

Pacific tuna meet fails to agree on cutbacks

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Pacific island states and countries failed on Friday to strike a deal to protect shrinking supplies of tuna and adopt cutbacks following a regional conference, officials said, sparking condemnation from conservationists.

The Pacific Ocean is the world's largest [tuna](#) fishing ground, accounting for almost 60 percent of the global catch.

But supplies are dwindling and conservationists say urgent action is needed to ensure populations remain viable.

The 10 participants "could not reach an agreement" on proposed regulation after five days of talks at the Northern Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) annual conference, Japan's Fisheries Agency said in a statement.

The participants, which include Japan, China, the United States, Fiji, Vanuatu, Canada, South Korea, the Philippines, the Cook Islands and Taiwan, agreed to the conference in the Japanese city of Fukuoka after sharp declines in [bluefin tuna](#) brood stock last year.

Japan, which consumes roughly 70 percent of the global bluefin tuna haul, has suggested introducing cutbacks if stocks drop for three consecutive years.

But the Japanese proposal was opposed by other participants at the meeting, including the US, that want tougher measures to protect the species, fisheries agency official Kazuya Fukaya told AFP.

Fukaya added that the issue will be discussed again at the committee's next annual meeting in South Korea.

Environmental groups expressed frustration over the stalemate, with Greenpeace calling it "extremely regrettable as the stock of Pacific bluefin tuna is in a state of emergency."

"Japan, the world's largest consumer of bluefin tuna, bears the responsibility to strengthen domestic rules (on fishing)," Greenpeace said.

The conservation group has proposed an immediate two-year

moratorium on all commercial fishing.

"The latest stock assessment for Pacific bluefin, released in 2016, found that the population has been heavily depleted to just 2.6 percent of its historic unfished size by nearly a century of overfishing," Greenpeace said in its proposal.

Conservation group World Wide Fund for Nature has recommended the ten countries introduce a catch limit and adopt a long-term bluefin tuna recovery plan.

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