South Africa albacore tuna - pole & line/rod & reel

Overview

FIP Description

Half of this profile is currently in Full Assessment (https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/southern-africa-sustainable-tuna-...@@view) and the other half is MSC certified (https://fisheries.msc.org/en/fisheries/south-africa-albacore-tuna-pole-a...@@view).

Fish for Good is a Pathway Project funded by the Dutch Postcode Lottery, facilitated by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and with WWF South Africa (WWF-SA) as the implementing partner in the project. The Fish for Good Project aims are to contribute to the building of fisheries sustainability infrastructure in South Africa, Indonesia, and Mexico to improve environmental sustainability and bring about socio-economic benefits for fishing communities.

The project uses the Pathway Project model which involves a country-specific analysis of fisheries as a way of introducing the MSC programme to small-scale fisheries, coastal fishers, and other types of hard-to-engage fisheries. The MSC has shown that its fishery certification and the eco-labelling programme can drive improvements amongst fisheries leading to healthier oceans by leveraging market incentives on offer by the MSC programme.

So far in South Africa, the Fish for Good Project has mapped 15 fisheries, conducted nine pre-assessments, and selected five fisheries to go for the development of action plans and implementation through Fishery Improvement Projects (FIP). One of the fisheries chosen for the FIP stage is the albacore tuna pole and line fishery.

The pole and line and rod and reel fisheries for tuna constitute the oldest commercial fisheries for tuna in South Africa dating to the 1970s when these gears were used to land tunas as bycatch of other sectors. The fishery developed rapidly in 1979 when yellowfin tuna (Thunnus albacares) became available close inshore off Cape Point. The run was short-lived and by 1980 yellowfin tuna was no longer available close inshore, resulting in a shift to targeting albacore (Thunnus alalunga) instead of on the Southwest and West coasts of South Africa. Albacore catches peaked at 6,000 t in 1989, although these catches were under-reported and were probably closer to 10,000 t. The sector has continued to exploit juveniles and sub-adult albacore of between 2 and 3 years old (average of 86 cm FL) and larger yellowfin tuna (average of 133 cm FL) when they are available.

Fishing is permitted to take place throughout the year. The fishery is seasonal with vessels active predominantly between November and May and peak catches recorded from November to January. Effort fluctuates according to the availability of fish in the area, but once a shoal of tuna is located several vessels will move into the area and target a single shoal which may remain in the area for days at a time. The fishery is dependent on window periods of favourable conditions relating to catch availability.

The bulk of the fleet operates out of Cape Town and Hout Bay harbours and fishes within a 100 nm radius of those locations. Smaller vessels typically conduct short trips of 5-7 days and have a specialised crew of 8-10 fishermen equipped with long poles and gaffs to haul tuna on-board. The effort is concentrated in the Cape Canyon area.

Fishes are targeted with pole and line and with rod and line gear. Vessels are split into two broad categories: (1) Pole boats of 10 m – 20 m, < 20 crew, ice slurry, 3-10 day trips, (2) freezer vessels 20 m -28 m, >20 crew, onboard freezers, > 3-week trips. Pole boats, representing the bulk of the fleet, are mainly older displacement type vessels converted from other fisheries. These vessels can undertake multiday trips of limited duration and range, as the catch is kept on ice and sold fresh. Freezer vessels due to their large size and freezing facilities can stay out at sea for long periods and reach the farthest fishing grounds at the Namibian border.

The fishing gear used is a bamboo pole with a wire leader attached that ends in an un-barbed hook - crew work in pairs to catch and haul albacore. The pole method is used when the vessel has located a school of fish and in conjunction with sprayers on the port and/or starboard of the vessel and the use of live or dead-bait to chum the water, the school is encouraged into a feeding frenzy and may remain associated with the vessel for a prolonged period. Bait, usually Sardinops sagax, is purchased locally from the South African Small Pelagic sardine purse seine fishery. Rod and reel gear is used when the vessel is steaming and there can be as many as 8-10 lines spread out of the stern of the vessel. Hooks are barbed and baited, or artificial lures are used. Strikes are monitored by a crew member from the stern and fish are reeled in one at a time. This method is typically used to target larger tropical yellowfin and bigeye tunas and occasionally southern bluefin tuna and marlins.

In addition to the albacore and yellowfin tuna, vessels will alternatively target snoek (Thyrsites atun) during good runs. The sector has, since 2017, been allocated a small proportion of the national TAC for Southern bluefin tuna (Thunnus maccoyii) but has yet to utilise this resource significantly. There is also scope for the TPL fleet to harvest significant catches of yellowtail (Seriola lalandi) however this species is predominantly reserved for the commercial linefish sector and strict limits are imposed on the TPL fleet for this species.

National management of the sector falls under the jurisdiction of the DAFF Chief Directorate Marine Resources Management, further to the Pelagic and High Seas Fisheries Management Directorate. The Tuna Pole and Line sector is effort controlled, limiting the number of vessels and crew in addition to the international TAC set by ICCAT.

The fishery operates from Cape Point (36°S) to the Namibian border over water 500 – 1000 m depth (sometimes further offshore to 1500 m depth. Vessels are excluded from all National Parks and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Due in large to the highly migratory nature of tunas, the fishery is seasonal typically occurring from March-June and again from October to December. Rough seas and volatile wind conditions in the main areas of operation further limit the sector from operating all year round.

How is this FIP Doing?

Current Status:

Actions Progress This shows the proportion of actions in the workplan that the FIP has completed.

0%

Actions Overview This shows the proportion of actions that are behind schedule, on track,completed, or not yet started.

Behind	On Track	Complete	Future
0%	100%	0%	0%

FIP Objective(s)

The project aims to deliver the following:

- Support a stakeholder submission to ICCAT to develop well-defined Harvest Control Rules that take into account a wide range of uncertainties and to define Long Term and Fishery Specific Objectives to be adopted by ICCAT by 2025.
- Developing an explicit Fishery management plan with long-term and short-term objectives in South Africa that adopts an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries to be incorporated into national policy by 2022.
- Develop a system to collect detailed at-sea catch information for all species by setting up independent observer monitoring, pilot electronic monitoring, and self-reporting by fishers by 2023.
- Train fishing captains/crew on species Identification, handling and self-reporting requirements by 2023.
- Assess and quantify risks to ETP species and develop a monitoring programme by analysing data collected as part of independent observer monitoring, electronic monitoring, and self-reporting by 2023.
- Develop a strategy to minimise impacts on ETP species in consultation with stakeholders and adopting strategy within national policy by 2023.
- Describe monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) system and demonstrate MCS system effectiveness by publishing annual MCS report by 2022.
- A pass against the MSC standard and enter full MSC assessment by 2025.

FIP Type

Comprehensive

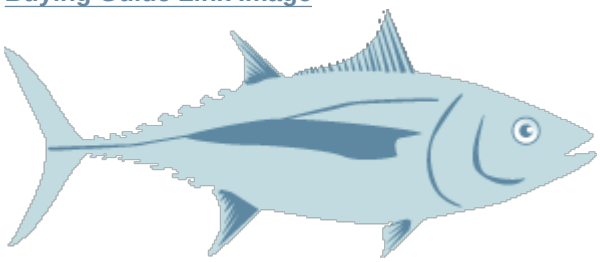
FIP Stage

Stage 4: Improvements in Fishing Practices or Fishery Management

Start and Projected End Dates
July, 2020 -
July, 2025

Species

Common Name
Albacore Tuna
Scientific Name
Thunnus alalunga
Buying Guide Link Image



Albacore Tuna
Buying Guide

Gear Type
Pole

Rod & Reel

Location

FAO Major Fishing Area
Area 47 (Atlantic, Southeast)

Exclusive Economic Zones

Country
South Africa

Geographic Scope
Atlantic Ocean within the South African EEZ

Country Flag of Vessel
South Africa

Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO)
ICCAT

Estimated Total FIP Landings
5068 metric tons

FIP Leads

Organization Name
WWF South Africa

Organization Type
NGO

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