

Tuna nearly fished to extinction

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Australian officials say one of that nation's most valuable fish -- the southern bluefin tuna -- is facing extinction.

Australia's Environment Minister Ian Campbell said the government's Threatened Species Scientific Committee has determined even if global bluefin tuna catches were reduced to zero, stocks might not recover since only 3 percent of breeding stock remains, the Sydney Morning Herald reported Thursday.

Although the committee has recommended the species be listed as endangered, it also said such a listing might further endanger the fish.

"It may weaken Australia's ability to influence the global conservation of the species and, by implication, its conservation in Australian waters," the committee said.

About 16,000 tons of the tuna are caught annually, including 5,265 tons by Australians, the Morning Herald reported. The bluefin sells in Japan as a sashimi fish for about \$23 a pound.

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