



Global Marine Programme

Restoring the balance

ForTuna

The Global Tuna Conservation Initiative

Big Appetite for Big Fish

Tuna is one of the world's most traded and sought-after fish. Consumers enjoy tuna in many forms, as a whole fish or fresh steaks, in cans, as sashimi or in a ready-made sandwich. Tuna is tasty, healthy and feeds billions of people globally. It is also highly profitable: Sainsbury's, a UK retailer, sells 665,000 cans worth more than USD 1.5 million - each week. And in Japan, 200 kg of top quality bluefin tuna can fetch over USD 10,000.

Although tuna are migratory while swimming the oceans, they often travel far greater distances canned, chilled or frozen. The tuna on your plate may be fished in the Indian Ocean by Philippine fishers on board a Spanish-owned vessel registered in Belize, before being processed in Thailand and then sold in Europe.

Global tuna production reached nearly five million tonnes in 2002, with catches at all-time highs. The world's appetite for tuna seems to have no limits. However, this huge demand is threatening many tuna populations as well as other marine life. Tuna fishing alters entire ecosystems: populations of these top predators are being depleted and large volumes of bycatch of species such as leatherback turtles, albatross and sharks, which can be caught on long-lines.

Many industrialized countries' (EU, US, Japan, China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan) tuna fleets fish in faraway oceans and often in the waters of developing countries. For example, only ten percent of tuna landed by EU vessels is caught in European waters or international waters near Europe. To catch tuna, EU countries have entered so-called Fisheries Partnership Agreements with several developing countries, granting its vessels the right to fish in foreign waters. Sixteen of 17 such agreements involve tuna. Such distant water fishing often has devastating effects on coastal fisheries vital to local communities.



Tuna purse seine fisheries have a huge impact on marine ecosystems, mainly through catching non-target species. Here, a manta ray.

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Tuna being prepared for sale at the Tsukiji market, Tokyo.

A recent addition to the perils of tuna is the booming tuna farming industry, which fattens wild-caught tuna in cages and is now critically endangering many wild populations.

ForTuna's Vision

By 2010, tuna fisheries provide food, jobs and social development while maintaining healthy wild populations of tuna, as well as of related species and habitats, and ensuring the ecological and economic productivity of the world's oceans.

To achieve this, all key actors ensure effective management of tuna populations globally, as well as responsible trade, marketing and consumption.

Working Together ForTuna

To create a sea change in the management of tuna populations on a global scale, WWF and TRAFFIC launched the global tuna conservation initiative, "ForTuna", in July 2004. WWF and TRAFFIC have a long history of working with fisheries issues - in tuna fisheries management commissions, with local communities and along the production chain.

ForTuna brings together the already extensive work on tuna fisheries, including policy activities and a partnership/solution-oriented approach of working with fishers. It provides a clear vision and strategy for the future management and conservation of tuna.

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ForTuna's Objectives

ForTuna will achieve six five-year (2005-10) outcomes for tuna conservation. These are:

- increased consumer awareness and demand for sustainably sourced tuna
- more equitable fisheries partnership agreements
- Restoration and maintenance of healthy pelagic ecosystems
- functional and effective regional fisheries management organizations
- sustainable investment in the tuna seafood and fishing sectors.

Seeking Solutions

Reducing the Impacts on Marine Life

The challenge today is to safeguard the marine environment while sustainably using the goods provided by its ecosystems. This can only be achieved through the ecosystem-based management approach, which integrates socio-economic and ecological aspects of marine resource use. ForTuna focuses on establishing ecosystem-based management in tuna fisheries to support the restoration and maintenance of healthy open-sea ecosystems and to reduce bycatch.

It is also seeking to promote research and development of new mitigation measures and works with fishers to assess and determine the benefits of reducing bycatch. One such solution is the introduction in long-line fisheries of circle-shaped hooks to replace the traditional J-shaped hooks. At-sea trials with local fishers in Colombia and Ecuador have shown that the circle hook can reduce leatherback turtle bycatch by up to 90 percent. Changed fishing practices, such as night fishing and line weighting, have also reduced albatross bycatch in the Southern Ocean.

Improving the Deal for Artisanal Fisheries

WWF has successfully raised awareness about the public subsidization of global fisheries. ForTuna seeks to capitalize on these efforts. It will also work to reduce the footprint of tuna fleets in distant waters by developing a toolkit for fisheries partnerships agreement negotiations, monitoring these agreements, documenting examples of good and bad fishing practices, improving existing agreements and by lobbying for fairer terms.

Additionally, to promote more sustainable practices in tuna fisheries, the initiative will explore developing investment guidelines for both public and private investors.



The EU has agreements with a number of developing countries, whereby it pays for catching fish in their territories. Sixteen of 17 such agreements involve tuna.

Catching the Right Amount

By working through the six regional tuna fisheries management organizations, ForTuna seeks to ensure adequate management of over-exploited fish stocks and the maintenance of healthy populations. The aim is that fisheries, both in national waters and on the high seas, will be effectively managed to reduce catching capacity to levels marine ecosystems can sustain, by 2007.

Farming - the Nail in the Coffin for Bluefin Tuna?



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Bluefin tuna is the most sought-after tuna for Japanese sushi and sashimi, fetching high prices in Tokyo's fish market. This has made the bluefin the world's most valuable fish. Tuna farming uses wild-caught tuna and today almost all Mediterranean bluefin and Australian southern bluefin tuna is caught in purse seine nets and then transferred to large cages for fattening.

Many tuna are caught before having reproduced, slowly eroding the productive base of the population. In the Mediterranean and Southern Ocean, the bluefin is greatly overfished and the rapidly rising tuna farming industry may push it to the brink of commercial extinction. From 2002 to 2004, the amount of tuna farmed in the Mediterranean increased by over 50%, to 22,500 tonnes.

Who Eats the Fish?

By choosing tuna sourced from sustainable operations, consumers can change the way tuna is fished. ForTuna aims to help consumers find sustainably sourced fish products in their local supermarket, through creating incentives for healthy fisheries.

ForTuna is doing this by encouraging major tuna traders and producers to adopt guidelines and agreements that support the sustainable exploitation of tuna – from fisher all the way to the dinner plate.

By promoting the certification of sustainable fisheries through the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), increasing consumer awareness of the benefits of choosing tuna from well-managed fisheries and through seeking key producers and traders along chains of custody, ForTuna will make sure tuna is here to stay.

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