

# Halve catches or lose Pacific bluefin tuna, WWF tells fishery managers

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The long term sustainability of the Pacific Bluefin Tuna fishery can only be guaranteed by following the science and halving catch limits, WWF will tell the two Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) covering the Pacific.

The 21 country and European Union members of the Inter American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) meeting next week in Lima, Peru will be faced with findings that measures of Pacific Bluefin tuna breeding stock have declined from their unfished levels by more than 96 percent. Also concerning is the fact that about 90% of the fished species are young fish that have not yet reproduced. The advice from experts of the International Scientific Committee (ISC) for tuna on how overfished Pacific Bluefin tuna must also be taken to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) in Samoa in December.

Japan, Mexico, the United States and South Korea are the major countries fishing Pacific bluefin, while the main market is Japan.

"Management measures in the Eastern Pacific and Western and Central Pacific are totally insufficient to preserve the Pacific Bluefin tuna stock. Only a 50% reduction of catches and stringent measures to protect juveniles can ensure a long-term sustainability of this fishery," said Pablo Guerrero, Eastern Pacific Ocean Tuna Coordinator for WWF's Smart Fishing Initiative.

## **Fleet capacity one third more than recommendation**

In June 2012, the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission set a quota for the tuna catch in the eastern Pacific for the first time ever. Last year the IATTC established that commercial catches in the Eastern Pacific Ocean should not exceed 5000 metric tons in 2014, but only the significant reduction of this quota might help Pacific bluefin tuna biomass to recover.

"Delegates to the Lima meeting need to agree to a catch limit of 2750 metric tons to be consistent with the ISC's recommendation of a 50% reduction of catches", said Guerrero.

For tuna fisheries generally, WWF is highlighting "a clear fishing overcapacity in the Eastern Pacific that undermines the economic performance of the fleet and if not properly controlled, can lead to overfishing of the main tuna stocks". WWF is calling on IATTC for an urgent reduction plan to meet the purse seine fishery capacity levels set out in its 2005 Plan for Management of Regional Capacity, given that current recorded capacity levels exceed these limits by more than a third.

"We are hoping that the Pacific Ocean tuna fishers will see it is in their best interests to address this issue of too many boats chasing too few fish and avoid more draconian management measures such as extended closed seasons and areas."

The IATTC should also adopt conservation measures to reduce fishing mortality of silky sharks in order to rebuild the stock of these sharks in the EPO, and also totally prohibit the removal of fins at sea and to require that sharks be landed with their fins naturally attached. IATTC members should adopt the scientific recommendations on best practices for handling mantarays aboard purse seiners.

Other measures which could make tuna fisheries more sustainable include: mandatory IMO (International Maritime Organization) numbers for all purse seiners and long liners greater than 20m in length operating in the Convention area to monitor and control existing fishing capacity; to provide additional data on movement of FADs (Fish Aggregated Devices) to the Commission, and to mark and identify these devices. And finally, that fishing fleets using FADs avoid the use of any entangling material deployed beneath them in order to reduce by catch of sea turtles and sharks.

Tuna is one of the most valuable fisheries in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, supporting a billion dollar industry that sustains the livelihoods of tens of thousands of people and contributes to economic growth and social development in the region. "It is vital that the member states of the IATTC expand their commitment to the responsible management necessary for sustainable levels of [tuna](#) stocks while ensuring a healthy long-term shark population at the same time," added Pablo Guerrero.

**More information:** A Pacific Bluefin Tuna factsheet is available online: [d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/ ... n tuna factsheet.pdf](https://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/...n_tuna_factsheet.pdf)

Provided by WWF

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