



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
FIFTH REGULAR SESSION**

10-21 August 2009
Port Vila, Vanuatu

**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMISSION
PART 1: INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH, AND STATISTICS**

WCPFC-SC5-AR/CCM-29

BELIZE

BELIZE'S ANNUAL REPORT
Part 1: Information on Fisheries Research and Statistics

Scientific data was provided to the Commission in accordance with the decision relating to the provision of scientific data to the Commission by 30 th April 2009	YES our scientific data was provided to Commission on 7th April 2009
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1. Abstract/Summary

Belize's longline tuna fishing fleet operating in the WCPFC Convention Area has shown a steady decrease in its catch and effort from 2003 to 2008. There has been a reduction from 30 vessels fishing exclusively in 2003 to 6 in 2008. All 6 of these vessels were licensed exclusively for operation in the WCPFC area. There were a further 4 longliners which were also licensed to fish in the WCPFC area but did not do so in 2008. We also now have 1 reefer carrier currently operating in the WCPFC Area. Due to the reduction in fishing effort, all our catches have decreased when compared with earlier years. There has been a 92% reduction in our overall catches from 3445.99 m/t in 2003 to 283.168 m/t in 2008 and a 58% reduction in our overall catches from 683.824 m/t in 2007. However, this reduction is as a result of 4 of the vessels being laid up for a little over 6 months due to socio-economic costs. Albacore was the main target specie from 2003 to 2006. However, our catches of yellowfin tuna exceed those of albacore in 2007 and 2008. The average size of our vessels has also risen from 191 GT in 2003 to 646 GT in 2007 and 497 in 2008. The majority of the vessels that operated during the period 2003-2006 were between 51-200 GT. In 2008 5 of our vessels were over 500 GT and 1 was under 100 GT.

Black marlin is the most common non-tuna by-catch in our longline fishery followed by Blue Marlin and Sailfish. The large reductions in our longline effort have also resulted in the reduction in catches of our major bycatch species.

We did not receive any reports of seabird and sea turtle interaction by our vessels in 2008. In 2008 we introduced measures to mitigate the impact of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks on seabirds and sea turtles and advised the Secretariat of the measures currently being utilized by our vessels.

Our fishing vessel owners/operators are required to submit data of their fishing operations based on our format for such reporting and in compliance with WCPFC's reporting guidelines. For the purpose of ensuring compliance, surveillance is conducted on a regular basis or as a result of an investigation.

In the future, we intend to re-expand our longline fishing fleet to 8 active fishing vessels exclusively in the Convention Area to fish within the limits set by WCPFC.

2. Tabular Annual Fisheries Information

Table 1: Annual catch and effort estimates for our national fleet, by gear and primary species for years 2004-2008. Gear of vessel is Long Line only

Year	Effort	No. of Vessels	Albacore	Yellowfin	Bigeye
2008	910164	6	7.313	128.98	89.499
2007	1686484	5	164.101	272.713	157.802
2006	1524	17	270.655	106.345	254.447
2005	2765	21	313.213	298.371	424.562
2004	2973	24	410.734	206.848	286.122

Year	Swordfish	Marlin	Blue Marlin	Black Marlin	Stripped Marlin
2008	4.281		12.783	37.393	0.00
2007	7.055		51.712	27.234	3.207
2006	23.032	44.211			
2005	43.625	75.251			
2004	118.147	51.944			

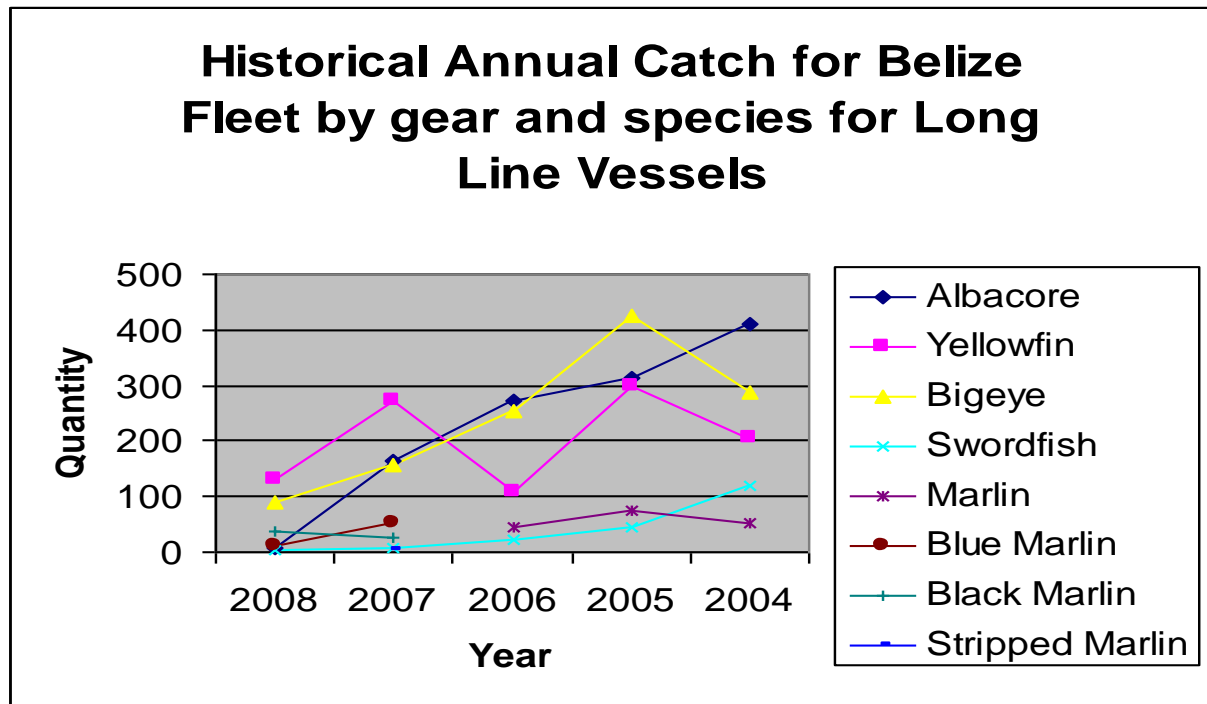


FIGURE 1

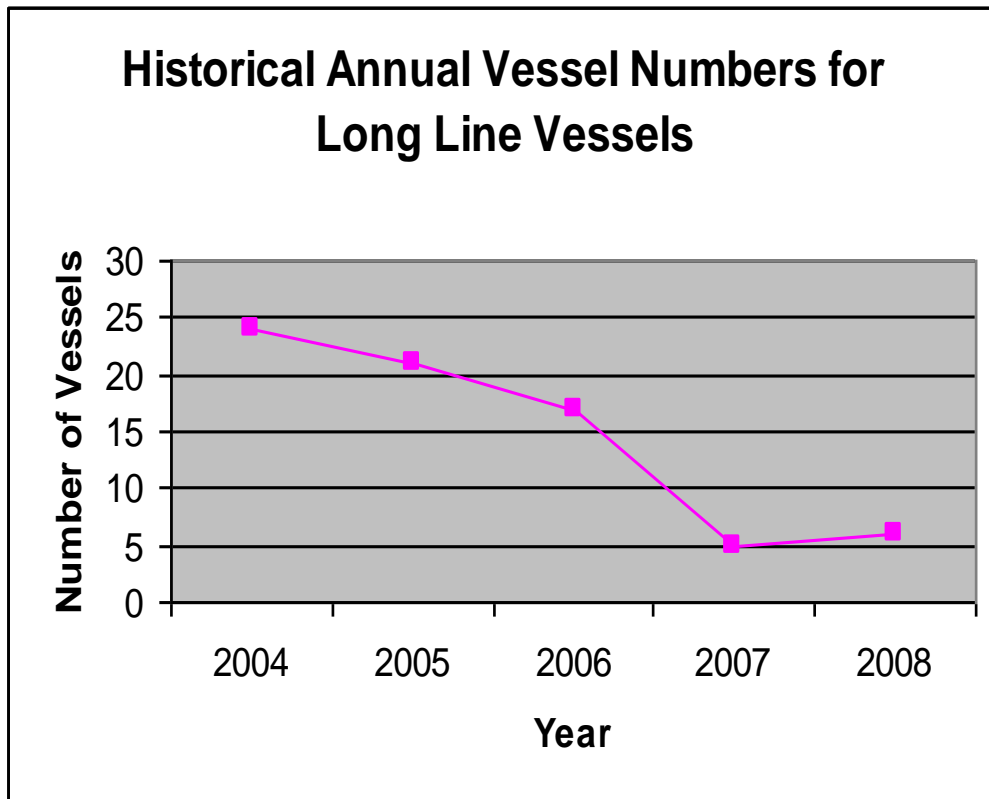


FIGURE 2

Table 2: Number of Belize flagged long line fishing vessels by size active in the WCPFC Convention Area for years 2004-2008.

Year	0-50	51-200	201-500	500+	Total
2008		1		5	6
2007		2	2	5	9
2006	1	15		1	17
2005	1	17	1	2	21
2004	1	20	1	2	24

Table 3: Observed annual estimated catches of species of special interest, such as seabirds, turtles and marine mammals.

We have had no reports of any interaction with species of special interest from our vessels operating in the WCPFC Convention area over a 5 year period.

Table 4: Annual estimated catches of non-target and dependent species by Belize flagged long line fishing vessels operating in the WCPFC Convention Area.

Year	Sharks	Skipjack	Sailfish	Wahoo	Total
2008			2.573		2.573
2007	8.078	2.303	3.299	9.668	23.348
2006		.859	1.181		2.04
2005	77.087	20.117	1.91		99.114
2004	206.17	19.245	38.109		263.524

3. Background

Belize is a Co-operating non-Member of WCPFC . Belize flagged fishing vessels have been operating in the Convention area since 1991. However, as you will observe from Figure 2 above, the number of vessels operating in the WCPFC has declined drastically from 2004-2008. Nonetheless, all our vessels are licensed to operate in the WCPFC Area and we have complied with all the Commission’s requirements for data submission. We have no vessels listed on the IUU Vessel List of any RFMO.

4. Flag State Reporting

- None of our fishing vessels transshipped in the WCPFC Convention area during 2008. This was also the case from 2004-2007.
- All of our vessels operating in the WCPFC Area in 2008 consisted of long line vessels.
- There has been a reduction in the number of active longline vessels from 54 in 2001 to 6 in 2008. All of these vessels were licensed to operate exclusively in the WCPFC area. There were a further 4 long liners which were also licensed to fish in the WCPFC area, but did not do so in 2008.
- Majority of our vessels which were licensed to operate in the WCPFC area in 2008 were laid up for over 6 months. As a result our catches are much reduced when compared with earlier years. Albacore was the main target specie from 2001-2006. However, our catches of yellowfin tuna exceed those of albacore for the first time in 2007 and 2008.
- The average size of our vessels have risen from 191 GT in 2003 to 646 GT in 2007 and 497 GT in 2008. Also, their specification has improved. We currently have 5 longliners with freezing capacity of -60c.

5. Coastal State Reporting

We are not a Coastal State in the WCPFC Area.

6. Socio-economic factors

As we reported above, half of our vessels have been laid up for almost 6 months in 2007 and 2008. This was reported as being influenced by the cost of fuel and the high expenses incurred for daily operation of the vessels.

7. Disposal of Catch

Five of our vessels when operating, export their catches to Vietnam and Busan, Korea. These catches are frozen. One of our vessel landed their fresh catches in Palau for onward exportation to Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Pago Pago, etc.,

8. Onshore Developments

We are not a Coastal State and therefore do not have any processing plants and/or support facilities etc.

9. Future Prospects of the Fishery

In the near future we plan to expand our long line fleet to about 8 active vessels fishing exclusively in the Convention Area and will fish within the limits set for Belize at the 4th Regular Session which was held in Guan 3-7 December 2007, which are as follows:

- Bigeye tuna – not to exceed 803 tonnes
- Yellowfin tuna – not to exceed 2000 tonnes

Other Limits

- We will limit the number of fishing vessels targeting stripped marlin in the Convention area south of 15 degrees south to 2 vessels.
- We will limit the number of fishing vessels actively fishing for South Pacific Albacore in the Convention Area south of 20 degrees south to 2 fishing vessels.
- We will limit the number of fishing vessels actively fishing for North Pacific Albacore in the Convention area north of the equator to 5 vessels.

10. Status of the Tuna Fishery data collection systems

- a) Log sheet data collection and verification – Fishing vessel owners/operator are required to submit data on their fishing operations based on our format for such reporting, which includes a detailed Fishing Log and Fishing Vessel Voyage Report showing information regarding positions, time/dates, sets, catches by species etc., in compliance with the requirements of WCPFC concerning the Standards for the Provision of Operational Catch and Effort Data. Our operational effort level is verified by VMS and our coverage was 100% in 2008. Our operational catch level for 2008 was verified by mate's receipts, and sales invoices and/or purchase contracts (98%) and (25%) port sampling. This included species and size by weight in 2007. In 2008 we have also introduced the requirement for measurement by length for 25% of the vessel's daily catches per specie.
- b) Observer /Port Sampling Program – For the purpose of ensuring compliance, surveillance is conducted on a regular basis or as a result of an investigation by: boarding at sea or in port, plant checks, requesting the assistance of other Governments/Organizations as necessary. We do not currently have any at-sea observer programs. As already indicated in our email dated 26th June 2008 to the Secretariat, we would like to cooperate and make use of any of their pool of observers which will be set up by WCPFC in due course.

11. Research Activities Covering Target and non-Target species

We are not a Coastal State within the WCPFC Convention Area and do not currently conduct any research activities.