

**PREPARATORY CONFERENCE FOR THE COMMISSION
FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF
HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS IN THE WESTERN
AND CENTRAL PACIFIC**

Fourth session
Nadi, Fiji Islands
5 – 9 May, 2003

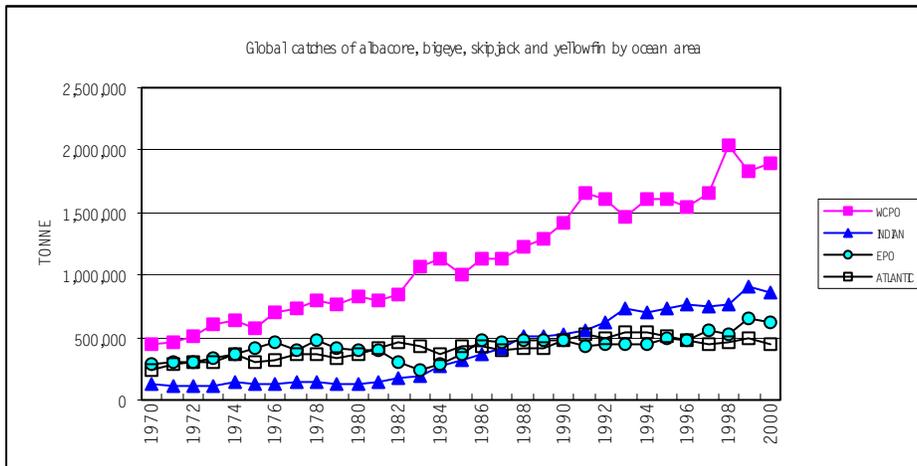
WCPFC/PrepCon/DP.12
9 May 2003

**FACT SHEET PRESENTED BY JAPANESE DELEGATION ON EXPANSION OF FISHING
CAPACITY OF PURSE SEINERS IN THE WESTERN CENTRAL PACIFIC**

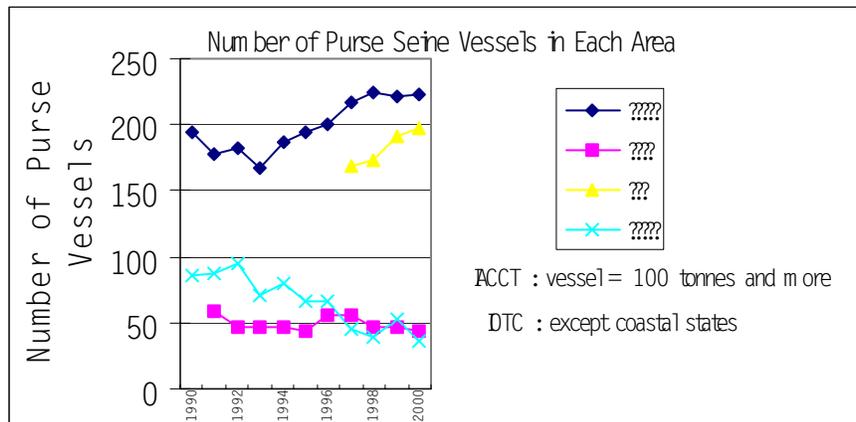
Submitted by the delegation of Japan

1. Despite the Palau Agreement limiting the number of purse seiners in the western central Pacific as well as the 1999 and 2002 resolutions calling for restriction over expansion of fishing efforts, the catch of tunas in this region has been showing an unprecedented increase in comparison with those in other oceans. This increase is mainly caused by the expansion of purse seine fishing capacity.

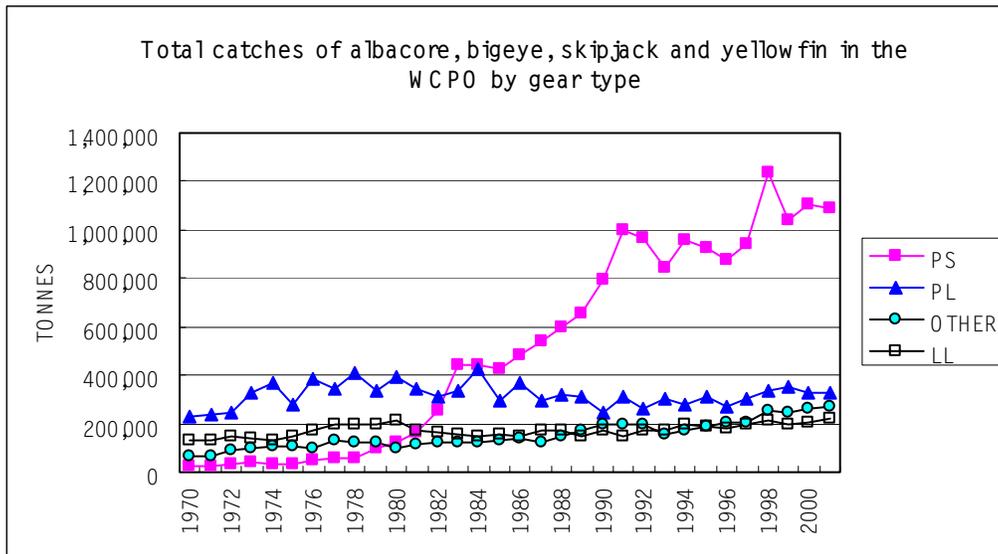
(Fig.1)



(Fig.2)



(Fig.3)



2. The expansion of purse seine fishing capacity involves the following fundamental problems.

(a) Increase of purse seiners by use of the flag of convenience

Fishing industries in some regions such as Taiwan are increasing purse seiners of foreign flags whereas maintaining the numbers of existing licenses. The total number of purse seiners in the region inevitably goes up. For example, the Taiwanese fishing industry was reported to have built 17 large purse seiners and be still building nine (9) purse seiners while keeping the number of Taiwanese licensed purse seine vessels at 41. The 26 purse seiners would be a net increase of the total fishing capacity. Moreover, all those new vessels are very large as described below; some of them are over 2,000GT.

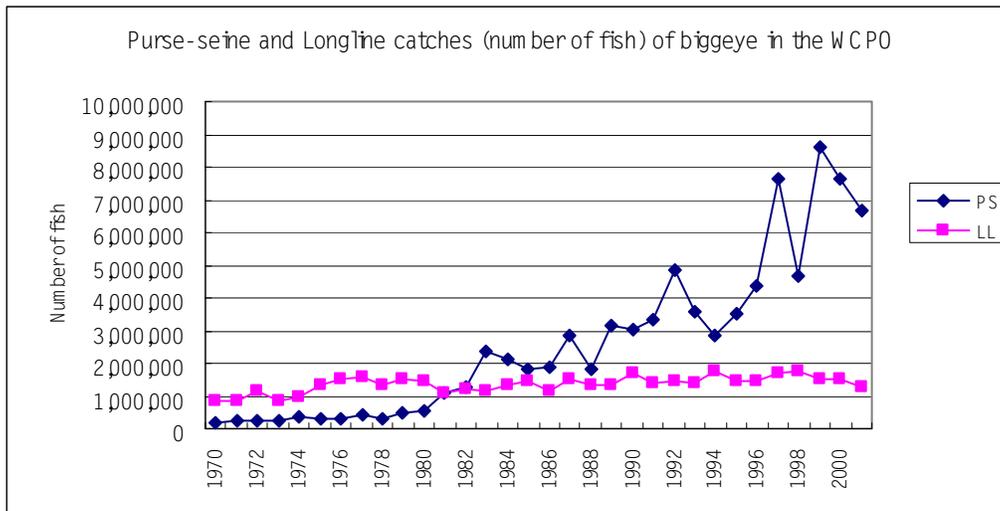
(b) Increase of the vessel size

Many of the purse seiners operating in this region used to be of 700GT class. However, the purse seiners recently recruited from other regions and those newly built are almost all over 1,300GT. Many of them have heliports onboard to enhance the ability of fish search. Even though the increase in number of purse seiners appears relatively small, therefore their total purse seine fishing capacity and actuality increased significantly in this region.

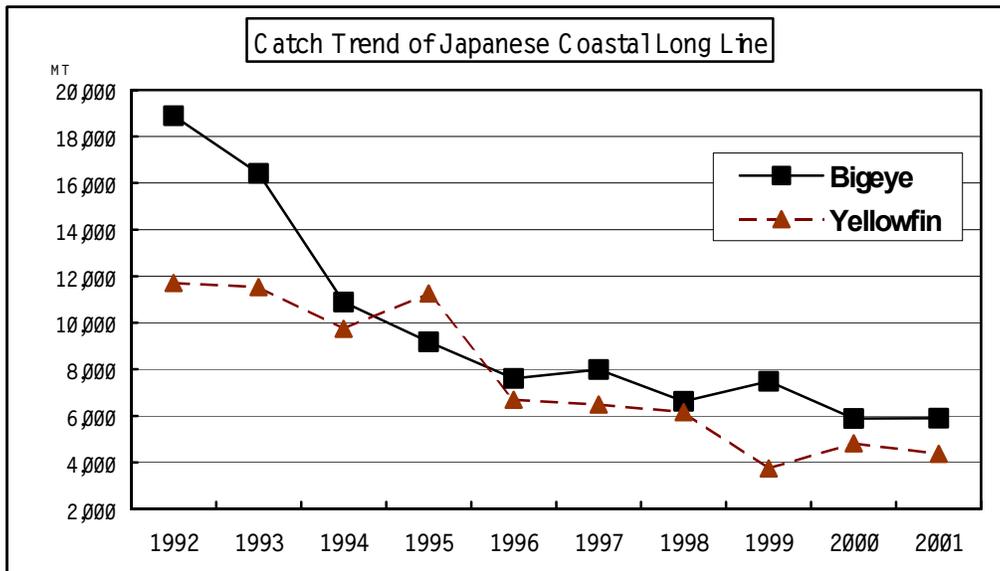
(c) Increase of small fish catch by introduction of FADs

At present almost all the purse seiners are using FADs to improve catches and thereby catching a large number of small tunas. In this sense, too, the impact of purse seine fishing has been amplified rapidly and significantly on the tuna resources involved. The Japanese bigeye catch in the north Pacific decreased sharply in parallel to the increase of purse seine fishing capacity.

(Fig 4)



(Fig.5)



Necessary actions

3. Japan recognizes and respects the right of developing coastal nations for their sound fishery development and has been and will be assisting those island developing nations in this regard. However, such development, particularly in case of large-scale tuna fisheries, should be realized through a shift of fishing capacity from the developed fishing states to the coastal developing states. Otherwise, the total fishing capacity would increase largely and might well ruin the sustainability of the tuna resources. Thus at least an increase of purse seiners by use of FOC has to be stopped promptly, or the number of the licensed purse seiners has to be cut correspondingly.

4. In view of the urgency of the matter, Japan would also like to suggest the Prep-Con to seek scientific advice from the SCTB/SCG (the meeting will be held in July 7-19 in Mooloolaba, Australia) on the impacts of the three problems described above on the tuna resources and possible actions to improve them. Then the next Prep-Con can consider these problems based upon scientific advice.

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