

Review of Taiwan SBT Fishery of 2011/2012

Fisheries Agency of Taiwan

1. INTRODUCTION

Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) (*Thunnus maccoyii*) was by-catch of Taiwanese tuna longline fleet targeting albacore in the past, but after the fishing vessels equipped with deep-frozen freezers, some fishing vessels operating in the Indian Ocean have started targeting SBT seasonally since 1990s. The annual catches of SBT were less than 250 metric tons (MT) in early 1980s (Table 1); after then with the increase of fishing fleet size and the expansion of fishing grounds, the catches of SBT increased thereafter.

From 1989 onwards, the annual catches of SBT were over 1,000 MT, of which the catches of drift net accounted for about 25% of the total catches in 1989 and 1990. The catches of SBT kept stable between 800 and 1,600 MT from 1991 to 2001. Since 2002, Taiwan has become the member of the Extend Commission of CCSBT and its national allocation is 1,140 MT. The annual catches of SBT fluctuated between 500 MT and 1,300 MT from 2002 to 2011.

In 2012, the annual catch of SBT significantly decreased to 497 MT for calendar year and 505 MT for quota year. That is because most Taiwanese fishing vessels operating in the Indian Ocean shifted to target bigeye tuna for good catch rate for bigeye tuna in tropical Indian Ocean, so the active vessels seasonally targeting SBT decreased. According to the Resolution on Limited Carry-forward of Unfished Annual Total Allowable Catch of Southern Bluefin Tuna within Three Year Quota Blocks adopted in October 2011 by the CCSBT, if a Member's annual TAC is under-caught, that Member may carry forward this unfished quota to the next quota year. However, the total quota carried forward from one year to the next shall not exceed 20% of a Member's annual TAC. Taiwan's SBT quota for 2012 quota year was 911 MT, so that the unfished quota of 182.2 MT may be carried forward to 2013 quota year.

2. CATCH AND EFFORT

There are 3 types of data collected to compile the catch and effort data for SBT, namely, (1) weekly reports, (2) logbooks and (3) commercial trading information including statistical/catch documents of trade information scheme/catch documentation scheme and certified weight reports provided by the Organization for the Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fisheries (OPRT).

In addition to the requirement of logbook, the masters of fishing vessels authorized to fish for SBT have been required to send their weekly catch reports of SBT with individual weight, length and location to Fisheries Agency of Taiwan since 2002. However, the weekly report contains only the catch information of SBT but excludes the information relevant to other tuna and tuna-like species. The trading information on SBT product has also been collected through the subscription of certified weight reports of Shin Nippon Kentai Kaisha from 1994 to 2003, and through OPRT since 2004. The weekly reports of fishing vessels have been crosschecked with the logbook and trading information.

The annual catch of SBT by gear from 1972 to 2012 is shown in Table 1. The catch distribution of seasonal targeting SBT vessels is mapped in Figure 1, and the catch distribution of SBT by-catch vessels is mapped in Figure 2 from 2009 to 2012.

NOMINAL CPUE

The catch of SBT was relatively low compared with the catches of other tuna and tuna-like species for Taiwanese deep-sea tuna longline fleet and there was no separate 'SBT' item on logsheet issued to fishers before 1994. Because the catch information on SBT collected through logbook system is insufficient to reflect the fishing pattern, the weekly report data system has become the major source of catch and effort information since 1996. However, since the weekly report system was designed for monitoring the SBT catch so as to manage the quota allocation rather than to replace the logbook system on catch and effort data collection, the fishing effort information was collected incompletely, and this could lead to over-estimation of CPUE of Taiwanese vessels authorized to fish for SBT. Since 2002, the catch and

effort information was requested to be recorded in the weekly report and improvement of logbook recovery, the CPUE over-estimation has been improved.

For estimating CPUE, the nominal CPUE series were derived from the logbook data of active vessels authorized to seasonally target SBT operating in the southern area of 20°S. Based on the catch distribution of SBT and the fishing season of Taiwanese fishing vessels, the fishing ground could be roughly divided into two areas: one is around the waters of the southern central Indian Ocean (Area 1, in the area of 20°S-40°S and east of 50°E), and the other one is around the southeastern waters off South Africa (Area 2, in the area of 20°S-45°S and 20°E-50°E) (Figure 3).

Figure 4 shows the nominal CPUE trend of Taiwanese fishing vessels operating in these two areas during 2002-2012. The CPUEs (number of SBT caught per 1000 hooks) during 2002-2012 appeared to be varied from 0.86 to 4.14 in Area 1 and from 0.34 to 0.73 in Area 2, respectively. CPUEs in Area 1 were apparently higher than those in Area 2. This might be because fishing vessels in Area 2 mainly targeted oil fish instead of SBT. The CPUEs in Area 1 showed decreased from 2007 to 2011, while CPUEs in Area 2 revealed a gradual increasing pattern. In 2012, CPUEs in Area 1 increased significantly, but decreased in Area 2. For Area 1, the active vessels decreased in these two years (2011 and 2012), so that the nominal CPUE increased. However, the values were preliminarily estimated and may be revised in the coming year.

SIZE COMPOSITION

The measurement scheme of catch length has been applied to Taiwanese deep-sea longline fishery statistical system. Fishers are requested to measure the fork length of the first 30 specimens from daily catch, and fill the length data in logbook. Besides, fishers have to report SBT catch positions and weights on weekly basis to Fisheries Agency since 1996, and they are also requested to report the individual length of SBT caught since 2002.

Figure 5 shows the distributions of length frequency of SBT caught in Area 1 and 2 during 2007-2012. The distributions mainly concentrate on the

range of 110 cm to 120 cm for both areas. For 2012, the small size of 95-110 cm increased in Area 1 and size of 150 cm increased in Area 2 compared to the year of 2010 and 2011. The length frequency data of 2012 is preliminary and may be revised in the coming year.

3. FLEET SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION

According to the record of weekly report and trading information, there were more than 100 vessels fishing for SBT during 1998-2001. Since 2002, vessels fishing for SBT including seasonal target and by-catch shall be authorized in advance of fishing season every year, and individual quota allocation system to each vessel has also been established.

The number of active vessels fishing for SBT was 30-100 from 2002 to 2012 shown as Table 2. During 2005-2009, the number of vessels fishing for SBT significantly decreased. The major reason was that partial vessels shifted to target oil fish around the waters off South Africa. In 2010, due to increasing threat of Somalia piracy, partial vessels operating in northern Indian Ocean were permitted to move to southern Indian Ocean to target temperate tuna and tuna-like species. This resulted in an increase of number of vessels fishing for SBT from 67 in 2009 to 82 in 2010 fishing season. In 2011, the number of vessels fishing for SBT decreased to 56 because of the limited quota for fishers (578 MT). For 2012 due to good catch rate for bigeye tuna in the Indian Ocean, most of Taiwanese fishing vessels operating in the Indian Ocean shifted to target bigeye tuna, subsequently the number of vessels fishing for SBT decreased to 36.

Taiwanese fishing vessels seasonally targeting SBT mainly operated in the waters of 20°S - 40°S in the Indian Ocean and the areas adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean. There were two major fishing grounds in general: one is in the southern central Indian Ocean around 50°E-105°E, 20°S-40°S, and the other one locates in the southeastern waters off Africa around 20°E-50°E, 25°S-45°S. Seasonally, SBT was caught in the southern and central Indian Ocean from April to September, and in the southern and western Indian Ocean extending to the eastern boundary of the Atlantic Ocean from October to February of the following year.

4. SCIENTIFIC OBSERVATION PROGRAM

Appendix 1 provides the summary report on the implementation of CCSBT scientific observer program.

5. OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

The collaboration between Taiwan and Australia on SBT archival tagging program was conducted in 2004-2007. The observers deployed on SBT fishing vessels carried out the SBT tagging program. There were 37, 48, 25 and 50 archival tags successfully settled in 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007 respectively. The results were incorporated into the documents of CCSBT-ESC/0709/20 and CCSBT-ESC/0809/23.

Table 1. Annual SBT catches by gear for Taiwanese fishing vessels during 1972-2012
calendar year

Year	Longliner	Drift Net	Total
1972	70		70
1973	90		90
1974	100		100
1975	15		15
1976	15		15
1977	5		5
1978	80		80
1979	53		53
1980	64		64
1981	92		92
1982	171	11	182
1983	149	12	161
1984	244	0	244
1985	174	67	241
1986	433	81	514
1987	623	87	710
1988	622	234	856
1989	1,076	319	1,395
1990	872	305	1,177
1991	1,353	107	1,460
1992	1,219	3	1,222
1993	958		958
1994	1,020		1,020
1995	1,431		1,431
1996	1,467		1,467
1997	872		872
1998	1,446		1,446
1999	1,513		1,513
2000	1,448		1,448
2001	1,580		1,580
2002	1,137		1,137
2003	1,128		1,128
2004	1,298		1,298
2005	941		941
2006	846		846
2007	841		841
2008	913		913
2009	921		921
2010	1,208		1,208
2011 ¹	533		533
2012 ²	497*		497

¹ Catch by quota year in 2011 (from 2011/4/1 to 2012/3/31): 502MT

² Catch by quota year in 2012 (from 2012/4/1 to 2013/3/31): 505MT

Since 2007, Taiwan changes its quota year from 1 January – 31 December to 1 April – 31 March.

Table 2. The number of active vessels fishing for SBT during 2002-2012.

Year	No. of seasonal targeting SBT vessels	No. of SBT by-catch vessels	Total vessels
2002	21	50	71
2003	76	24	100
2004	79	18	97
2005	49	8	57
2006	33	3	36
2007	27	3	30
2008	35	6	41
2009	34	33	67
2010	65	17	82
2011	28	28	56
2012	12	24	36

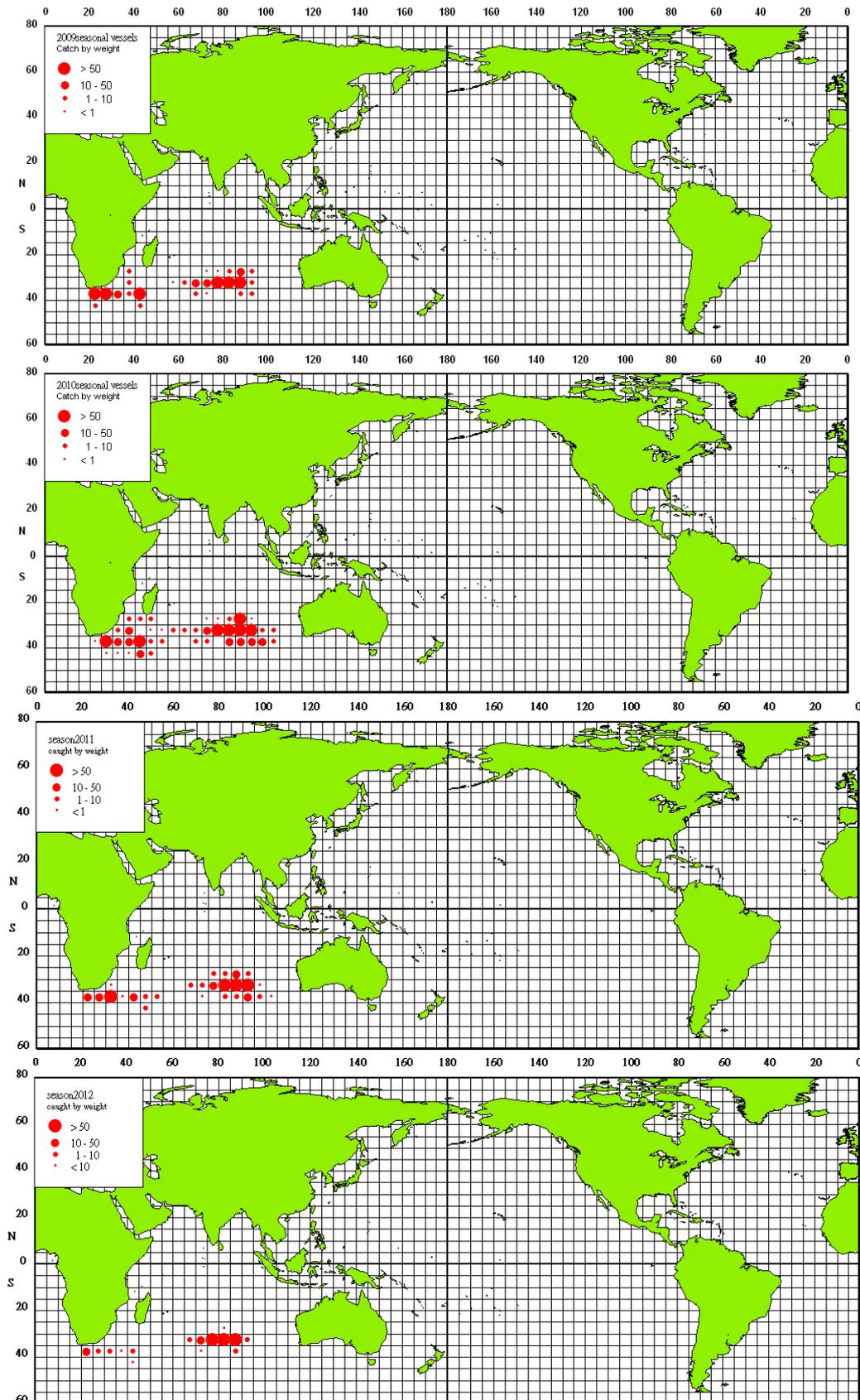


Fig. 1 The SBT catch distribution of Taiwanese fishing vessels seasonally targeting SBT during 2009-2012

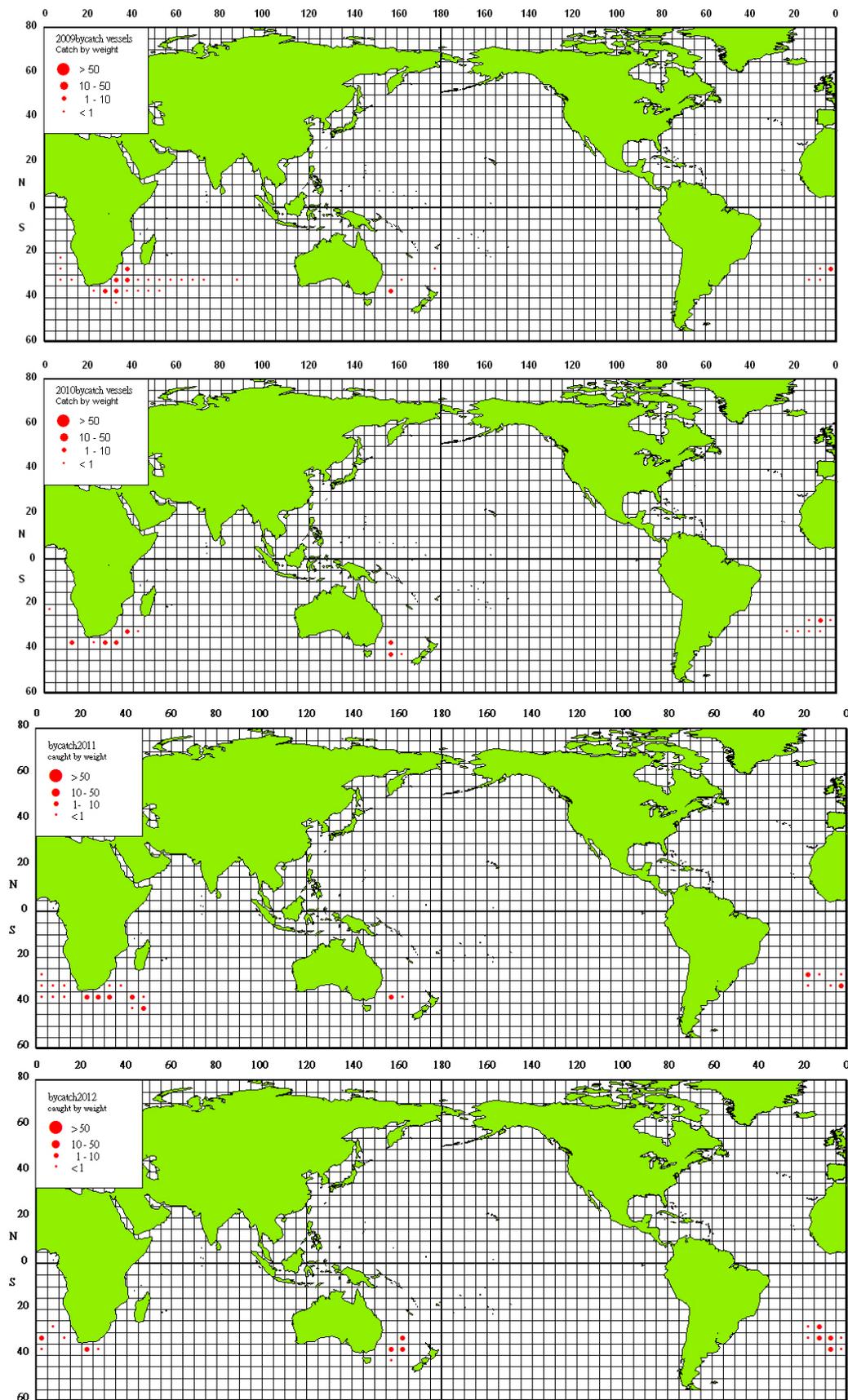


Fig. 2 The SBT by-catch distribution of Taiwanese fishing vessels during 2009-2012

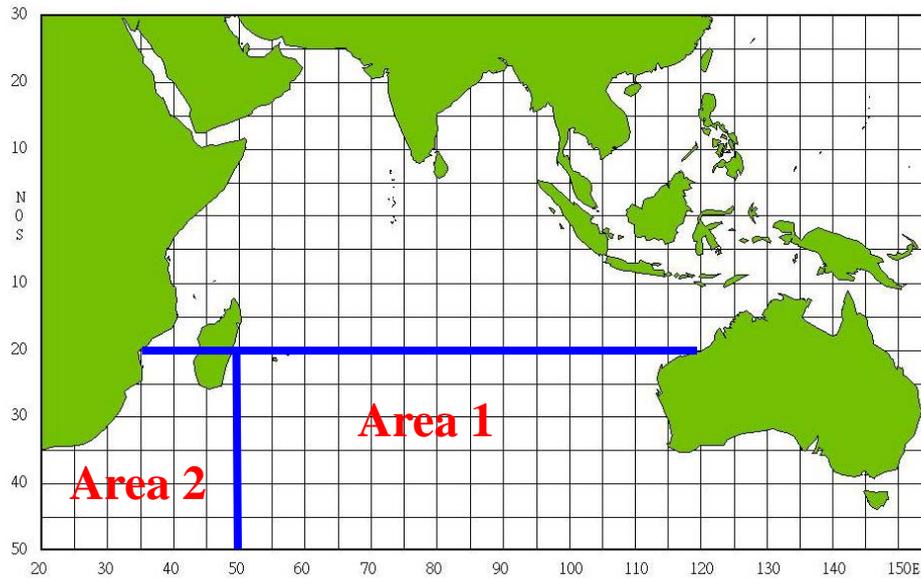


Fig. 3 Fishing grounds of Taiwanese seasonally targeting SBT vessels

Nominal CPUE of SBT seasonal vessels operating in different Area

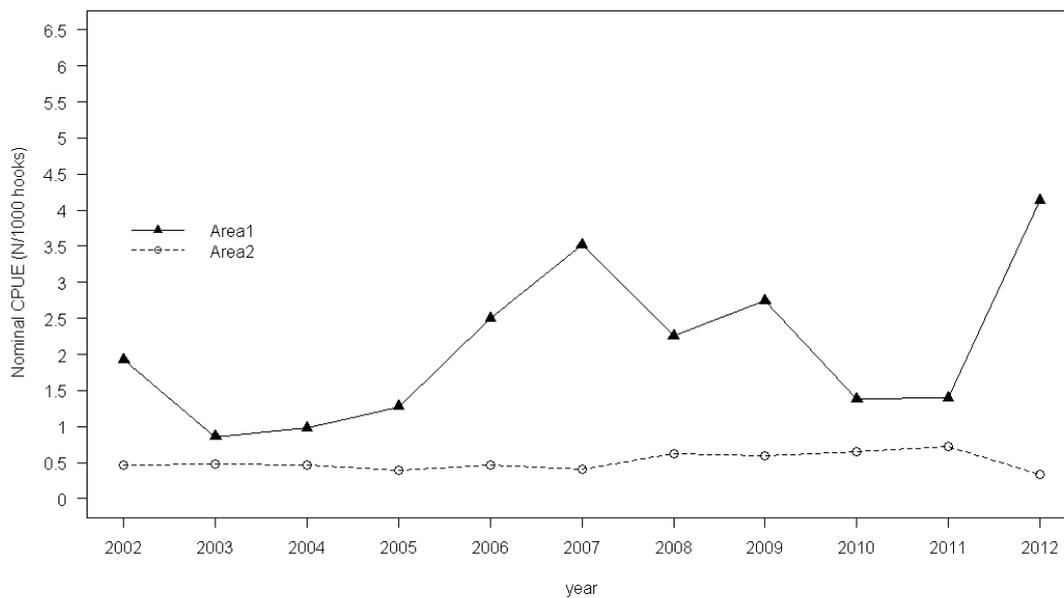
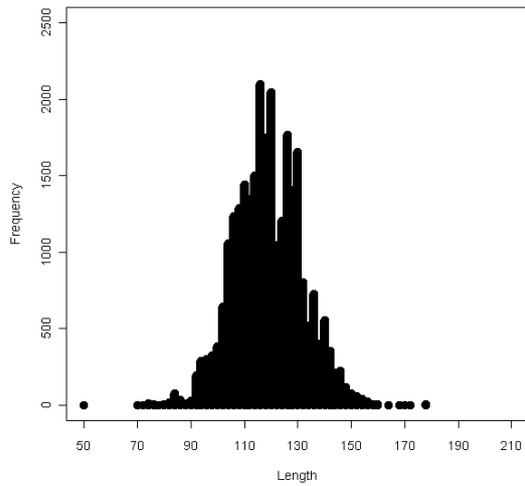
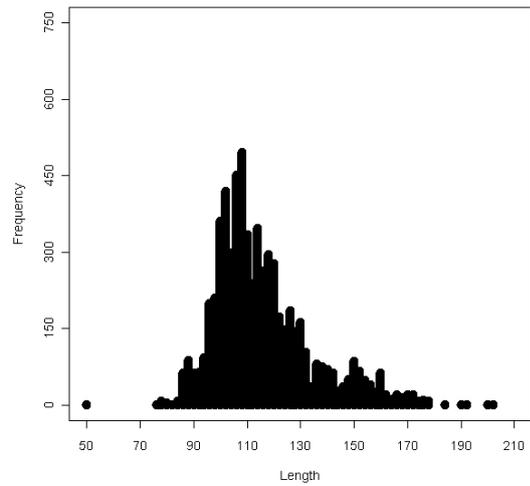


Fig. 4 The nominal CPUE series of Taiwanese seasonal targeting SBT vessels operated in Area1 and Area2 during 2002-2012 (data of 2012 is preliminary)

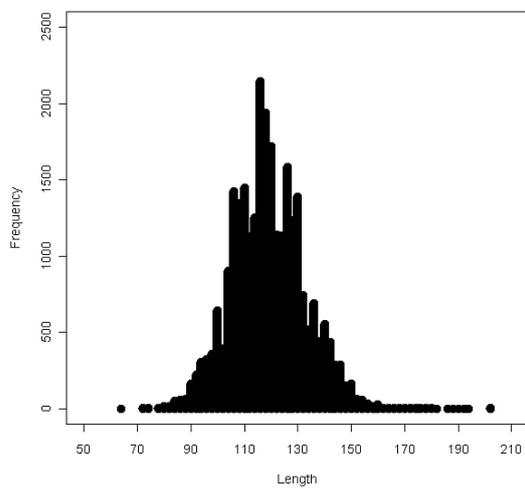
FL-length frequency distributions of Area 1 in 2007



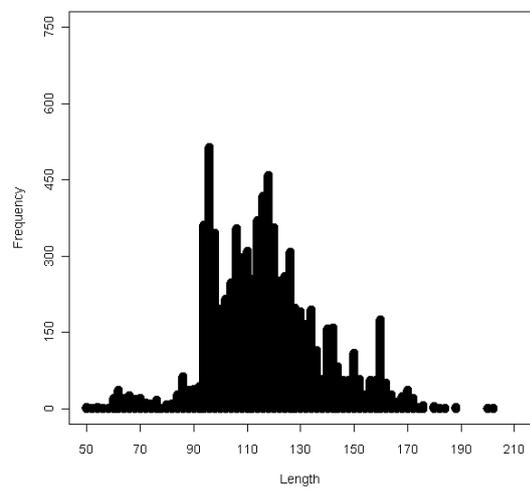
FL-length frequency distributions of Area 2 in 2007



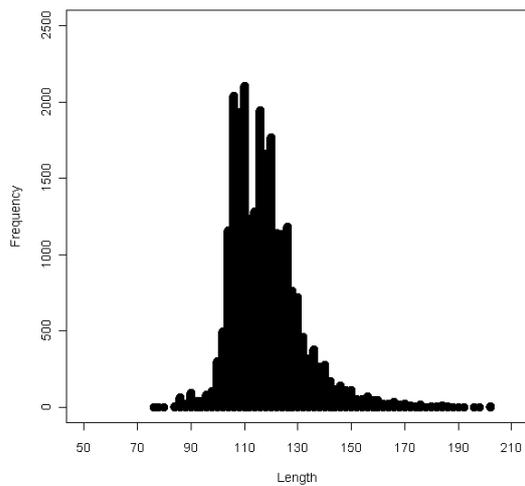
FL-length frequency distributions of Area 1 in 2008



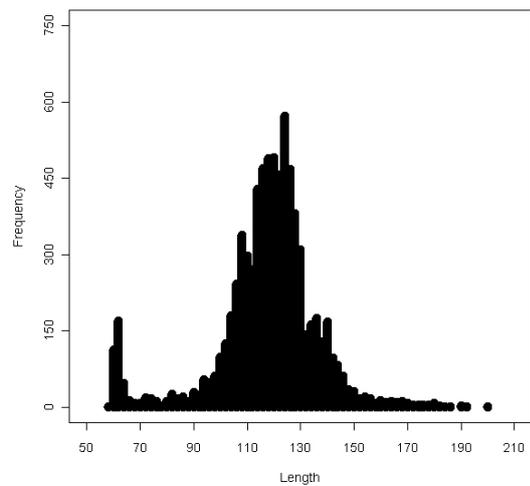
FL-length frequency distributions of Area 2 in 2008



FL-length frequency distributions of Area 1 in 2009



FL-length frequency distributions of Area 2 in 2009



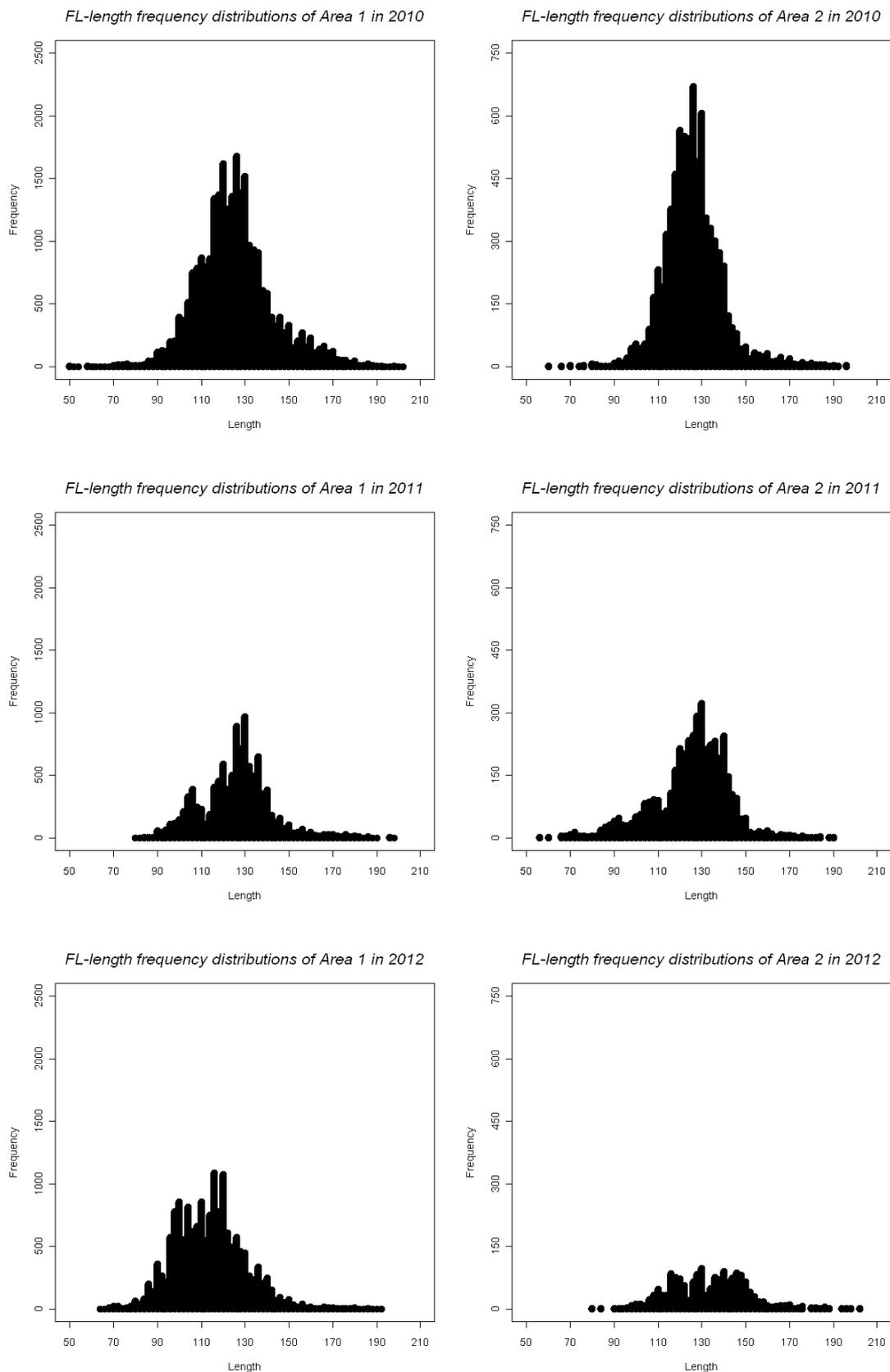


Fig. 5 The FL-length frequency distributions of SBT caught by Taiwanese longline vessels in Area1 and Area2 during 2007-2012(data of 2012 is preliminary)

Appendix 1

Scientific observer program

Observer Training

To collect scientific information of tuna longliners, the scientific observer program of deep-sea tuna fisheries of Taiwan was launched in 2001. However, observers deployed on vessels seasonally targeting SBT commenced in 2002.

Fisheries Agency (FA) is responsible for implementing the program and recruiting scientific observers. FA also invited researchers on fishery sciences and senior observers (with 2-year's experience) to form a special panel for designing the observer training program, items of observation, biological and by-catch information to be collected for scientific researches and the format of data records.

The qualification for observers is college graduated or senior high school graduated with at least 5-year experience on-board, and they are required the competence to live and work at sea. Candidate observers who have passed the oral examination will have to take a 3-week training program, and only those who pass the training program and medical check will be qualified and deployed on board as scientific observers.

Observer training program includes basic safety training for seafaring, operations of navigation devices, mini-log thermometer and VMS system, identification of tunas, tuna-like species, sea turtles, seabirds, sharks and marine mammals, sampling skill for muscle tissue, otolith, stomach content and gonad, and data collection for fishing activities, catches and locations. After the training program, they are required to undergo at sea training on a training ship for one week and have a test in identifying tuna and tuna-like species at local fish market.

Scientific Observer Program Design and Coverage

At the initial stage, for the purpose of encouraging industries to join the observer program, the observed vessels were offered reward catch quota after completing the observation cruise if they fully cooperated with the observer's duties. However, this measure has been put an end since 2007. It is regarded as the obligation of industries to accept observer on board. Since 2008, observers have been requested to accept a debriefing after completing the trip.

Table 1 shows the summary of observed catch and effort during 2002-2012. Since 2005, the observer coverage rate by efforts are all above 10% except 2008 and 2011. For 2008, due to high fuel price, for saving cost, fishing vessels reduced to enter ports and meet transshipping vessels, it was difficult to deploy observer on board, so that only 2 observers were placed on 2 seasonally targeting SBT vessels. In 2011, because of the increasing threat of Somalia piracy, considering the safety of observer, we stopped dispatching observer on board in the Indian Ocean until at the end of December.

In 2012, the threat of Somalia piracy still existed in the tropical Indian Ocean. For the safety of observer, most of our observers deployed in the southern Indian Ocean, so that the observer coverage rate for SBT fishing vessels increased significantly. In 2012 fishing season, 8 observers were deployed on 8 fishing vessels authorized to target SBT seasonally. There were 717 fishing days and 1,462,845 hooks observed by observers. The observer coverage rates were about 31.34% by hooks, and 34.89% by catch respectively.

Observer Data Collected

The data recorded by observer on board includes 3 categories: vessel and gear attributes, set details and by-catch/incidental catch information (including sighting of marine mammals, sea turtles and sea birds).

The biological samples, including measurement of weight, records the length of the first 60 fishes, and collection of otoliths, muscle tissues, stomach

and gonads of SBT, were carried out by observers on board. Table 2 shows the summary of SBT biological samples collected by observers from 2002 to 2012. Figure 1 shows SBT catch distributions of observed vessels during 2009-2012.

Tag Return Monitoring

There was no tagged SBT recaptured during the presence of observer on board during 2008-2011. In 2012, there was one tagged SBT recaptured during the presence of observer on board. The tags returned by Taiwanese fishing vessels are 771 in total among which 685 were released by the CCSBT and 86 tagged by CSIRO during 2002-2012. The details of tag recaptures for each year are shown in Table 3. The returned tags and the related information were sent to the CCSBT Secretariat.

Problems Experienced

Although the program was fully supported by boat owners and skippers of SBT observed vessels, there are still some difficulties that could not be resolved technically. Since the homeport is far from the fishing ground, it will take more than 1 month to transport the supplies and equipments needed for sampling from Taiwan to fishing ground, and sometimes the supplies could not reach to observers on board in time. Besides, samples collected by observers were sometimes missing transferred by transshipping vessels. In addition, it is also difficult to arrange interviews with skippers for collecting information on fishing activities since these SBT fishing vessels seldom return to Taiwan when they finalized SBT fishing.

Table 1. Summary of observed catch and effort during 2002-2012

Year	Observers Deployed	Observed Trips	Sea Days	Set Observed	Observed Vessels (%)	Observed Effort (%)	Observed catch (%)
2002	1	1	202	126	4.76%	6.57%	1.44%
2003	2	2	177	133	2.63%	2.43%	0.86%
2004	3	5	263	165	3.8%	4.17%	3.10%
2005	4	4	681	444	8.16%	11.57%	9.62%
2006	3	3	296	253	9.09%	10.46%	6.08%
2007	4	4	441	394	14.81%	14.84%	13.72%
2008	2	2	252	227	5.71%	6.65%	3.63%
2009	5	6	531	457	18.18%	15.01%	12.75%
2010	7	11	964	927	16.67%	11.95%	8.35%
2011	2	2	135	129	7.14%	4.19%	0.02%
2012	8	8	717	645	66.67%	31.34%	34.89%

*Data from 2009 was for quota year.

Table 2. Biological samples collected by observers during 2002-2012.

Year	SBT catch data recorded (No. of fish)	SBT length measured (No. of fish)	Number of otolith collection	Stomach content (No. of fish)	Number of Muscle collection
2002	498	338	-	-	-
2003	226	174	102	-	-
2004	1295	1290	316	93	-
2005	3200	2217	210	257	-
2006	1863	1484	56	57	-
2007	4632	4043	197	189	-
2008	1219	1049	73	45	-
2009	4045	3958	155	-	159
2010	2605	2308	219	101	179
2011	3	0	1	-	-
2012	5969	5258	83	-	-

Table 3 Number of SBT tag returned by Taiwanese fishing vessels during 2002-2012

Year	CCSBT	CSIRO	Total
2002	2	16	18
2003	24	18	42
2004	112	21	133
2005	204	25	229
2006	253	6	259
2007	40	0	40
2008	5	0	5
2009	0	0	0
2010	27	0	27
2011	13	0	13
2012	5	0	5
Sum	685	86	771

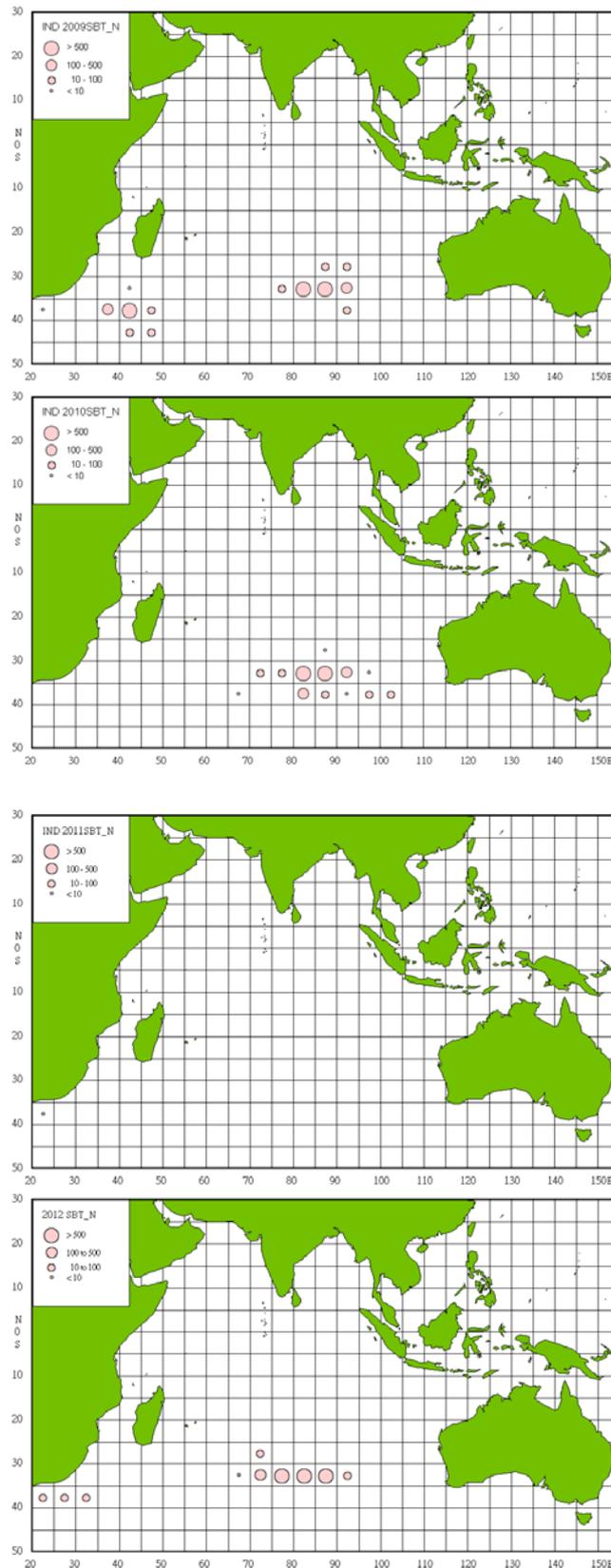


Figure 1 The SBT catch distributions of observed vessels during 2009-2012