
PACIFIC TUNA WATCH

Pacific Island Tuna Industry raises concerns ahead of IUCN meeting.

The Pacific Islands Tuna Industry Association (PITIA) has sent a circular to members urging industries to consult with fisheries and environment administrations regarding the implications of two upcoming motions which will be voted upon by the members of the International Union of Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) congress. These motions could potentially see the closure of 30% of its members exclusive economic zone (EEZ) to all fishing which if implemented will have drastic effects on the commercial fishing industry.

The IUCN congress will meet in Honolulu, Hawaii from the 1st to the 10th September and will conduct a vote on a number of resolutions which it wishes to present to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) at the time of the review of the Aichi Targets. These targets are part of the CBD's biodiversity strategic plan for the 2011-2020 period targeted towards the conservation of biodiversity. Among the many resolutions that will be put to the vote and one which is concerning to PITIA is motion 53 which calls for implementation of 30% of members' national waters as marine protected areas (MPAs). If this is passed it will require all coastal states to close 30% of their EEZs to all fishing in the next 24 years and this will lead to critical impact on the domestic fishing industry.

Pacific Islands countries already have robust management controls of their commercial fisheries, such as the capping of the number of fishing licenses. It is also understood that Solomon Islands will be implementing long liner vessel day scheme (VDS) as early as 2017. In addition, Vessel operators

in the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) areas are also faced tough fisheries management measures like the VDS, Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) ban periods and the ban on high seas pocket 1 and 2 in the central and western Pacific Ocean which already covers area of around 1.2 million square kilometers of "no take" closed areas. Therefore, to find themselves committed to a further 30% of "no take" MPA is a commercial catastrophe where more boats will be tied up and less fish supplied to the processing facilities resulting in loss of revenue for all stakeholders and more employees send home. Further to that, tuna is a highly migratory pelagic fish species and has no residential home in an MPA, therefore the use of large MPAs as a management tool for sustainable fisheries in the pelagic fisheries is contrary to science and common sense. The pelagic fish species will simply shift from a protected area to areas where there is less control like the high seas. This could lead to overfishing in the uncontrolled areas.

The other area of concern is that responsible agencies for this agreements are not fisheries agencies but environmental agencies which do not deal with fisheries management or understand the science of it. Therefore, PITIA is calling for a more collaboration and thorough consultation with all government agencies concerned to oversee the protection and sustainable use of fisheries and regulate the competing marine uses. This should include stakeholders such as the fishing industry as well.