

Overfishing may lead to tuna extinction

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Some scientists fear the bluefin tuna, Japan's unofficial national dish, is being caught in such numbers its commercial extinction is looming.

The International Commission for the Conservation of the Atlantic Tuna said it allocated in 2004 32,000 tons of tuna fishing at its annual meeting this week in Seville, Spain.

However, the WWF, the environmental group, estimates that between 45,000 and 50,000 tons were actually caught and it also believes ICCAT it is failing in its duties, reported the Independent Friday.

"We have now reached crisis point for bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean," said Sergio Tudela, of WWF Mediterranean. "Levels of fishing are 2.5 times higher than the bluefin populations can sustain. This mismanagement will lead to commercial extinction."

Tuna ranching involves spotting schools of tuna by plane, catching them in nets by fast-moving fleets, towing them ashore and fattening them until they are large enough to be slaughtered, blast-frozen and shipped to Japan.

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