

Tuna Market Intelligence

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Your fortnightly report on trends and influencers on the global tuna market from the Pacific Islands.

MARKET UPDATE

Prices continued to drop, down to around \$1550 mt in Bangkok in the first weeks of March.

Weaker demand and increased supply from the Indian Ocean were cited as contributing factors by insiders as leading to the price drop. Major processors were also said to be counting on relatively higher prices in the first half of the year and lower prices in the second half.

Send us your tips to marketintel@pnatuna.com

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INFLUENCERS REPORT

Regional albacore tuna talks heat up

While PNA countries are generally focused on skipjack and yellowfin tuna catch and trade, albacore tuna deals came into focus this month in regional meetings.

PNA's collective share on albacore catch amounts to 40% currently, with Solomon Islands having 33%, Tuvalu, 2%, Tokelau, 1.5% and Papua New Guinea, 1.4%) Albacore is already covered under the multi-species PNA Longline Vessel Day Scheme which currently is used by seven PNA countries, plus Tokelau.

Meanwhile, the Tokelau Arrangement seeks to set limits on albacore catch with each country a share of catch, although the agreement is non-binding. The latest draft revises PNA share down to 30.5% with Solomons proposed to take a cut from 33.7% to 22.7% (14,500 mt), but Tokelau and Tuvalu's share increasing to a minimum threshold allocation of 3.9% each (2,500 mt per country).

Meanwhile, New Zealand through the Tokelau Arrangement process has argued its share should go from 330mt to an aspirational limit of 6,700 mt.

Another complication for PNA countries is the Tokelau Arrangement would mean they would be required to operate two management systems, the Longline Vessel Day Scheme and albacore catch limits.

PNA Policy Adviser Richard Banks said discussions are now in process through a FFA consultation exercise on the Tokelau Arrangement to allow for an adjustment process to catch entitlements to remove latent catch. However, talks have pointed to potential problems in the Arrangement. "A number of countries are now voicing serious reservations to the proposed catch based regime, and pointing to the comparative success of the Vessel Day Scheme as an alternative," said Banks.

Palau Bill eyes commercial marine license for export of fish

Three senators from Palau proposed a piece of legislation that will create a commercial marine license process for the sellers and purchasers of fish.

Senate Bill 10-28 stated that Palau fishermen raised the concern that unregulated small-scale fishing and selling of fish locally had led to abuses of the marine environment and depletes the resources for the local fishermen.

The bill, if passed, will require commercial fishermen, sellers and purchasers of fish to obtain licenses from the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism (MNRET).

The bill will also require sellers to record their sales, the types and weight of fishes they sell.

The piece of legislation also aims to address the issue of so-called "cooler trade" of fish. In 2014, 90 metric tons of fish were exported from Palau as part of personal luggage's on airlines. By 2015, the figure rose to 98 metric tons, the bill noted.

There were concerns that these fish were being sold in Guam or Saipan or other destinations.

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The Bill text states: “This legislation will reduce, over time, the weight limit for export to ensure that overfishing of Palau’s resources ceases.”

The limit of non-commercial fish export by an individual allowed, as their checked in baggage is 50 lbs and shall be reduced over the period of two years to only 10 lbs.

Currently passengers can export fish for non-commercial purposes tax-free. Travelers are also not required to obtain a license prior to export of fish.

Sens. Regis Akitaya, Mason Whipps and Frank Kyota introduced the bill.

Sapphire puts shine on NFD fishing in Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands fishing company National Fisheries Company (owned by TriMarine International) now is operating an overhauled and refurbished purse seine vessel, Solomon Sapphire, as of last month.

With a length of 68 meters and gross tonnage of 1446, the vessel will provide a boost to SolTuna’s canning and processing in Noro, Western Province. The vessel was formerly a US-flagged ship named the Cape San Lucas.

NFD supplies SolTuna the local processing company and about 70% of their production is exported to the EU. The remainder supplies the domestic market with brands like Chilli and Solomon Blue also being exported to neighbouring Pacific countries.

PNG canning industry laments trade balance

The National newspaper reported that Papua New Guinea’s Fishing Industry Association (FIA) was not happy with the balance of canned tuna trade.

FIA President Sylvester Pokajam says PNG has been importing more canned tuna than they are exporting. He said there were about 40,000 metric tonnes of canned tuna coming into the country but only 35,000 metric tonnes exported in 2012 and 2013.

Pokajam called on the National Fisheries Authority, Customs and other relevant agencies to look at this problem and work with PNG industry to get standards in place to check quality of imports.

He said PNG should do “like what the European Union is doing to us, we cannot export until we comply with their

standard.”

“We are just importing canned products especially from places like China, Thailand, Vietnam, Australia and other countries. There is no border control over what we are importing,” he said.

New Dock in Majuro celebrated

Marshall Islands fishing development received a boost with the opening of a new dock and net repair facility by Pacific International Inc (PII) this month. The new facility will allow ships to repair nets locally rather than travel to other ports offering such services which are further away, such as Pago Pago, American Samoa.

President Hilda Heine led a delegation of VIPs around the facility describing it as a step in the right direction to “elevate our economy from its current stagnant state”.

The net repair facility will be used by the many purse seine vessels which use services in Majuro, a hub for fishing activity in the region. *Marshall Islands Journal* reported previously net repairs often were interrupted by arrival of vessels needing to dock at Delap.

PII’s CEO Jerry Kramer said the new facility would create dozens of direct jobs and possibly hundreds indirectly.