

# New research offers roadmap towards sustainable pole-and-line-caught tuna

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Research conducted at the University of York offers a blueprint for the long-term sustainability of tuna caught using the pole-and-line method.

The report, written by Steve Rocliffe of the University of York's Environment Department, looks specifically at the role of baitfish – small fish released into the sea to attract [tuna](#) schools within range of a vessel's fishing gear.

It reveals the first ever global estimate of baitfish required to catch tuna using the pole-and-line technique – 25,000 tonnes per year – and identifies several environmental and social issues associated with fishing for this bait. Chief among these issues is the use of juvenile fish as well as the complex interactions between live baitfish fisheries, local

communities and tourism industries, the report shows.

Ensuring Sustainability of Livebait Fish calls for more research into these impacts. It also argues that improving management in bait fisheries through the introduction of management plans and stock assessments could resolve most of these issues and ensure that pole-and-line remains the most responsible and sustainable way to fish for tuna.

Pole-and-line fishing is a simple approach to catching tuna with a hooked line attached to a pole. On locating a school of tuna, pole-and-line vessels scatter live bait into the sea in a process known as “chumming”. This creates the illusion of a large school of small fish near the surface, sending the tuna into such a feeding frenzy that they will bite at any shiny, moving object in the water, even un-baited hooks.

The report was compiled in collaboration with the not-for-profit International Pole & Line Foundation (IPNLF). The Foundation, launched in April 2012, works to help develop sustainable and equitable pole-and-line fisheries and to increase the market share of sustainably and equitably caught pole-and-line tuna.

Steve Roccliffe said: “Pole-and-line fishing is one of the most environmentally and socially desirable methods of catching tuna, but like any method, it isn’t perfect. As demand for responsibly sourced tuna grows, it’s vital to ensure that the bait fisheries on which pole-and-line depends are well-managed and regularly assessed.”

“Sustainable live bait fisheries are in everyone’s interests,” said Andrew Bassford, co-founder of the International Pole & Line Foundation (IPNLF). “As a priority, we’re developing best practise guidelines for baitfish management plans and providing skill sharing, training and capacity building to improve community and coastal states’ ability to manage baitfish fisheries on a long-term sustainable and equitable basis.”

**More information:** The report, "Ensuring Sustainability of Livebait Fish," can be downloaded from the University of York's Environment department website at [www.york.ac.uk/environment](http://www.york.ac.uk/environment)

Provided by University of York

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