

Pacific nations hike tuna fishing fees by 33 percent

13 June 2014



This photo taken on May 2, 2014 shows a net filled with skipjack tuna coming out of the hold of a purse seine fishing vessel anchored in Majuro Atoll as it off-loads the fish to a mothership for transfer to Asian canneries

Pacific island nations ratcheted up the fees they charge tuna fishing boats to enter their waters by a hefty 33 percent Friday as they accused foreign fleets of not doing enough to conserve stocks.

They also warned the United States, which operates under a separate tuna fishing agreement, that it also faced a substantial increase.

The eight countries that form the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) control waters covering more than half the world's skipjack tuna, the most commonly canned variety.

"There are too many boats catching too few fish," Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority director Glen Joseph said at the end of the PNA annual meeting on Friday.

"Limits are not being fully applied and rules are not being followed."

From January 1, 2015, the PNA will raise the fishing day fee for so-called "distant water" fleets from as far afield as Europe, China, South Korea, Japan and Taiwan, from \$6,000 to \$8,000.

This would increase annual revenue to \$354 million.

"World market prices dropped late last year, but there are indications of improvement that warrant the increase," Joseph said.

In a strongly-worded communique, the United States was told the \$63 million dollars it pays for 40 US-flagged purse-seiner vessels to [fish](#) in PNA waters would have to be renegotiated or they would not be given any fishing days next year.

The PNA covers Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, the Federated States of Micronesia and Palau.

The United States' fee was increased from \$21 million last year during difficult negotiations between the island states, the American tuna industry and the US State Department. The figure will be looked at again when talks resume next month.

"We won't agree to anything after 2015 unless it reflects the new benchmark price," for other foreign vessels, PNA chief executive Transform Aqorau said.

The distant fishing nations were accused of not assisting with conservation measures and Joseph said they refused to provide [tuna](#) catch data despite promising to do so.

"They need to pull their socks up and provide the data. This is an obligation of these states, but eight years later it is still a problem," he said.

Joseph said that despite the PNA limiting the number of fishing days in order to sustain the industry, the distant fleet continued to flout the rules.

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