

Pacific nations resist US push to lift tuna quota

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Pacific island nations have vowed to oppose US efforts to increase its catch limit in the world's largest tuna fishery, saying the proposal does nothing to improve sustainable fishing.

The United States is expected to try to increase its quota for [bigeye tuna](#) at a meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) taking place in Honolulu this week.

The meeting brings together 26 nations to determine fishing policy in the Pacific, which accounts for almost 60 percent of the global tuna catch, worth about \$6.0 billion annually.

It is mostly made up of small island nations but also includes so-called "distant-water nations" that come from as far afield as Europe, China, the United States, South Korea, Japan and Taiwan to fish Pacific tuna.

Island nations regularly accuse them of being reluctant to curb the lucrative industry in the interests of long-term conservation.

President Donald Trump's administration will push this year to catch more bigeye—one of the most sought after species of tuna for sashimi—as a reward for complying with the commission's monitoring rules.

All fishing fleets are supposed to carry independent fisheries observers on at least five percent of their boats as means of ensuring quotas are not exceeded and to collect accurate data.

However, most nations aside from the United States ignore the monitoring requirement.

Ludwig Kumoru, chief executive of a Pacific island grouping called the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, said the US bigeye quota should not be

lifted simply because it was following the rules.

"Good reporting should not be used as a condition to increase catch," he said Monday.

"We should instead concentrate on bringing [conservation measures](#) that actually support sustainable fishing."

The head of the Pacific Islands Forum's fisheries agency FFA, Manu Tupou-Roosen, said her aim was to "maintain the strength of the tropical tuna measure (protections) and not to weaken the existing provisions".

The Pew Charitable Trust described the US proposal as "an interesting idea" but was cautious about any measure that lifted the overall bigeye catch.

"If you increase the catch of bigeye through one proposal, you need to kind of rein it in (elsewhere) in a different way," the environmental group's [tuna](#) conservation specialist Dave Gershman said.

"If they can structure it in a way where it doesn't lead to an increase in bigeye catch then that would be the way to go, but at this point, not sure about that."

The meeting in Honolulu ends on Friday.

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