

CCSBT

Australian Self- Assessment of Fishing Capacity**Recent History of the Australian SBT Fleet**

Significant commercial fishing for SBT commenced in the early 1950s with the establishment of a pole-and-live-bait fishery off New South Wales (NSW), South Australia (SA) and, later (1970) Western Australia (WA). Purse seine gear overtook pole as the main fishing method in the 1980s. The bulk of this early Australian catch of SBT was canned. In 1990–91, about 20 t of SBT were transferred to fattening cages in Port Lincoln, SA, to enhance their value. Utilisation of the Australian SBT TAC in ‘farming’ operations increased from 3 per cent of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) in 1991–92 to 98 per cent in 1999–2000.

Currently, around 96 per cent of Australia’s Southern Bluefin Tuna quota is taken by purse seine vessels fishing in the Great Australian Bight. The SBT are towed alive back to static grow-out pontoons located off Port Lincoln. These fish are grown out for up to 7 months before being harvested. Southern Bluefin Tuna is also a valuable and largely incidental catch for longline vessels operating in southern Australian waters. They are also taken in small amounts by pole and line, and trolling.

Table 1. Number vessels that caught Southern Bluefin Tuna in Australian waters by Australian fishing year (1 December to 30 November).

Fishing Year (1 Dec-30 Nov)	Purse Seine (vessel numbers)	Longline/Pole (vessel numbers)
1998-1999	7	64
1999-2000	8	58
2000-2001	8	46
2001-2002	7	49
2002-2003	7	19
2003-2004	6	49
2004-2005	8	15
2005-2006	7	7
2006-2007	6	13
2007-2008	7	17
2008-2009	7	21
2009-2010	6	21
2010-2011	5	15
2011-2012	5	11
2012-2013	5	20

As seen in table 1, the purse seine fleet has rationalised slightly in recent years. The number of longline/pole vessels has decreased primarily due to the movement of quota to the farming sector.

Capacity with respect to Australia's allocation

The Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery is managed through a system of output controls in the form of Individually Transferrable Quotas, which are allocated as Statutory Fishing Rights (SFR) under the *Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Plan 1995*. The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) determines a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of Southern Bluefin Tuna for the domestic fishery, based on Australia's national allocation from the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna. Each SFR entitles the holder to receive an equal portion of the TAC set by AFMA.

Operators catch against their SFR holdings is monitored through a series of logbooks and catch disposal documents and a paper trail of fish receivers and fishers. These records are provided to AFMA within legislative timeframes to enable AFMA to monitor catch against quota holdings.

Australia does not restrict the number of vessels entitled to catch SBT under its national allocation but rather controls the take of SBT by requiring all commercial fishing vessels to cover SBT catches with quota. All commercial catch that is not released in an alive and vigorous state must be covered by quota. Failure to do so can result in prosecution.

Australia's current management system for the SBT fishery offers a robust means of ensuring that it stays within the bounds of its national allocation without the need for additional measures aimed at restricting vessel capacity.