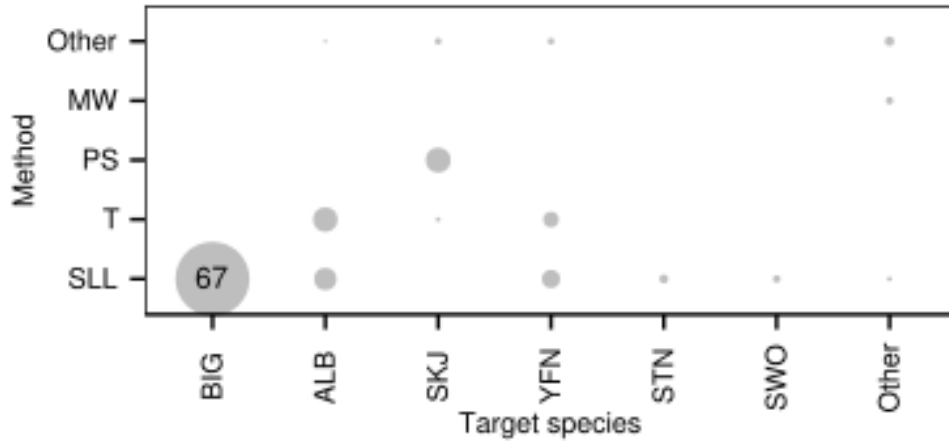

Figure 2: A summary of the proportion of landings of yellowfin tuna taken by each target fishery and fishing method. The area of each circle is proportional to the percentage of landings taken using each combination of fishing method and target species. The number in the circle is the percentage. SLL = surface longline, T = trawl, PS = purse seine, MW = mid-water trawl (Bentley et al 2013).
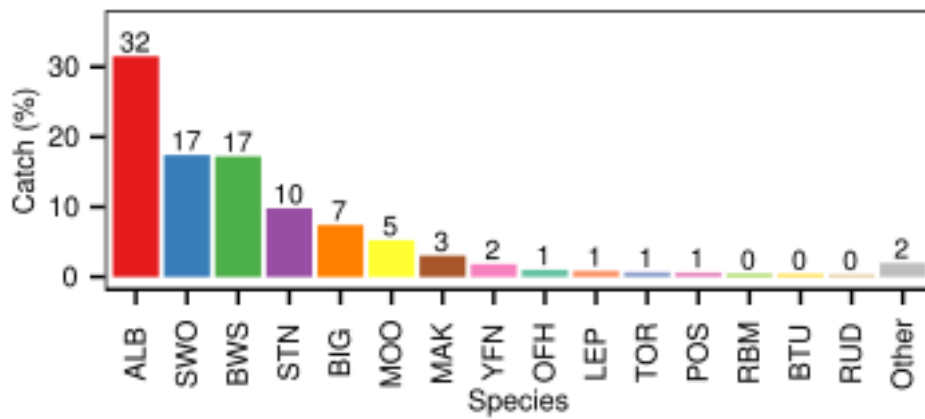

Figure 3: A summary of species composition of the reported surface longline catch. The percentage by weight of each species is calculated for all surface longline trips (Bentley et al. 2013).

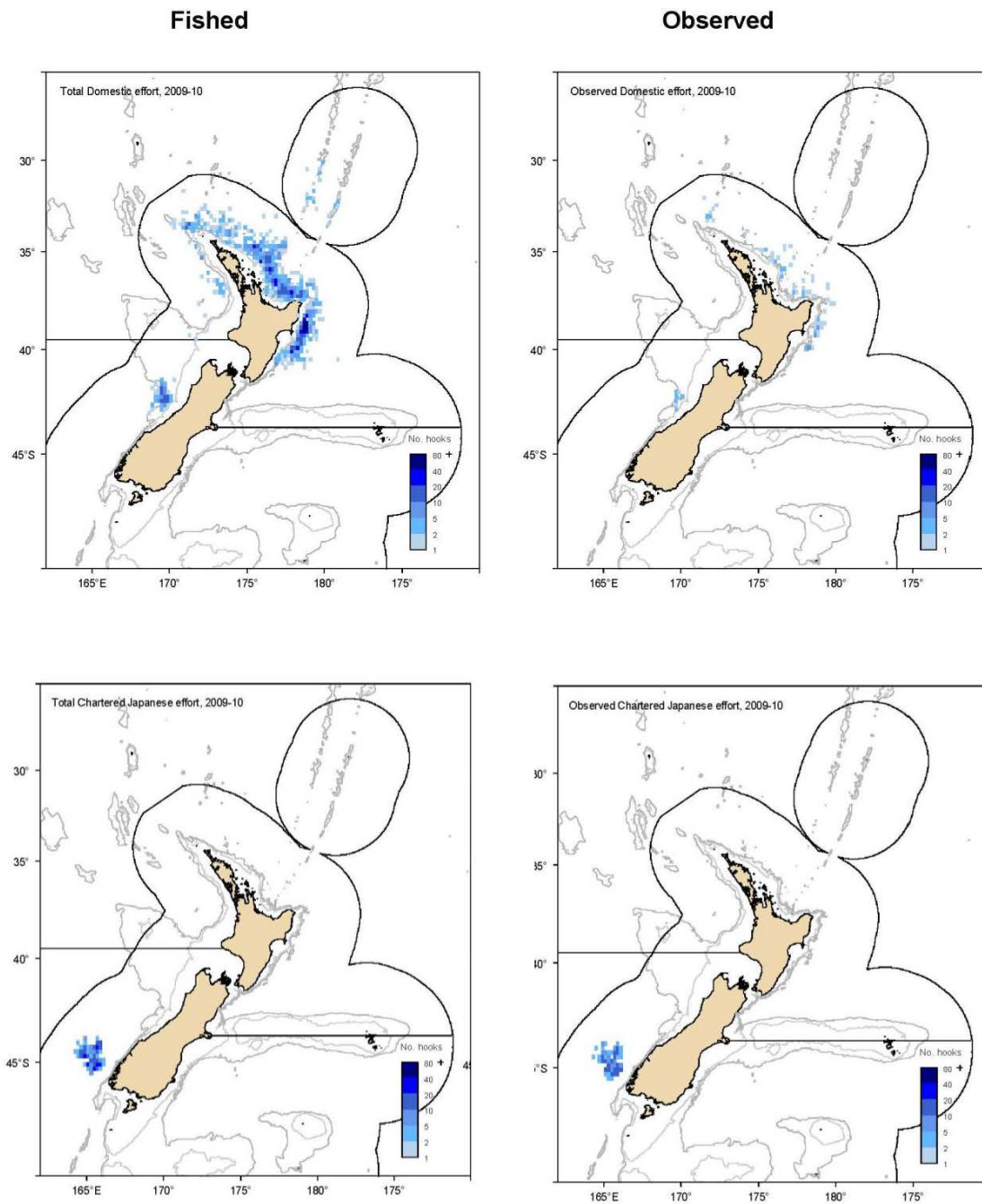**Fished**   **Observed**

Figure 4: Distribution of fishing positions for domestic (top two panels) and charter (bottom two panels) vessels, for the 2009–10 fishing year, displaying both fishing effort (left) and observer effort (right).

Across all fleets in the longline fishery 79.4% of the yellowfin tuna were alive when brought to the side of the vessel (Table 4). The domestic fleets retain between 78 and 100% of their yellowfin tuna catch (Table 5).

Table 4: Percentage of yellowfin tuna (including discards) that were alive or dead when arriving at the longline vessel and observed during 2006–07 to 2009–10, by fishing year, fleet and region. Small sample sizes (number observed < 20) were omitted Griggs & Baird (2013).

Year	Fleet	Area	% alive	% dead	Number
2006–07	Domestic	North	75.0	25.0	28
	Total		**78.3**	**21.7**	**46**
2007–08	Domestic	North	75.8	24.2	33
	Total		**75.8**	**24.2**	**33**
2008–09	**Total**		**88.9**	**11.1**	**9**
2009–10	**Total**		**88.9**	**11.1**	**9**
Total all strata			**79.4**	**20.6**	**97**

Table 5: Percentage yellowfin that were retained, or discarded or lost, when observed on a longline vessel during 2006–07 to 2009–10, by fishing year and fleet. Small sample sizes (number observed < 20) omitted Griggs & Baird (2013).

Year	Fleet	% retained	% discarded or lost	Number
Total all strata		**71.0**	**29.0**	**617**
2006–07	Domestic	78.6	21.4	28
	Total	**80.4**	**19.6**	**46**
2007–08	Domestic	90.9	9.1	33
	Total	**90.9**	**9.1**	**33**
2008–09	**Total**	**100.0**	**0.0**	**9**
2009–10	**Total**	**100.0**	**0.0**	**9**
Total all strata		**87.6**	**12.4**	**97**

1.2 Recreational fisheries

Recreational fishers used to make regular catches of yellowfin tuna particularly during summer months and especially in FMA 1 and FMA 2 where the recreational fishery targeted yellowfin as far south as the Wairarapa coast.

While the magnitude of the recreational catch is unknown catches weighed at sport fishing clubs have dropped from over 1000 fish per year in the 1990s to an average of 30 per year in the last 3 years.

1.3 Customary non-commercial fisheries

An estimate of the current customary catch is not available.

1.4 Illegal catch

There is no known illegal catch of yellowfin tuna in the EEZ. Estimates of illegal catch are not available, but are probably insignificant.

1.5 Other sources of mortality

The estimated overall incidental mortality rate from observed longline effort is 0.22% of the catch. Discard rates are 0.92% on average from observer data of which approximately 25% are discarded dead (usually because of shark damage). Fish are also lost at the surface in the longline fishery, 0.16% on average from observer data, of which 95% are reported as escaping alive.

2. BIOLOGY

Yellowfin tuna are epi-pelagic opportunistic predators of fish, crustaceans and cephalopods. Yellowfin tuna are found from the surface to depths where low oxygen levels are limiting (about 250 m in the tropics but probably deeper in temperate waters). Individuals found in New Zealand waters are mostly adults that are distributed in the tropical and temperate waters of the western and central Pacific Ocean. Adults reach a maximum size of 200 kg and length of 239 cm. First maturity is reached at 60 to 80 cm (1 to 2 years old), and the size at 50% maturity is estimated to be 105 cm. The maximum reported age is 8 years. Spawning takes place at the surface at night mostly within 10º of the equator when temperatures exceed 24ºC. Spawning takes place throughout the year but the main spawning season is November to April. Yellowfin are serial spawners, spawning every few days throughout the peak of the season.

Natural mortality is assumed to vary with age. A range of von Bertalanffy growth parameters has been estimated for yellowfin in the Pacific Ocean depending on area (Table 6).

Table 6: von Bertalanffy growth parameters for yellowfin tuna by country or area.

Country/Area	L_∞ (cm)	K	t_0
Philippines	148.0	0.420	
Mexico	162.0	0.660	
Western tropical Pacific	166.0	0.250	
Japan	169.0	0.564	
Mexico	173.0	0.660	
Hawaii	190.0	0.454	
Japan	191.0	0.327	-1.02

Females predominate in the longline catch of yellowfin tuna in the in the New Zealand EEZ (0.75 males:females).

3. STOCKS AND AREAS

Yellowfin tuna in New Zealand waters are part of the western and central Pacific Ocean stock that is distributed throughout the North and South Pacific Ocean west of about 150ºW.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECOSYSTEM CONSIDERATIONS

This section was updated for the November 2014 Fishery Assessment Plenary after review by the Aquatic Environment Working Group. This summary is from the perspective of yellowfin tuna but there is no directed fishery for them and the incidental catch sections below reflect the New Zealand longline fishery as a whole and are not specific to this species; a more detailed summary from an issue-by-issue perspective is available in the Aquatic Environment & Biodiversity Annual Review where the consequences are also discussed (http://www.mpi.govt.nz/Default.aspx?TabId=126&id=2122) (Ministry for Primary Industries 2013a).

4.1 Role in the ecosystem

Yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) are epi-pelagic opportunistic predators of fish, crustaceans and cephalopods generally found within the upper few hundred meters of the ocean. Yellowfin tuna are large pelagic predators, so they are likely to have a 'top down' effect on the fish, crustaceans and squid they feed on.

4.2 Incidental catch (seabirds, sea turtles and mammals)

The protected species, capture estimates presented here include all animals recovered onto the deck (alive, injured or dead) of fishing vessels but do not include any cryptic mortality (e.g., seabirds caught on a hook but not brought onboard the vessel).

4.2.1 Seabird bycatch

Between 2002–03 and 2012–13, there were 818 observed captures of birds across other surface longline target fisheries (those not targeting albacore tuna, bigeye tuna, southern bluefin tuna, pacific bluefin tuna and swordfish). Seabird capture rates since 2003 are presented in Table 7 and Figure 5. Seabird captures were more frequent off the south west coast of the South Island (Figure 6). Bayesian models of varying complexity dependent on data quality have been used to estimate captures across a range of methods (Richard & Abraham 2014). Observed and estimated seabird captures in albacore longline fisheries are provided in Table 8.

Through the 1990s the minimum seabird mitigation requirement for surface longline vessels was the use of a bird scaring device (tori line) but common practice was that vessels set surface longlines primarily at night. In 2007 a notice was implemented under s 11 of the Fisheries Act 1996 to formalise the requirement that surface longline vessels only set during the hours of darkness and use a tori line when setting. This notice was amended in 2008 to add the option of line weighting and tori line use if setting during the day. In 2011 the notices were combined and repromulgated under a new regulation (Regulation 58A of the Fisheries (Commercial Fishing) Regulations 2001) which provides a more flexible regulatory environment under which to set seabird mitigation requirements.

Risk posed by commercial fishing to seabirds has been assessed via a level 2 method which supports much of the NPOA-Seabirds 2013 risk assessment framework (MPI 2013b). The method used in the level 2 risk assessment arose initially from an expert workshop hosted by the Ministry of Fisheries in 2008. The overall framework is described in Sharp et al. (2011) and has been variously applied and improved in multiple iterations (Waugh et al. 2009, Richard et al. 2011, Richard and Abraham 2013, Richard et al. 2013 and Richard & Abraham in press). The method applies an "exposure-effects" approach where exposure refers to the number of fatalities is calculated from the overlap of seabirds with fishing effort compared with observed captures to estimate the species vulnerability (capture rates per encounter) to each fishery group. This is then compared to the population's productivity, based on population estimates and biological characteristics to yield estimates of population-level risk.

The 2014 iteration of the seabird risk assessment (Richard & Abraham in press) assessed other surface longline target fisheries (those not targeting albacore tuna, bigeye tuna, southern bluefin tuna, pacific bluefin tuna and swordfish) contribution to the total risk posed by New Zealand commercial fishing to seabirds (see Table 9). These target fisheries contribute 0.003 of PBR_1 to the risk to Southern Buller's albatross which was assessed to be at very high risk from New Zealand commercial fishing (Richard & Abraham in press).

Table 7: Number of observed seabird captures in the New Zealand surface longline fisheries, 2002–03 to 2012–13, by species and area. See glossary above for a description of the areas used for summarising the fishing effort and protected species captures. The risk ratio is an estimate of aggregate potential fatalities across trawl and longline fisheries relative to the Potential Biological Removals, PBR (from Richard and Abraham (2013) where full details of the risk assessment approach can be found). It is not an estimate of the risk posed by fishing for porbeagle shark using longline gear but rather the total risk for each seabird species. Other data, version 20130305.

Albatross Species	Risk Ratio	Kermadec Islands	Northland and Hauraki	Bay of Plenty	East Coast North Island	Stewart Snares Shelf	Fiordland	West Coast South Island	West Coast North Island	Total
Salvin's	Very high	0	1	2	6	0	0	0	0	9
Southern Buller's	Very high	0	5	2	27	0	280	39	0	353
NZ white-capped	Very high	0	2	0	3	10	62	36	1	114
Northern Buller's	High	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Gibson's	High	4	16	0	17	0	6	3	1	47
Antipodean	High	12	10	1	8	0	0	0	1	32
Northern royal	Medium	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Southern royal	Medium	0	1	0	0	0	4	1	0	6
Campbell black-browed	Medium	2	10	2	29	0	3	3	1	50
Light-mantled sooty	Very low	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Unidentified	N/A	38	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	43
Total	**N/A**	**56**	**47**	**8**	**93**	**10**	**355**	**83**	**5**	**657**

Other seabirds	Risk Ratio	Kermadec Islands	Northland and Hauraki	Bay of Plenty	East Coast North Island	Stewart Snares Shelf	Fiordland	West Coast South Island	West Coast North Island	Total
Black petrel	Very high	1	10	1	0	0	0	0	1	13
Flesh-footed shearwater	Very high	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	2	12
Cape petrel	High	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Westland petrel	Medium	0	0	0	2	0	1	6	0	9
White-chinned petrel	Medium	2	3	3	3	1	20	3	3	38
Grey petrel	Medium	3	4	3	38	0	0	0	0	48
Grey-faced petrel	Very low	12	5	1	2	0	0	0	0	20
Sooty shearwater	Very low	1	0	0	8	3	1	0	0	13
Southern giant petrel	-	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0
White-headed petrel	-	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Unidentified	N/A	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Total	**N/A**	**21**	**23**	**10**	**65**	**4**	**23**	**9**	**8**	**159**

Table 8: Effort, observed and estimated seabird captures by fishing year for the New Zealand surface longline fishery within the EEZ. For each fishing year, the table gives the total number of hooks; the number of observed hooks; observer coverage (the percentage of hooks that were observed); the number of observed captures; the capture rate (captures per thousand hooks); and the mean number of estimated total captures (with 95% confidence interval). Estimates are based on methods described in Thompson et al (2013) and are available via http://www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/Environmental/Seabirds/. Estimates from 2002–03 to 2011–12 and preliminary estimates for 2012–13 are based on data version 20140131.

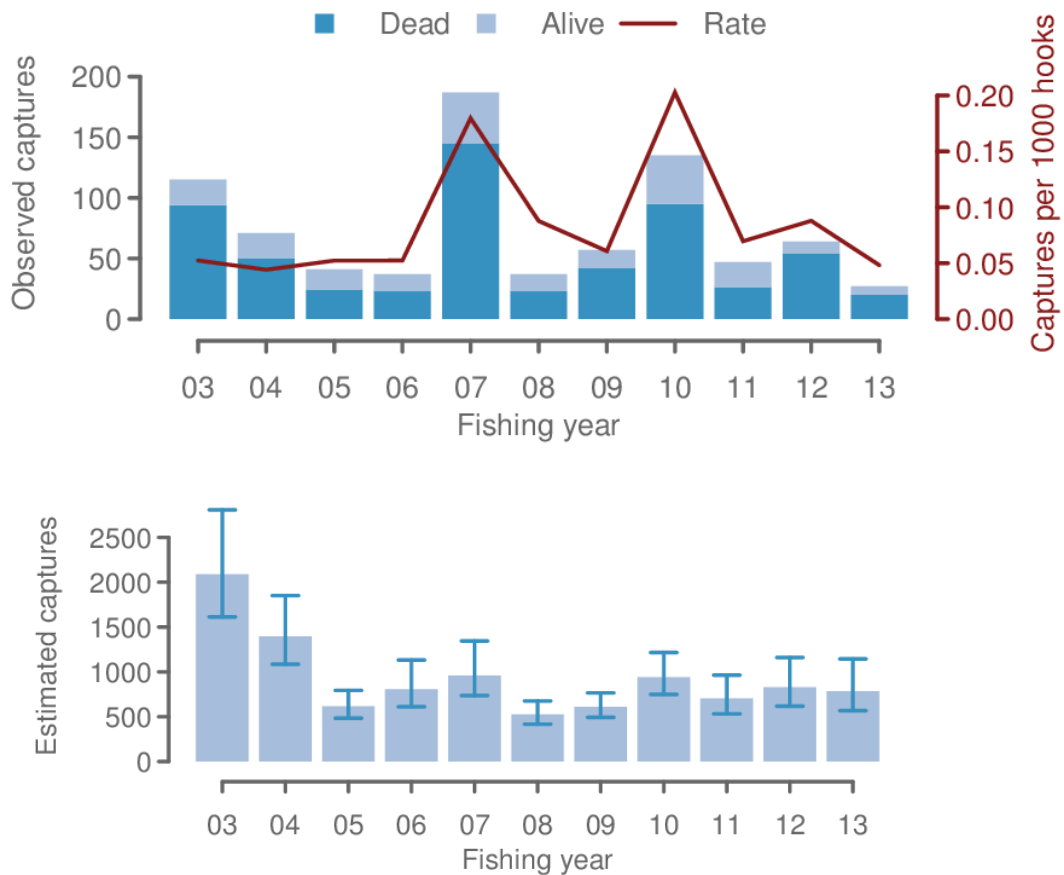| Fishing year		Fishing effort		Observed captures		Estimated captures	
	All hooks	Observed hooks	% observed	Number	Rate	Mean	95% c.i.
2002–2003	10 772 188	2 195 152	20.4	115	0.052	2 088	1 613–2 807
2003–2004	7 386 329	1 607 304	21.8	71	0.044	1 395	1 086–1 851
2004–2005	3 679 765	783 812	21.3	41	0.052	617	483–793
2005–2006	3 690 119	705 945	19.1	37	0.052	808	611–1 132
2006–2007	3 739 912	1 040 948	27.8	187	0.18	958	736–1 345
2007–2008	2 246 189	421 900	18.8	37	0.088	524	417–676
2008–2009	3 115 633	937 496	30.1	57	0.061	609	493–766
2009–2010	2 995 264	665 883	22.2	135	0.203	939	749–1 216
2010–2011	3 187 879	674 572	21.2	47	0.07	705	532–964
2011–2012	3 100 277	728 190	23.5	64	0.088	829	617–1 161
2012–2013†	2 862 182	560 333	19.6	27	0.048	783	567–1 144

†Provisional data, model estimates not finalised.

Figure 5: Observed and estimated captures of seabirds in the New Zealand surface longline fisheries from 2002–03 to 2012–13.
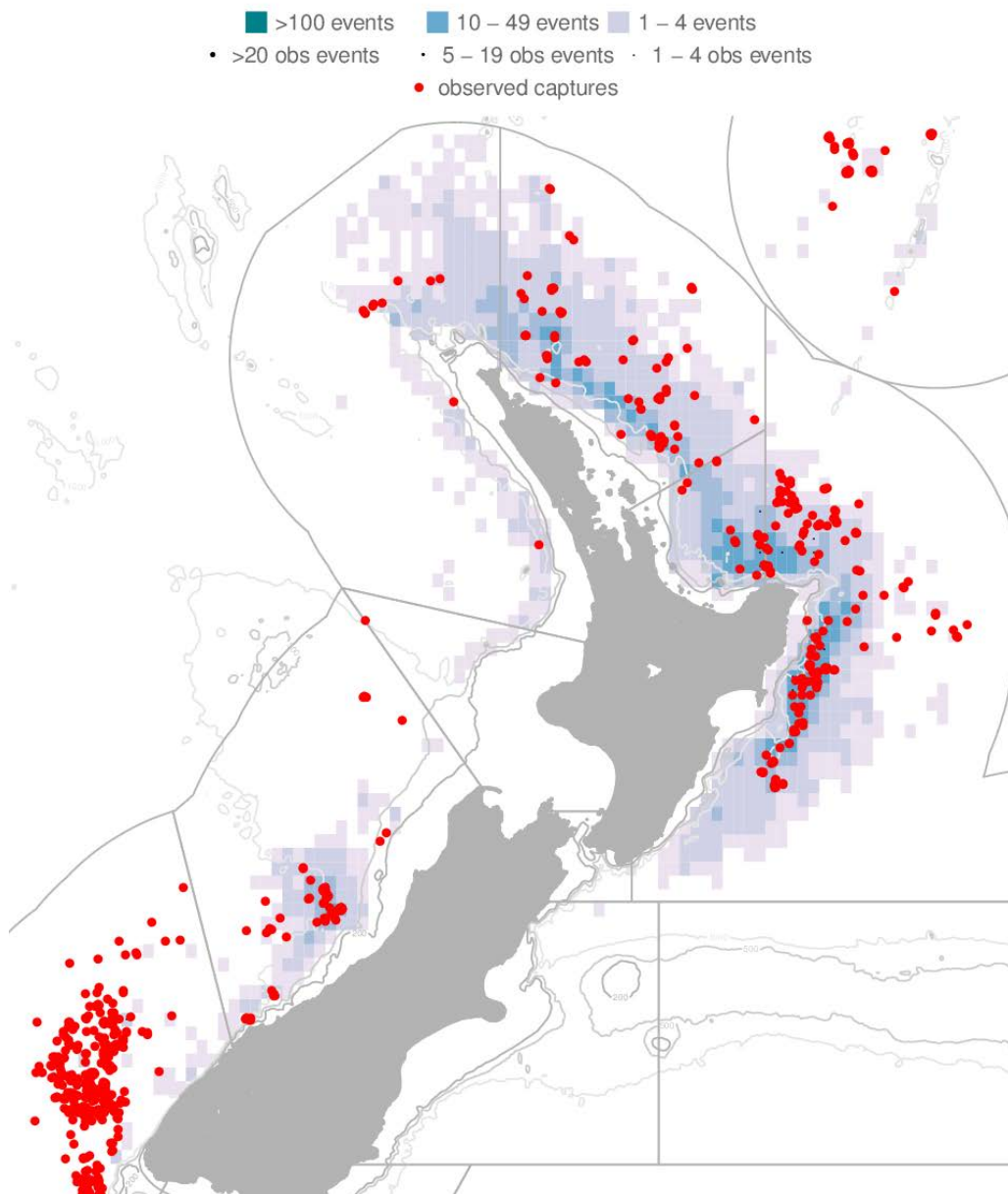
Figure 6: Distribution of fishing effort in the New Zealand surface longline fisheries and observed seabird captures, 2002–03 to 2012–13. Fishing effort is mapped into 0.2-degree cells, with the colour of each cell being related to the amount of effort. Observed fishing events are indicated by black dots, and observed captures are indicated by red dots. Fishing is only shown if the effort could be assigned a latitude and longitude, and if there were three or more vessels fishing within a cell. In this case, 89.4% of the effort is shown. See glossary for areas used for summarising the fishing effort and protected species captures.

Table 9: Risk ratio of seabirds predicted by the level two risk assessment for the other species target surface longline fisheries (those not targeting albacore tuna, bigeye tuna, southern bluefin tuna, pacific bluefin tuna and swordfish) and all fisheries included in the level two risk assessment, 2006–07 to 2012–13, showing seabird species with risk category of very or high, or a medium risk category and risk ratio of at least 1% of the total risk. The risk ratio is an estimate of aggregate potential fatalities across trawl and longline fisheries relative to the Potential Biological Removals, PBR_1 (from Richard and Abraham 2014 where full details of the risk assessment approach can be found). PBR_1 applies a recovery factor of 1.0. Typically a recovery factor of 0.1 to 0.5 is applied (based on the state of the population) to allow for recovery from low population sizes as quickly as possible. This should be considered when interpreting these results. The New Zealand threat classifications are shown (Robertson et al 2013 at http://www.doc.govt.nz/documents/science-and-technical/nztcs4entire.pdf)

Species name	OTH SLL target	Risk ratio Total risk from NZ commercial fishing	% of total risk from NZ commercial fishing	Risk category	NZ Threat Classification
Black petrel	0.000	15.095	0.00	Very high	Threatened: Nationally Vulnerable
Salvin's albatross	0.000	3.543	0.00	Very high	Threatened: Nationally Critical
Southern Buller's albatross	0.003	2.823	0.10	Very high	At Risk: Naturally Uncommon
Flesh-footed shearwater	0.000	1.557	0.00	Very high	Threatened: Nationally Vulnerable
Gibson's albatross	0.000	1.245	0.00	Very high	Threatened: Nationally Critical
New Zealand white-capped albatross	0.000	1.096	0.01	Very high	At Risk: Declining
Chatham Island albatross	0.000	0.913	0.00	High	At Risk: Naturally Uncommon
Antipodean albatross	0.000	0.888	0.00	High	Threatened: Nationally Critical
Westland petrel	0.000	0.498	0.00	High	At Risk: Naturally Uncommon
Northern Buller's albatross	0.000	0.336	0.13	High	At Risk: Naturally Uncommon
Campbell black-browed albatross	0.000	0.304	0.00	High	At Risk: Naturally Uncommon
Stewart Island shag	0.000	0.301	0.00	High	Threatened: Nationally Vulnerable

4.2.2 Sea turtle bycatch

Between 2002–03 and 2012–13, there were 15 observed captures of sea turtles across all surface longline fisheries (Tables 10 and 11, Figure 7). Observer records documented all but one sea turtle as captured and released alive. Sea turtle capture distributions predominantly occur throughout the east coast of the North Island and Kermadec Island fisheries (Figure 8).

Table 10: Number of observed sea turtle captures in the New Zealand surface longline fisheries, 2002–03 to 2012–13, by species and area. Data from Thompson et al (2013), retrieved from http://data.dragonfly.co.nz/psc/. See glossary above for a description of the areas used for summarising the fishing effort and protected species captures.

Species	Bay of Plenty	East Coast North Island	Kermadec Islands	West Coast North Island	Total
Leatherback turtle	1	4	3	3	11
Green turtle	0	1	0	0	1
Unknown turtle	0	1	0	2	3
Total	1	6	3	5	15

Table 11: Effort and sea turtle captures in surface longline fisheries by fishing year. For each fishing year, the table gives the total number of hooks; the number of observed hooks; observer coverage (the percentage of hooks that were observed); the number of observed captures (both dead and alive); and the capture rate (captures per thousand hooks). For more information on the methods used to prepare the data see Thompson et al (2013).

Fishing year	Fishing effort			Observed captures	
	All hooks	Observed hooks	% observed	Number	Rate
2002–2003	10 772 188	2 195 152	20.4	0	0
2003–2004	7 386 329	1 607 304	21.8	1	0.001
2004–2005	3 679 765	783 812	21.3	2	0.003
2005–2006	3 690 119	705 945	19.1	1	0.001
2006–2007	3 739 912	1 040 948	27.8	2	0.002
2007–2008	2 246 189	421 900	18.8	1	0.002
2008–2009	3 115 633	937 496	30.1	2	0.002
2009–2010	2 995 264	665 883	22.2	0	0
2010–2011	3 187 879	674 572	21.2	4	0.006
2011–2012	3 100 277	728 190	23.5	0	0
2012–2013	2 862 182	560 333	19.6	2	0.004
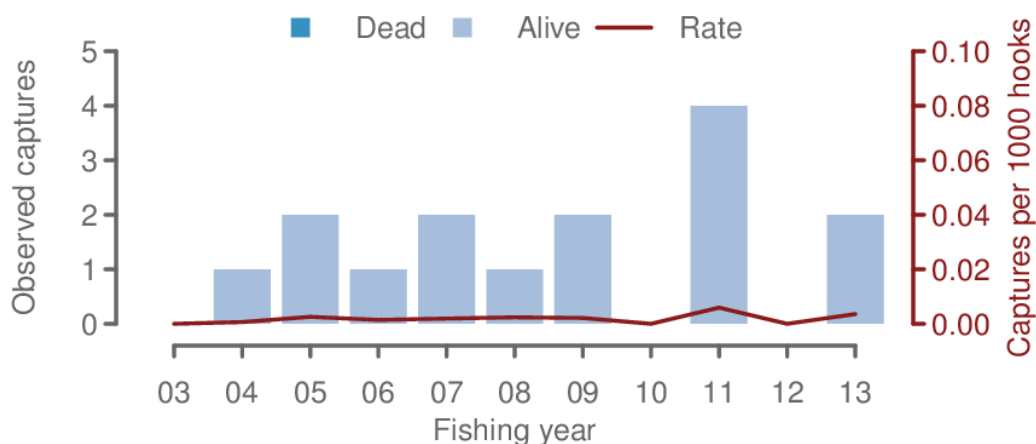
Figure 7: Observed captures of sea turtles in the New Zealand surface longline fisheries from 2002–03 to 2012–13.
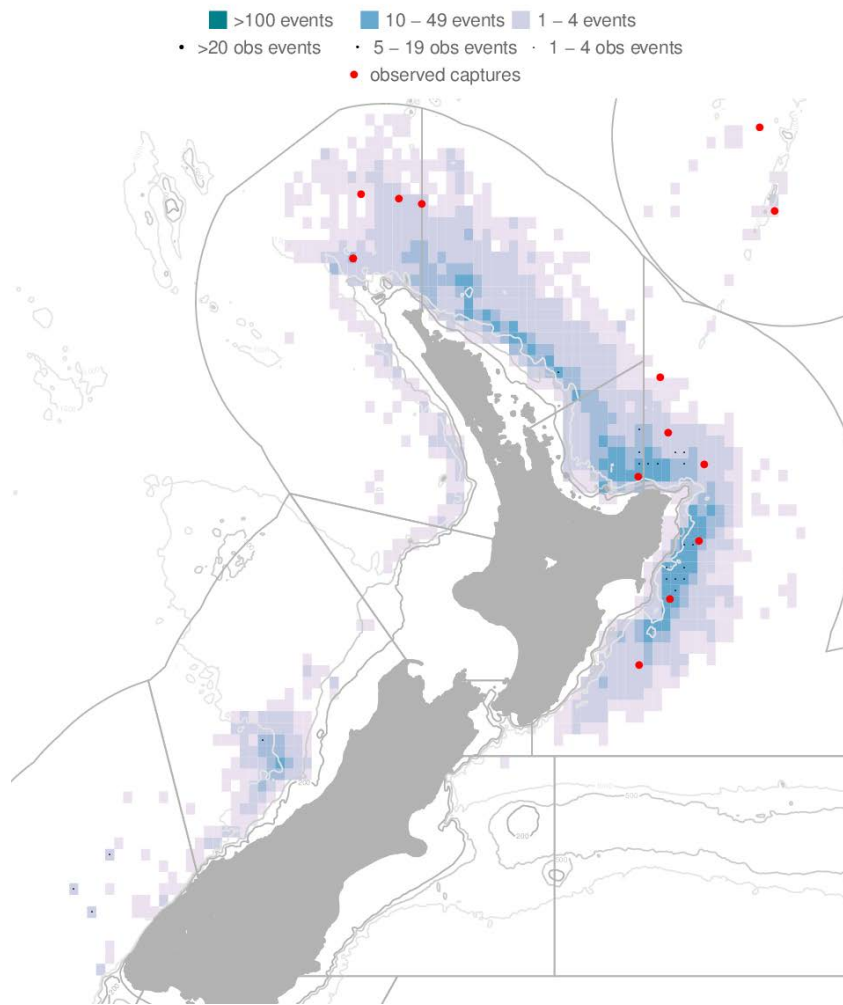
Figure 8: Distribution of fishing effort in the New Zealand surface longline fisheries and observed sea turtle captures, 2002–03 to 2012–13. Fishing effort is mapped into 0.2-degree cells, with the colour of each cell being related to the amount of effort. Observed fishing events are indicated by black dots, and observed captures are indicated by red dots. Fishing is only shown if the effort could be assigned a latitude and longitude, and if there were three or more vessels fishing within a cell. In this case, 89.4% of the effort is shown. See glossary for areas used for summarising the fishing effort and protected species captures.

4.2.3 Marine Mammals

4.2.3.1 Cetaceans

Cetaceans are dispersed throughout New Zealand waters (Perrin et al 2008). The spatial and temporal overlap of commercial fishing grounds and cetacean foraging areas has resulted in cetacean captures in fishing gear (Abraham & Thompson 2009, 2011).

Between 2002–03 and 2012–13, there were seven observed captures of whales and dolphins in surface longline fisheries. Observed captures included 5 unidentified cetaceans and 2 long-finned Pilot whales (Tables 12 and 13, Figure 9) (Thompson et al 2013). All captured animals recorded were documented as being caught and released alive (Thompson et al 2013). Cetacean capture distributions are more frequent off the east coast of the North Island (Figure 10).

Table 12: Number of observed cetacean captures in the New Zealand surface longline fisheries, 2002–03 to 2012–13, by species and area. Data from Thompson et al (2013), retrieved from http://data.dragonfly.co.nz/psc/. See glossary above for a description of the areas used for summarising the fishing effort and protected species captures.

Species	Bay of Plenty	East Coast North Island	Fiordland	Northland and Hauraki	West Coast North Island	West Coast South Island	Total
Long-finned pilot whale	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
Unidentified cetacean	1	1	1	1	1	0	5
Total	1	2	1	1	1	1	7

Table 13: Effort and captures of cetaceans in surface longline fisheries by fishing year. For each fishing year, the table gives the total number of hooks; the number of observed hooks; observer coverage (the percentage of hooks that were observed); the number of observed captures (both dead and alive); and the capture rate (captures per thousand hooks). For more information on the methods used to prepare the data, see Thompson et al (2013).

| Fishing year	All hooks	Observed hooks	% observed	Observed captures Number	Rate
2002–2003	10 772 188	2 195 152	20.4	1	0
2003–2004	7 386 329	1 607 304	21.8	4	0.002
2004–2005	3 679 765	783 812	21.3	1	0.001
2005–2006	3 690 119	705 945	19.1	0	0
2006–2007	3 739 912	1 040 948	27.8	0	0
2007–2008	2 246 189	421 900	18.8	1	0.002
2008–2009	3 115 633	937 496	30.1	0	0
2009–2010	2 995 264	665 883	22.2	0	0
2010–2011	3 187 879	674 572	21.2	0	0
2011–2012	3 100 277	728 190	23.5	0	0
2012–2013	2 862 182	560 333	19.6	0	0
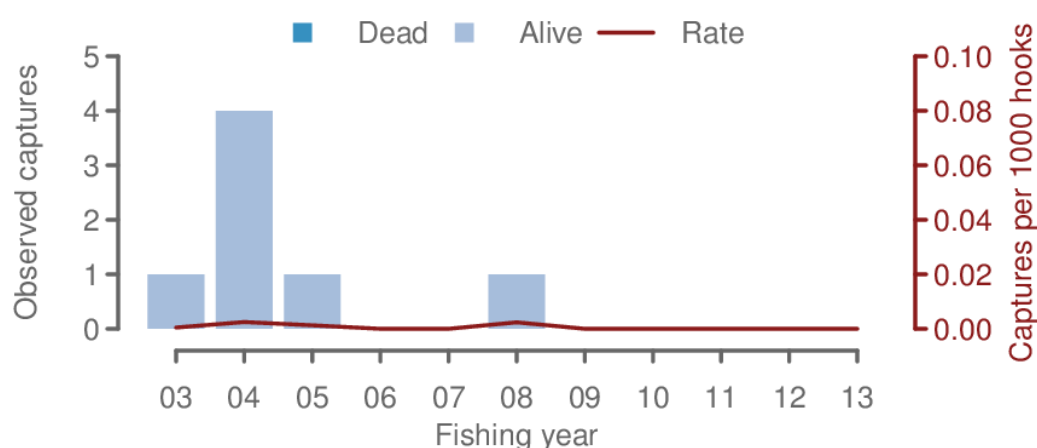
Figure 9: Observed captures of cetaceans in the New Zealand surface longline fisheries from 2002–03 to 2012–13.
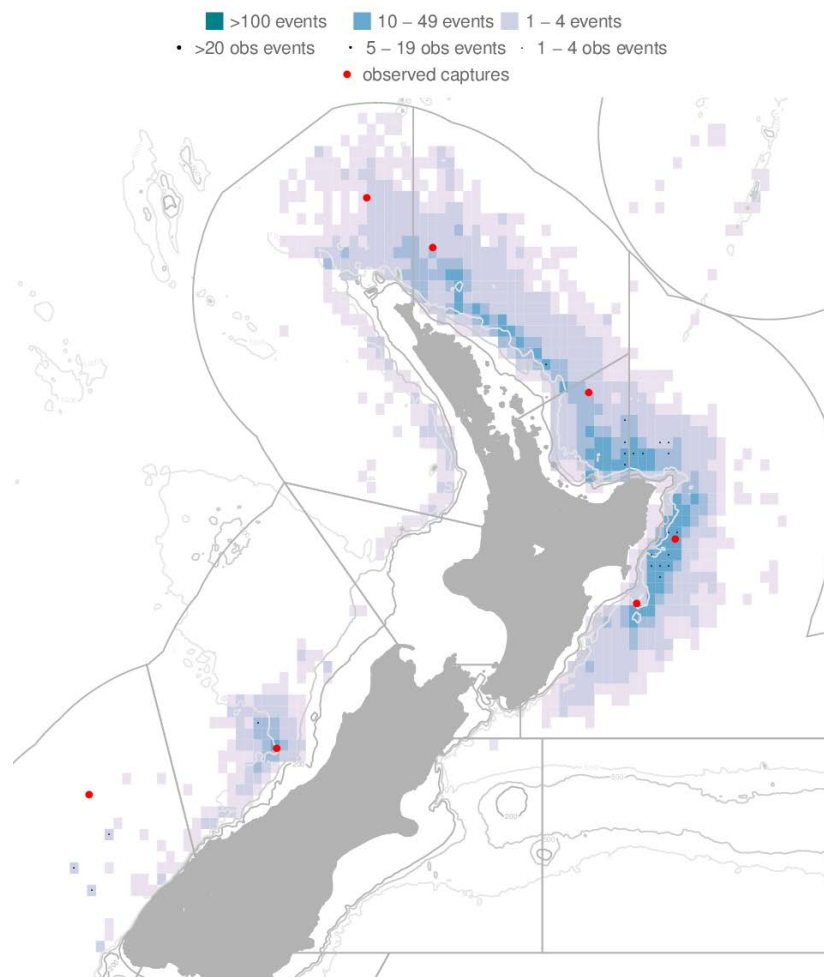
Figure 10: Distribution of fishing effort in the New Zealand surface longline fisheries and observed cetacean captures, 2002–03 to 2012–13. Fishing effort is mapped into 0.2-degree cells, with the colour of each cell being related to the amount of effort. Observed fishing events are indicated by black dots, and observed captures are indicated by red dots. Fishing is only shown if the effort could be assigned a latitude and longitude, and if there were three or more vessels fishing within a cell. In this case, 89.4% of the effort is shown. See glossary for areas used for summarising the fishing effort and protected species captures.

4.2.3.2 New Zealand fur seal bycatch

Currently, New Zealand fur seals are dispersed throughout New Zealand waters, especially in waters south of about 40° S to Macquarie Island. The spatial and temporal overlap of commercial fishing grounds and New Zealand fur seal foraging areas has resulted in New Zealand fur seal captures in fishing gear (Mattlin 1987, Rowe 2009). Most fisheries with observed captures occur in waters over or close to the continental shelf, which slopes steeply to deeper waters relatively close to shore, and thus rookeries and haulouts, around much of the South Island and offshore islands. Captures on longlines occur when the fur seals attempt to feed on the bait and fish catch during hauling. Most New Zealand fur seals are released alive, typically with a hook and short snood or trace still attached.

New Zealand fur seal captures in surface longline fisheries have been generally observed in waters south and west of Fiordland, but also in the Bay of Plenty-East Cape area when the animals have attempted to take bait or fish from the line as it is hauled. These capture rates include animals that are released alive (100% of observed surface longline capture in 2008–09; Thompson & Abraham 2010). Capture rates in 2011–12 and 2012-13 were higher than they were in the early 2000s (Figures 11 and 12). While fur seal captures have occurred throughout the range of this fishery most New Zealand captures have occurred off the Southwest coast of the

South Island (Figure 13). Between 2002–03 and 2012–13, there were 267 observed captures of New Zealand fur seal in surface longline fisheries (Tables 14 and 15).

Table 14: Number of observed New Zealand fur seal captures in the New Zealand surface longline fisheries, 2002–03 to 2012–13, by species and area. Data from Thompson et al (2013), retrieved from http://data.dragonfly.co.nz/psc/. See glossary above for a description of the areas used for summarising the fishing effort and protected species captures.

	Bay of Plenty	East Coast North Island	Fiordland	Northland and Hauraki	Stewart Snares Shelf	West Coast North Island	West Coast South Island	Total
New Zealand fur seal	11	33	179	4	4	2	34	267

Table 15: Effort and captures of New Zealand fur seal in the New Zealand surface longline fisheries by fishing year. For each fishing year, the table gives the total number of hooks; the number of observed hooks; observer coverage (the percentage of hooks that were observed); the number of observed captures (both dead and alive); and the capture rate (captures per thousand hooks). Estimates are based on methods described in Thompson et al (2013) are available via http://www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/Environmental/Seabirds/. Estimates from 2002–03 to 2011–12 and preliminary estimates for 2012–13 are based on data version 20140131.

	Fishing effort			Observed captures		Estimated captures	
Fishing year	All hooks	Observed hooks	% observed	Number	Rate	Mean	95% c.i.
2002–2003	10 772 188	2 195 152	20.4	56	0.026	299	199–428
2003–2004	7 386 329	1 607 304	21.8	40	0.025	134	90–188
2004–2005	3 679 765	783 812	21.3	20	0.026	66	38–99
2005–2006	3 690 119	705 945	19.1	12	0.017	47	23–79
2006–2007	3 739 912	1 040 948	27.8	10	0.010	32	14–55
2007–2008	2 246 189	421 900	18.8	10	0.024	40	19–68
2008–2009	3 115 633	937 496	30.1	22	0.023	53	29–81
2009–2010	2 995 264	665 883	22.2	19	0.029	77	43–121
2010–2011	3 187 879	674 572	21.2	17	0.025	64	35–101
2011–2012	3 100 277	728 190	23.5	40	0.055	140	92–198
2012–2013†	2 862 182	560 333	19.6	21	0.037	110	65–171

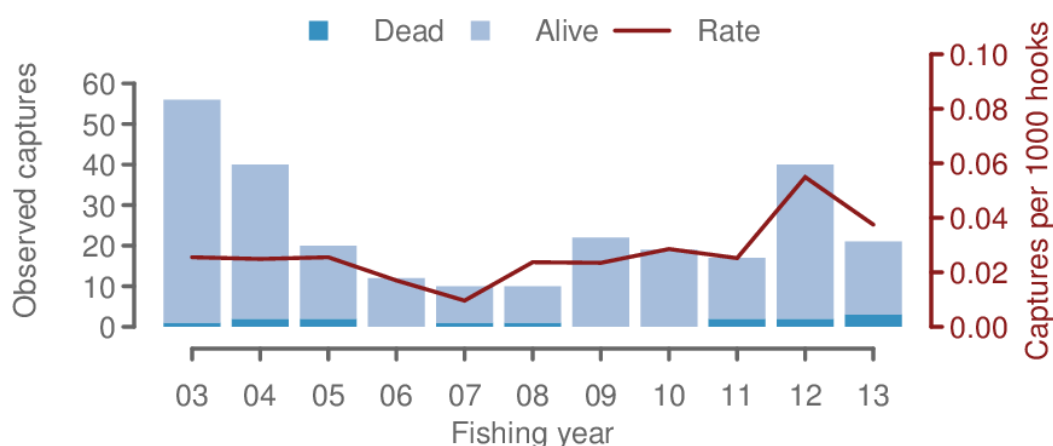†Provisional data, model estimates not finalised.

Figure 11: Observed captures of New Zealand fur seal in the New Zealand surface longline fisheries from 2002–03 to 2012–13.
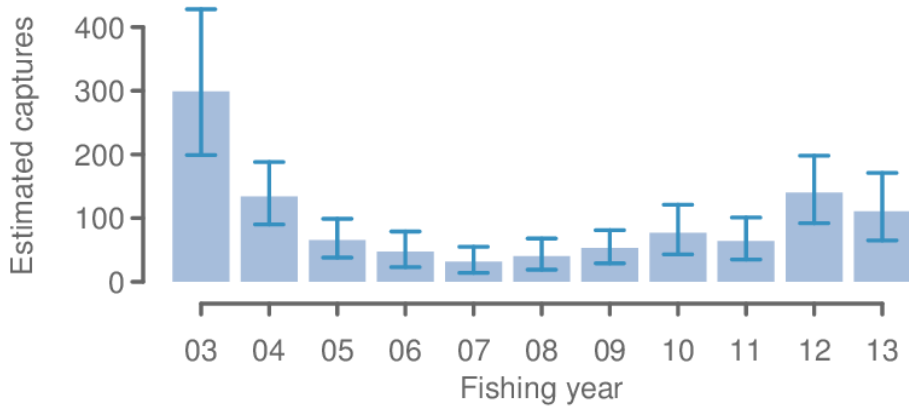
Figure 12: Estimated captures of New Zealand fur seal in the New Zealand surface longline fisheries from 2002–03 to 2012–13.
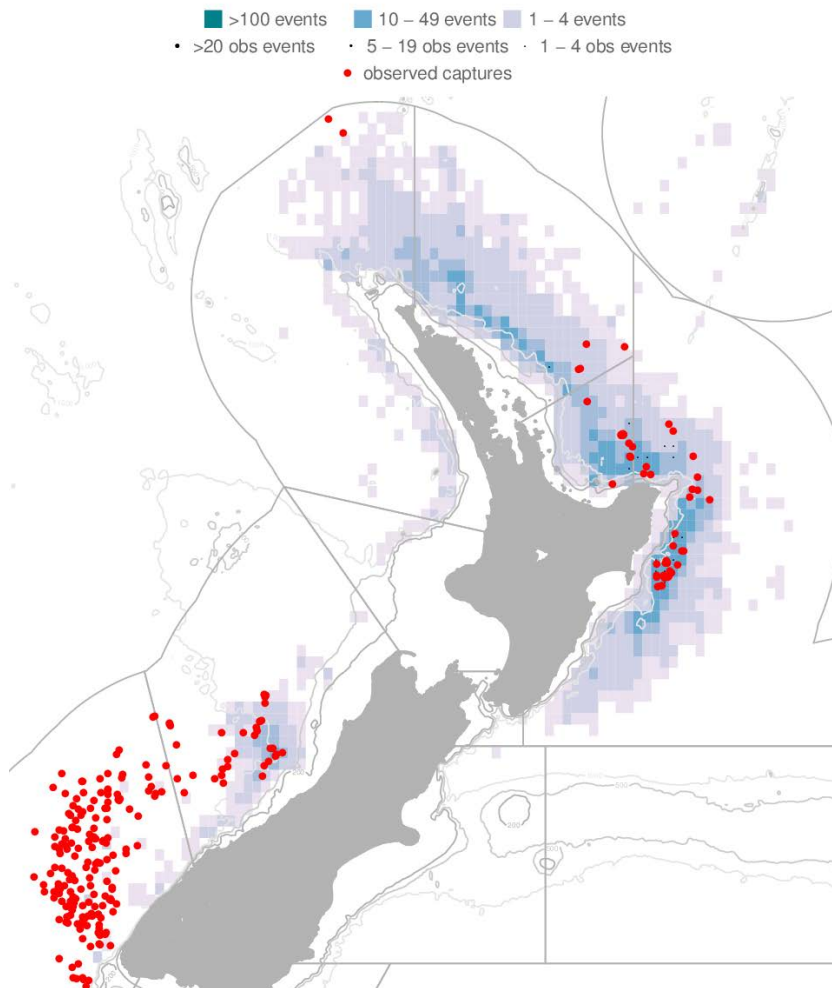

Figure 13: Distribution of fishing effort in the New Zealand surface longline fisheries and observed New Zealand fur seal captures, 2002–03 to 2012–13. Fishing effort is mapped into 0.2-degree cells, with the colour of each cell being related to the amount of effort. Observed fishing events are indicated by black dots, and observed captures are indicated by red dots. Fishing is only shown if the effort could be assigned a latitude and longitude, and if there were three or more vessels fishing within a cell. In this case, 89.4% of the effort is shown. See glossary for areas used for summarising the fishing effort and protected species captures.

4.3 Incidental fish bycatch

Observer records indicate that a wide range of species are landed by the longline fleets in New Zealand fishery waters. Blue sharks are the most commonly landed species (by number), followed by Ray's bream (Table 16). Southern bluefin tuna and albacore tuna are the only target species that occur in the top five of the frequency of occurrence.

Table 16: Total estimated catch (numbers of fish) of common bycatch species in the New Zealand longline fishery as estimated from observer data from 2009 to 2013. Also provided is the percentage of these species retained (2013 data only) and the percentage of fish that were alive when discarded, N/A (none discarded).

Species	2010	2011	2012	2013	% retained (2013)	discards % alive (2013)
Blue shark	66113	53432	132925	158736	45.2	97.4
Lancetfish	43425	37305	7866	19172	0.1	37.6
Rays bream	20041	18453	19918	13568	97.4	4.2
Porbeagle shark	4679	9929	7019	9805	34.0	79.8
Mako shark	4490	9770	3902	3981	35.5	84.9
Moonfish	5398	3418	2363	2470	99.0	0.0
Escolar	1539	6602	2181	2088	30.2	76.3
Sunfish	3148	3773	3265	1937	2.7	100.0
Pelagic stingray	1983	4090	712	1199	1.0	97.0
Butterfly tuna	1158	909	713	1030	48.1	11.1
Deepwater dogfish	377	548	647	743	1.2	88.5
Oilfish	886	1747	509	386	26.5	72.2
Rudderfish	326	338	491	362	13.0	80.0
Thresher shark	209	349	246	256	33.3	75.0
Skipjack tuna	91	255	123	240	100.0	N/A
Dealfish	1160	223	372	237	1.7	25.1
Striped marlin	471	175	124	182	0.0	44.4
Big scale pomfret	505	139	108	67	88.2	100.0
School shark	62	49	477	21	100.0	N/A

4.4 Benthic interactions

N/A

4.5 Key environmental and ecosystem information gaps

Cryptic mortality is unknown at present but developing a better understanding of this in future may be useful for reducing uncertainty of the seabird risk assessment and could be a useful input into risk assessments for other species groups.

The survival rates of released target and bycatch species is currently unknown.

Observer coverage in the New Zealand fleet is not spatially and temporally representative of the fishing effort.

5.   STOCK ASSESSMENT

With the establishment of WCPFC in 2004, stock assessments of the WCPO stock of yellowfin tuna are undertaken by the Oceanic Fisheries Programme (OFP) of Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) under contract to WCPFC.

No assessment is possible for yellowfin within the New Zealand EEZ as the proportion of the stock found within New Zealand fisheries waters is unknown and likely varies from year to year.

The yellowfin stock assessment was updated by the SPC in 2014 in SC10-SA-WP-04 (Davies et. al. 2014) and reviewed by the WCPFC Scientific Committee (SC10) in August 2014. In addition SC10-SA-IP-01 (Harley et. al. 2014) summarized the major changes to the tropical tuna stock assessments resulting from the recommendations provided in SC8-SA-WP-01 (Independent Review of the 2011 bigeye tuna stock assessment). Also, status quo stochastic projections were provided for yellowfin tuna in SC10-SA-WP-06 (Pilling 2014).

The following is a summary of the 2014 yellowfin stock assessment as agreed by the WCPFC Scientific Committee (SC10) in August 2014.

Some of the main improvements in the 2014 assessment are:

- Increases in the number of spatial regions to better model the tagging and size data;

- Inclusion of catch estimates from Vietnam and some Japanese coastal longline data previously not included;

- The use of operational longline data for multiple fleets to better address the contraction of the Japanese fleet and general changes over time in targeting practices;

- Improved modelling of recruitment to ensure that uncertain estimates do not influence key stock status outcomes; and

- A large amount of new tagging data corrected for differential post-release mortality and other tag losses

The large number of changes since the 2011 assessment (some of which are described above), and the nature of some of these changes, means that full consideration of the impacts of individual changes is not possible. Nevertheless, the report details some of the steps from the 2011 reference case (LLcpueOP_TWcpueR6_PTTP) to the 2014 reference case (run37 – Ref.Case). Distinguishing features of the 2014 reference case model include:

- The steepness parameter of the stock recruitment relationship is fixed at 0.8.

- Long-term average recruitment is defined for the period 1965-2011.

- Natural mortality at age is fixed according to an external analysis in which it is assumed that the natural mortality rate of females increases with the onset of reproductive maturity.

- The likelihood function weighting of the size data is determined using an effective sample size for each fishing observation of one-twentieth of the actual sample size, with a maximum effective sample size of 50.

- For modelling the tagging data, a mixing period of 2 quarters (including the quarter of release) is applied.

- The last four quarterly recruitments aggregated over regions are assumed to lie on the stock-recruitment curve.

The rationale for these choices, which comprise the key areas of uncertainty for the assessment, is described in detail in the report. We report the results of "one-off" sensitivity models to explore the impact of these choices for the reference case model on the stock assessment results. A sub-set of key, plausible model runs was taken from these sensitivities to include in a structural uncertainty analysis (grid) for consideration in developing management advice.

The main conclusions of the current assessment are consistent with recent assessments presented in 2009 and 2011. The main conclusions are as follows

1. The new regional structure appears to work well for yellowfin, and in combination with other modelling and data improvements, provides a more informative assessment than in the past.

2. Spatially-aggregated recruitment is estimated to decline in the early part of the assessment, but there is no persistent trend post-1965.

3. There appears to be confounding between the estimates of regional recruitment distribution and movement such that certain regions have very low recruitments. While adding complexity to the recruitment process of age 1 fish, this did not add to the uncertainty over the range of runs considered in this assessment.

4. Latest catches marginally exceed the maximum sustainable yield (MSY).

5. Recent levels of fishing mortality are most likely below the level that will support the MSY.

6. Recent levels of spawning potential are most likely above (based on 2008-11 average and based on 2012) the level which will support the MSY.

7. Recent levels of spawning potential are most likely above (based on 2008-11 average and based on 2012) the LRP of 20% $SB_{F=0}$ agreed by WCPFC.

8. Recent levels of spawning potential are most likely higher (by 1%, based on 2008-11 average) and lower than (by 2% based on 2012) the candidate biomass-related TRPs currently under consideration for skipjack tuna, i.e., 40-60% $SB_{F=0}$.

9. Stock status conclusions were most sensitive to alternative assumptions regarding the modelling of tagging data, assumed steepness and natural mortality. However the main conclusions of the assessment are robust to the range of uncertainty that was explored.

Paper SC10-SA-WP-06 (Pilling 2014) contained status quo stochastic projections for bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin tunas. The paper outlined an assessment of the potential consequences of recent (2012) fishing conditions on the future biological status of the three tropical tuna stocks, based on the 2014 tropical tuna stock assessments. Projected status in 2032 was reported relative to spawning biomass and fishing mortality reference levels in absolute terms (as a median of the projection outcomes) and in probabilistic terms.

A single assessment model run (the reference case model for each tropical tuna stock) was used as the basis for projecting future stock status. Only uncertainty arising from future recruitment conditions was therefore captured in the results, using two alternative hypotheses: where recruitment was assumed to follow the estimated stock recruitment relationship on average with randomly selected deviates from the period used to estimate the relationship in each stock assessment; or was assumed to be consistent with actual recruitments estimated over the period 2002-2011.

Under 2012 conditions, stochastic projection results indicated that for yellowfin tuna it was exceptionally unlikely (<1%) that the yellowfin stock would fall below the LRP level or that fishing mortality would increase above the F_{MSY} level by 2032, and dependent upon the future recruitment assumption, it was exceptionally unlikely (<1%; long-term recruitment deviate assumption) or very unlikely (<10%; recent recruitment assumption) to fall below SB_{MSY}.

Stock status and trends

There have been significant improvements to the 2014 stock assessment resulting from the implementation of the 2012 bigeye review recommendations which apply equally to yellowfin tuna. Improvements were made to regional and fisheries structures, Catch estimates, CPUE, and tagging data inputs, and the MULTIFAN-CL modelling framework. This assessment is also the first since the adoption of a LRP based on the spawning biomass in the absence of fishing $(0.2SB_{F=0})$.

SC10 selected the reference case which had an assumed steepness of 0.8 to represent the stock status of yellowfin. To characterize uncertainty in the assessment, SC10 chose 3 additional models based on alternate values of steepness and tagging mixing period. Fuller details of the base case and other models are provided in Table 17.

Table 17: Description of the base case and key model chosen for the provision of management advice.

Name	Description
Base Case	JP longline CPUE for regions 1 and 2, all flags longline for regions 3 to 7, and all flags longline nominal for regions 8 and 9; with purse-seine CPUE for PH-ID in region 7 and all flags in region 8. Size data weighted as the number of samples divided by 20, steepness fixed at 0.8, M fixed, tag mixing period of 2 quarters, and fixed natural mortality.
h_0.65	Steepness=0.65.
h_0.95	Steepness=0.95.
Mix_1qtr	Tag mixing period=1 quarter

Time trends in estimated recruitment, biomass, fishing mortality and depletion are shown in Figures 14-17.

High levels of fishing mortality on juveniles have been recorded in region 7 (Figure 19). Stock depletion levels are higher in the equatorial regions than elsewhere, refer Figure 17.

The estimated MSY of 586,400 mt is within the range of previous assessments and model quantities are generally similar with these earlier assessments. This is due largely to the consistent information on declining relative abundance provided by the longline CPUE indices and the large amount of tagging data input to the model.

The dramatic decline in the MSY in the 1970's follows the increased development of those fisheries that catch younger yellowfin, principally the small-fish fisheries in the west equatorial region (Figure 20).

Fishing mortality has generally been increasing through time, and for the reference case $F_{current}$ (2008-11 average) is estimated to be 0.72 times the fishing mortality that will support the MSY. Across the four models (base case and three sensitivity models) $F_{current}/F_{MSY}$ ranged from 0.58 to 0.90. This indicates that overfishing is not occurring for the WCPO yellowfin tuna stock, however latest catches are close to or exceed the MSY by up to 13% (Table 18 and Figure 18).

The latest (2012) estimates of spawning biomass are above both the level that will support the *MSY* (SB_{latest}/SB_{MSY} = 1.24 for the base case and range 1.05-1.51 across the four models) and the newly adopted LRP of $0.2SB_{F=0}$ ($SB_{latest}/SB_{F=0}$ = 0.38 for the base case and range 0.35-0.40).

Table 18: Estimates of management quantities for selected stock assessment models (see Table YFT1 for details). For the purpose of this assessment, "current" is the average over the period 2008–2011 and "latest" is 2012.

	Ref.Case	Mix_1	h_0.65	h_0.95
MSY (mt)	586400	526400	527200	642800
C_{latest}/MSY	1.02	1.12	1.13	0.93
$F_{current}/F_{MSY}$	0.72	0.87	0.9	0.58
B_0	4319000	3862000	4475000	4221000
$B_{current}$	1994655	1597536	1996179	1995224
SB_0	2467000	2202000	2557000	2411000
SB_{MSY}	728300	648000	859600	594500
$SB_{F=0}$	2368557	2206510	2556733	2255523
$SB_{current}$	998622	746743	999474	998914
SB_{latest}	899496	770210	899362	898389
$SB_{current}/SB_{F=0}$	0.42	0.34	0.39	0.44
$SB_{latest}/SB_{F=0}$	0.38	0.35	0.35	0.4
$SB_{current}/SB_{MSY}$	1.37	1.15	1.16	1.68
SB_{latest}/SB_{MSY}	1.24	1.19	1.05	1.51

Table 19: Comparison of selected WCPO yellowfin tuna reference points from the 2009, 2011, and 2014 base case models.

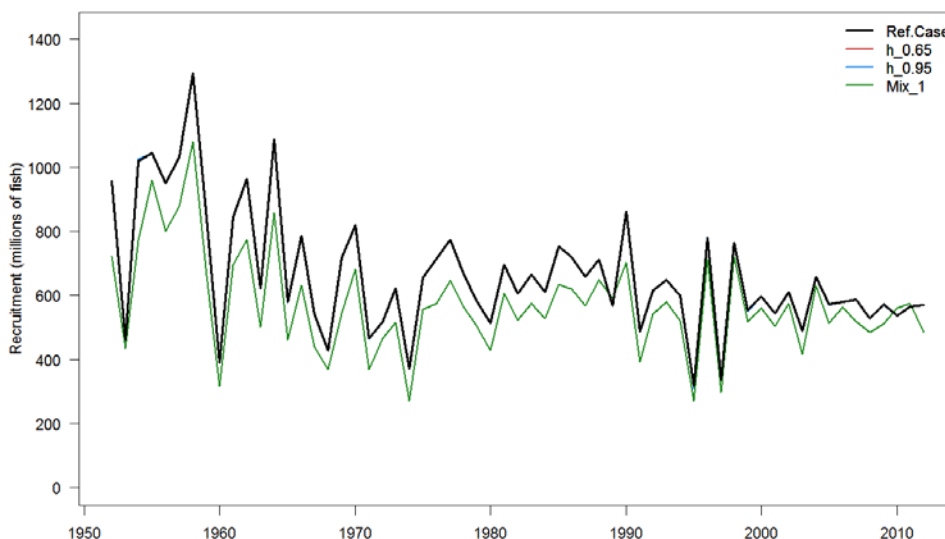| Management quantity	Ref.case-2009	Ref.case-2011	Ref.case-2014
MSY	636,800	538,800	586,400
$F_{current}/F_{MSY}$	0.58	0.77	0.72
$SB_{latest}/SB_{F=0}$	0.50	0.44	0.38

Figure 14: Estimated annual average recruitment for the WCPO obtained from the base case model and three additional runs described in Table YFT1. The model runs with alternative steepness values give the same recruitment estimates.
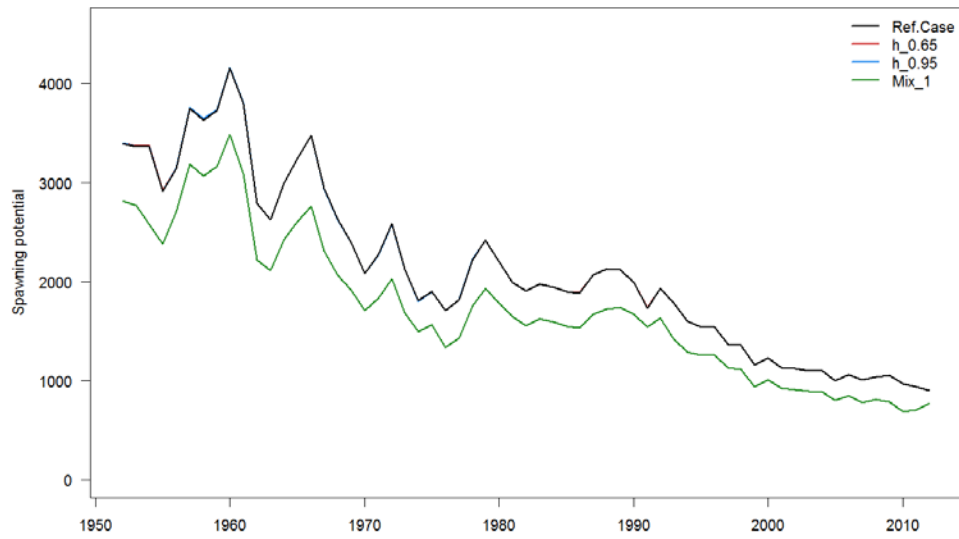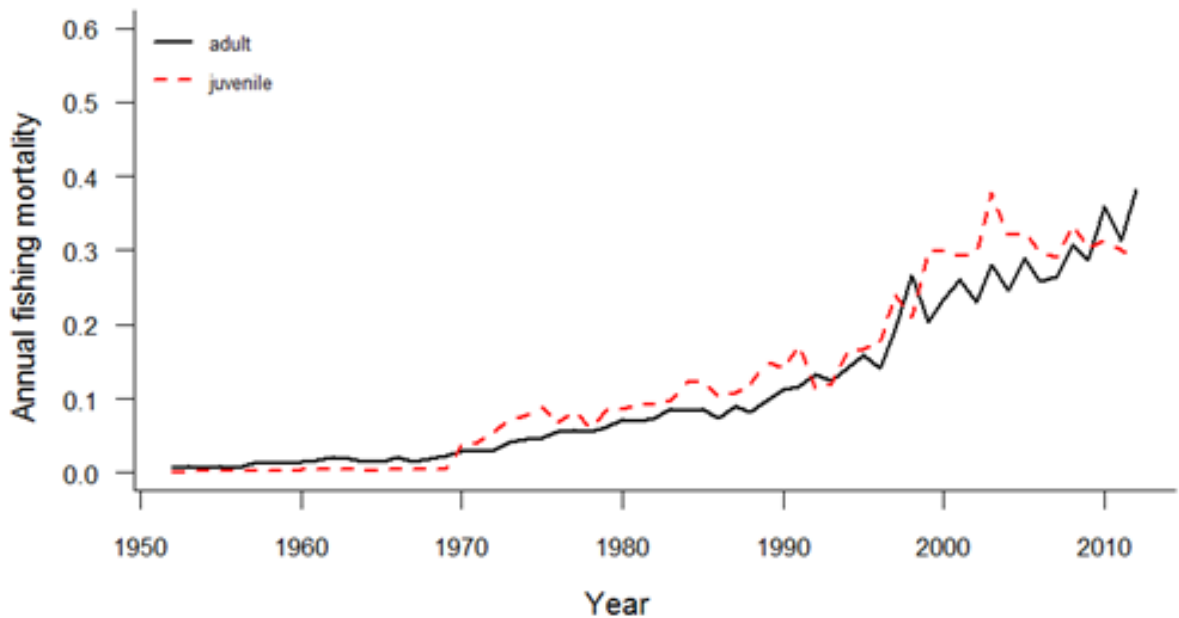
Figure 15: Estimated annual average spawning potential for the WCPO obtained from the base case model and three additional runs described in Table YFT1. The model runs with alternative steepness values give the same recruitment estimates.

Figure 16: Estimated annual average juvenile and adult fishing mortality for the WCPO obtained from the base case model.
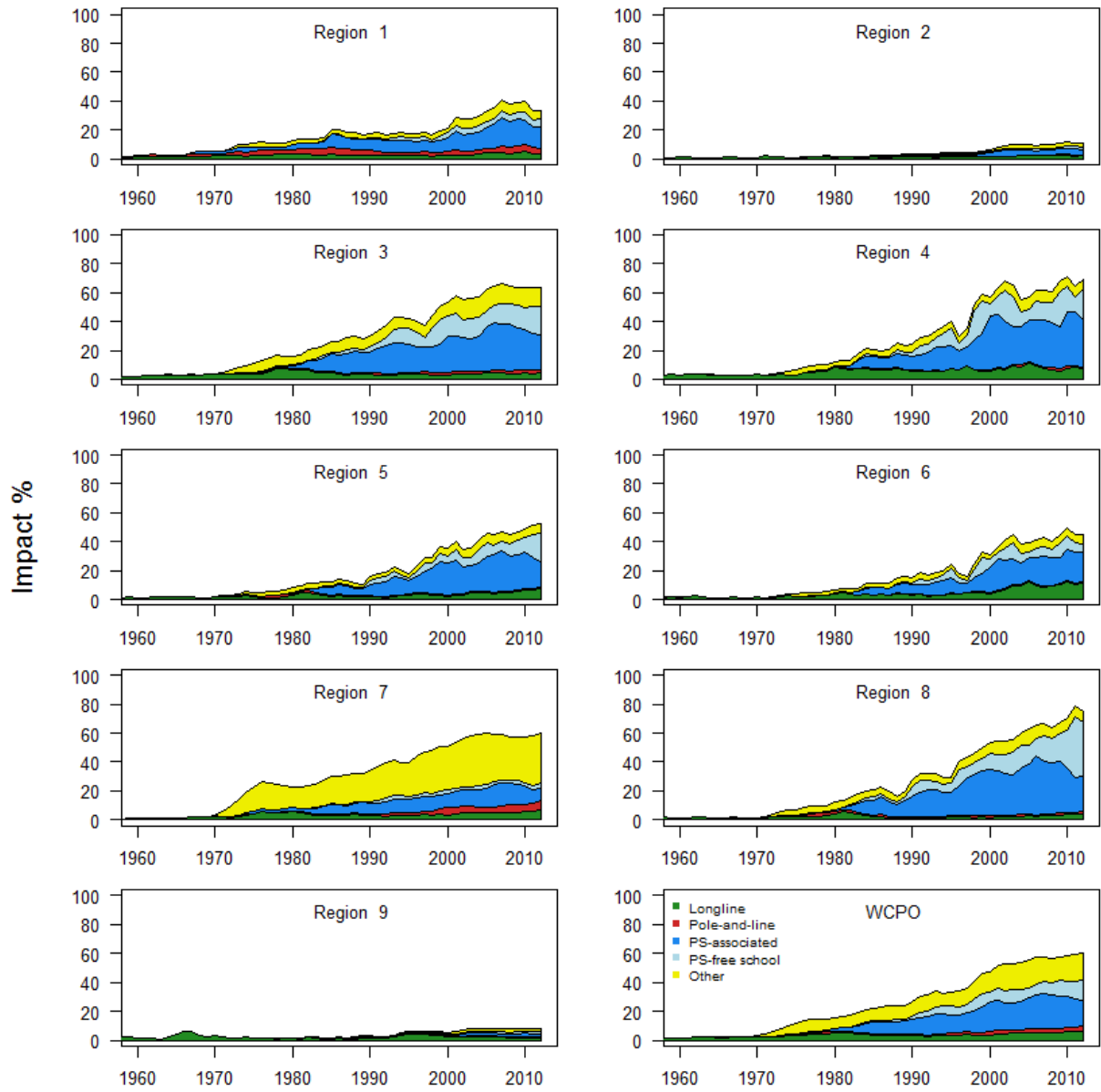
Figure 17: Estimates of reduction in spawning potential due to fishing (fishery impact = $1 - SB_t/SB_{t,F=0}$) by region and for the WCPO attributed to various fishery groups for the base case model.
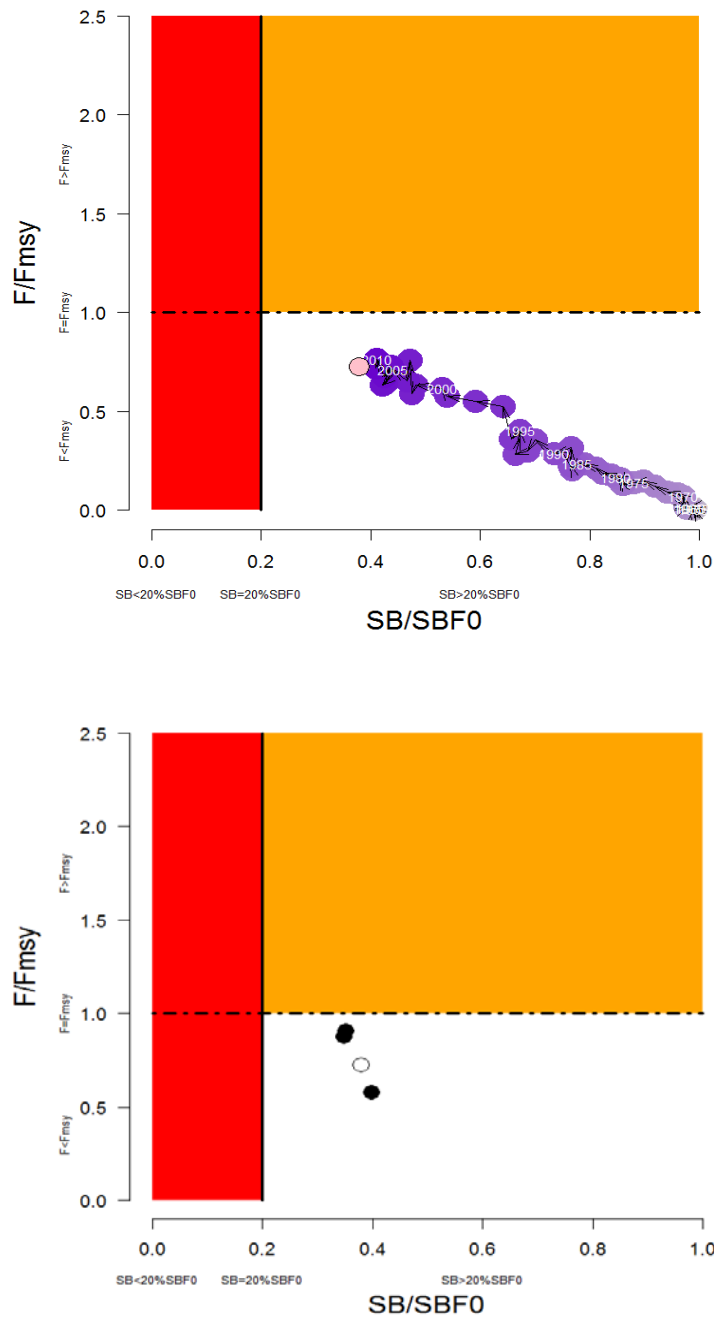
Figure 18: Temporal trend for the base case model (top) and terminal condition for the base case and other sensitivity runs (bottom) in stock status relative to $SB_{F=0}$ (x-axis) and F_{MSY} (y-axis). The red zone represents spawning potential levels lower than the agreed LRP which is marked with the solid black line ($0.2SB_{F=0}$). The orange region is for fishing mortality greater than F_{MSY} ($F=F_{MSY}$; marked with the black dashed line). The pink circle (top panel) is $SB_{2012}/SB_{F=0}$ (where $SB_{F=0}$ was the average over the period 2002-2011). The bottom panel includes the base case (white dot) and sensitivity analyses described Table YFT-1.
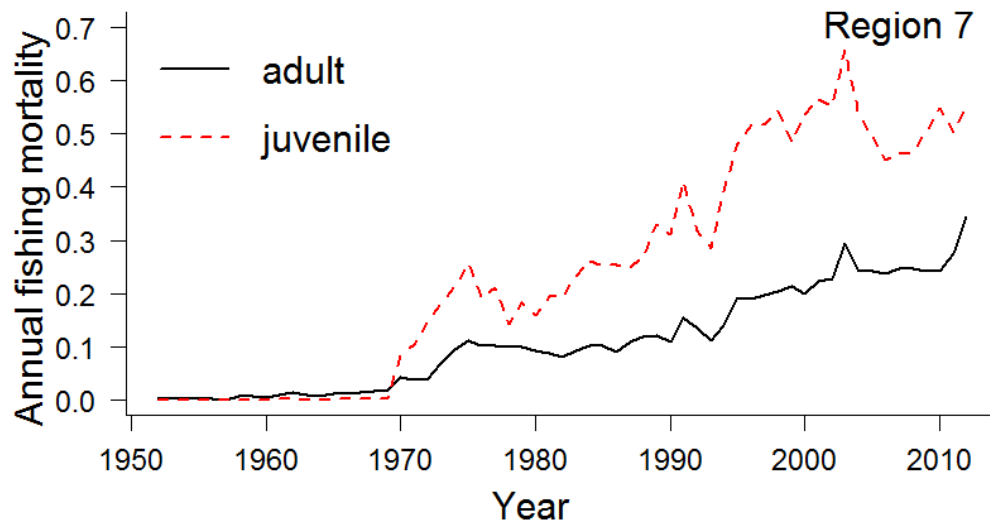
Figure 19: Estimated annual average juvenile and adult fishing mortality for the region 7 of the assessment obtained from the base case model.
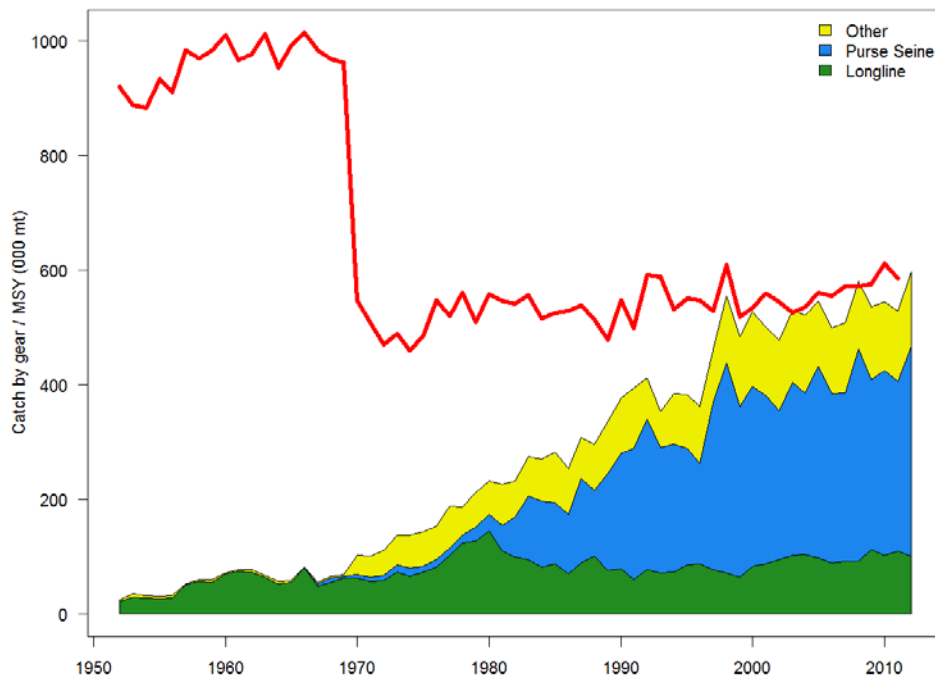

Figure 20: History of annual estimates of MSY compared with catches of three major fisheries for the base case model.

Management Advice and Implications

The WCPO yellowfin spawning biomass is above the biomass-based LRP WCPFC adopted, $0.2SB_{F=0}$, and overall fishing mortality appears to be below F_{MSY}. It is highly likely that stock is not experiencing overfishing and is not in an overfished state.

Latest (2012) catches (612,797mt (SC10-GW-WP-01)) of WCPO yellowfin tuna marginally exceed the MSY (586,400mt).

Future status under status quo projections (assuming 2012 conditions) depends upon assumptions on future recruitment. When spawner-recruitment relationship conditions are assumed, spawning biomass is predicted to increase and the stock is exceptionally unlikely (0%) to become overfished ($SB_{2032}<0.2SB_{F=0}$) or to fall below SB_{MSY}, nor to become subject to overfishing ($F>F_{MSY}$). If recent (2002-2011) actual recruitments are assumed, spawning biomass will remain relatively constant, and the stock is exceptionally unlikely (0%) to become overfished or to become subject to overfishing, and it was very unlikely (2%) that the spawning biomass would fall below SB_{MSY}.

The SC also noted that levels of fishing mortality and depletion differ between regions, and that fishery impact was highest in the tropical region (regions 3, 4, 7, 8 in the stock assessment model). The WCPFC could consider measures to reduce fishing mortality from fisheries that take juveniles, with the goal to increase to maximum fishery yields and reduce any further impacts on the spawning potential for this stock in the tropical regions.

WCPFC could consider a spatial management approach in reducing fishing mortality for yellowfin.

The SC recommend that the catch of WCPO yellowfin should not be increased from 2012 levels which exceeded MSY and measures should be implemented to maintain current spawning biomass levels until the Commission can agree an appropriate TRP.

5.1 Estimates of fishery parameters and abundance
There are no fishery-independent indices of abundance for the yellowfin tuna stock. Relative abundance information is available from standardized indices of longline catch per unit effort data. Returns from large scale tagging programmes undertaken in the early 1990s and 2000s also provide information on rates of fishing mortality which in turn leads to improved estimates of abundance.

5.2 Biomass estimates
These estimates apply to the WCPO portion of the stock or an area that is approximately equivalent to the waters west of 150°W. The stock assessment results and conclusions of the 2014 assessment show $SB_{current}$ / SB_{MSY} estimated at 1.37 over the period 2008-2011. Spawning biomass for the WCPO is estimated to have declined to about 38% of its initial level by 2012.

5.3 Yield estimates and projections
No estimates of MCY and CAY are available.

5.4 Other yield estimates and stock assessment results
SC10 achieved consensus to accept and endorse the reference case proposed in the assessment document, and that $SB_{20\%,F=0}$ be used as the LRP for stock status purposes as agreed by WCPFC. There was further discussion about whether to use SB_{latest} or $SB_{current}$ as the terminal spawning biomass for management purposes. The SC agreed to use the

most recent information on spawning biomass, SB_{latest} corresponding to 2012. At 0.38 $SB_{F=0}$ SB_{latest} is above the limit reference point.

SC10 also endorsed the use of the candidate biomass-related target reference point (TRP) currently under consideration for skipjack tuna, i.e., 40-60% $SB_{F=0}$. At 0.38 $SB_{F=0}$ SB_{latest} is slightly below the target reference point.
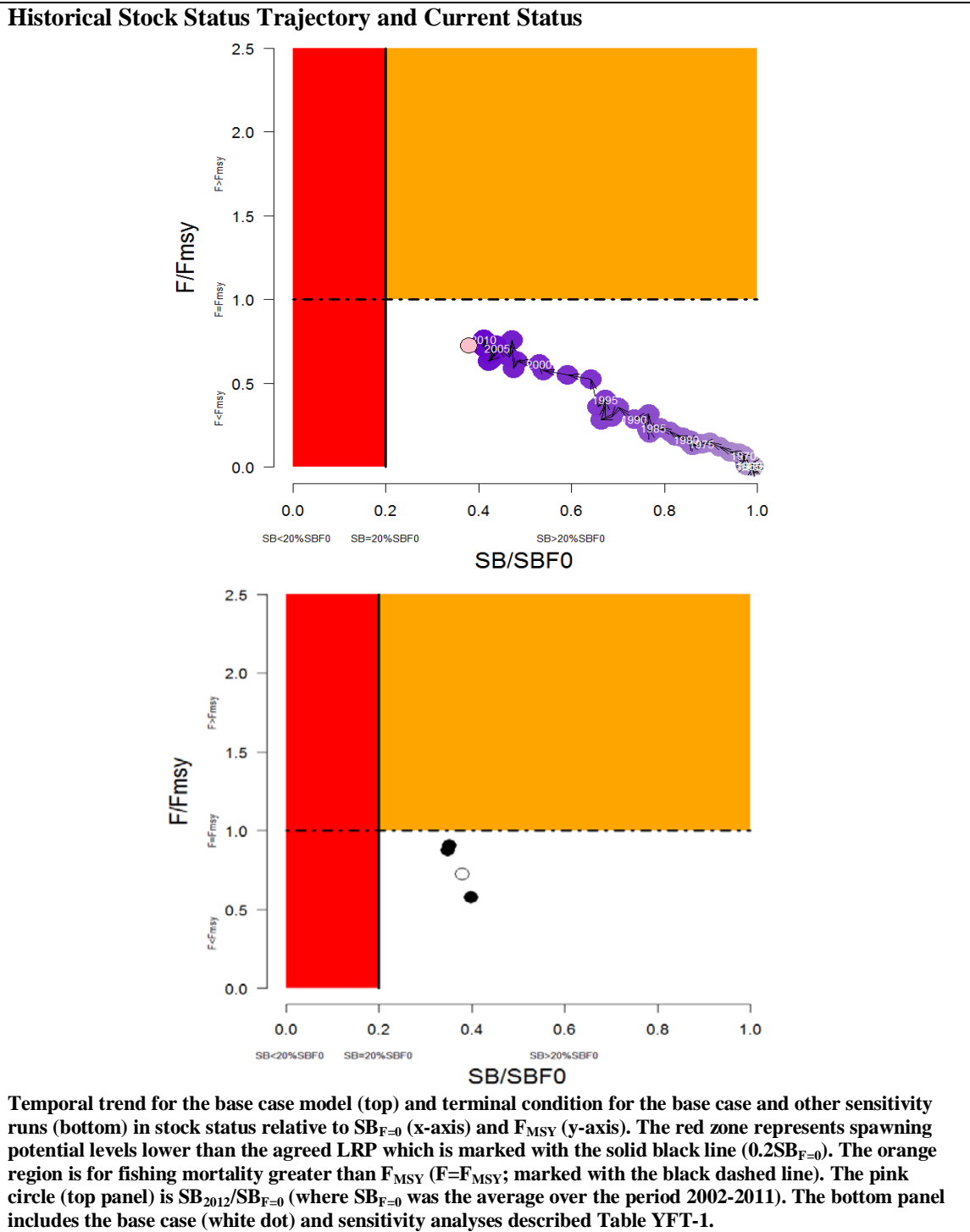
5.5   Other factors

It is thought that large numbers of small yellowfin tuna are taken in surface fisheries in Indonesia and the Philippines. There are considerable uncertainties in the exact catches and these lead to uncertainties in the assessment. Programmes are in place to improve the collection of catch statistics in these fisheries.

6.   STATUS OF THE STOCKS

Stock structure assumptions
Western and Central Pacific Ocean

Stock Status	
Year of Most Recent Assessment	2014
Assessment Runs Presented	Base case model and a range of sensitivities
Reference Points	Candidate biomass-related target reference point (TRP) currently under consideration for key tuna species is 40-60% SB_0 Limit reference point of 20% SB_0 established by WCPFC equivalent to the HSS default of 20% SB_0 Hard Limit: Not established by WCPFC; but evaluated using HSS default of 10% SB_0 Overfishing threshold: F_{MSY}
Status in relation to Target	Recent levels of spawning biomass are About as Likely as Not (40-60%) to be at or above the lower end of the range of 40-60% SB_0 (based on both the 2008-11 average and the 2012 estimate). Likely ($> 60\%$) that $F < F_{MSY}$
Status in relation to Limits	Soft Limit: Unlikely ($< 40\%$) to be below Hard Limit: Very Unlikely ($< 10\%$) to be below
Status in relation to Overfishing	Overfishing is Unlikely ($< 40\%$) to be occurring

Historical Stock Status Trajectory and Current Status

Temporal trend for the base case model (top) and terminal condition for the base case and other sensitivity runs (bottom) in stock status relative to $SB_{F=0}$ (x-axis) and F_{MSY} (y-axis). The red zone represents spawning potential levels lower than the agreed LRP which is marked with the solid black line ($0.2SB_{F=0}$). The orange region is for fishing mortality greater than F_{MSY} ($F=F_{MSY}$; marked with the black dashed line). The pink circle (top panel) is $SB_{2012}/SB_{F=0}$ (where $SB_{F=0}$ was the average over the period 2002-2011). The bottom panel includes the base case (white dot) and sensitivity analyses described Table YFT-1.

Fishery and Stock Trends	
Recent trend in Biomass or Proxy	Biomass has been reduced steadily over time reaching a level of about 38% of unexploited biomass in 2012. However, depletion is higher in the equatorial region 4 where recent depletion levels are approximately 0.31 for spawning biomass (a 69% reduction from the unexploited level) and 0.24 in region 8.
Recent Trend in Fishing Intensity or Proxy	Fishing mortality has increased over time but is estimated to be lower than F_{MSY} in all cases
Other Abundance Indices	-

Trends in Other Relevant Indicator or Variables	Spatially-aggregated recruitment is estimated to have declined in the early part of the assessment, but there is no persistent trend post-1965. The analysis suggests that the substantial declines in spawning potential are being driven primarily by the fishing impacts rather than long-term declines in recruitment. However, recent recruitment is estimated to be slightly lower than the long-term average (by approximately 6%).

Projections and Prognosis	
Stock Projections or Prognosis	Stochastic projection results indicated that for yellowfin tuna it was Exceptionally Unlikely ($< 1\%$) that the yellowfin stock would fall below the LRP level or that fishing mortality would increase above the F_{MSY} level by 2032.
Probability of Current Catch or TACC causing Biomass to remain below or to decline below Limits	Soft Limit: Exceptionally Unlikely ($< 1\%$) Hard Limit: Exceptionally Unlikely ($< 1\%$)
Probability of Current Catch or TACC causing Overfishing to continue or commence	Exceptionally Unlikely ($< 1\%$)

Assessment Methodology and Evaluation		
Assessment Type	Level 1: Quantitative Stock assessment	
Assessment Method	The assessment uses the stock assessment model and computer software known as MULTIFAN-CL.	
Assessment Dates	Latest assessment: 2014	Next assessment: Unknown
Overall assessment quality rank	1 - High Quality	
Main data inputs (rank)	This assessment includes improved purse seine catch estimates; reviews of the catch statistics of the component fisheries; standardised CPUE analyses of operational level catch and effort data; size data inputs from the purse seine and longline fisheries; revised regional structures and fisheries definitions; preparation of tagging data and reporting rate information	1 - High Quality
Data not used (rank)	N/A	
Changes to Model Structure and Assumptions	- Changes to the data from the 2011 assessment included: - Increases in the number of spatial regions to better model the tagging and size data; - Inclusion of catch estimates from Vietnam and some Japanese coastal longline data previously not included; - The use of operational longline data for multiple fleets to better address the contraction of the Japanese fleet and general changes over time in targeting practices; - Improved modelling of recruitment to ensure that uncertain	

	estimates do not influence key stock status outcomes; and - A large amount of new tagging data corrected for differential post-release mortality and other tag losses
Major Sources of Uncertainty	Estimated recruitments appear to be uncertain for the terminal time period (2012) as was indicated by the retrospective analyses, with the final recruitment estimate in each retrospective model altering as more data were added. The values of absolute abundance differ among the assessments due to a number of factors including changes in model structure, assumptions, input data and the MULTIFAN-CL software.

Qualifying Comments

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Fishery Interactions

Interactions with protected species are known to occur in the longline fisheries of the South Pacific, particularly south of 25°S. Seabird bycatch mitigation measures are required in the New Zealand, Australian EEZ's and through the WCPFC Conservation and Management Measure (CMM2007-04). Sea turtles also get incidentally captured in longline gear; the WCPFC is attempting to reduce sea turtle interactions through Conservation and Management Measure (CMM2008-03). Shark bycatch is common in longline fisheries and largely unavoidable; this is being managed through New Zealand domestic legislation and to a limited extent through Conservation and Management Measure (CMM2010-07).

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