

Tropical Tuna Landings at Fishing Ports in Thailand During 2021-2023

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Abstract

The seafood processing industry in Thailand is an industry with high export value. The main export product of the processing industry is canned tuna. Each year, a large amount of tuna is imported as the main raw material in the industry. Most of the imported tuna is tropical tuna, with three main species: Skipjack tuna Yellowfin tuna and Bigeye tuna. The imported tuna is caught from fishing grounds in both the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The vessels that import tuna to the fishing ports of Thailand are carrier and fishing vessels, from purse seiners and longliners fisheries. This study will discuss the trends of Tropical tuna landings in Thai fishing ports, the volume and value of imports, as well as fishing grounds of tuna in the Indian Ocean area.

Key words: Tropical tuna, skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna, bigeye tuna, Indian Ocean

Introduction

Thailand is one of the world's largest exporters of tuna products which are of great importance in terms of economic value and intensive international trade. In 2023, In terms of global ranking, the top 5 canned tuna exporters in 2023 were Thailand (US\$2.08 billion), Ecuador (US\$1.188 billion), China (US\$832.24 million), Spain (US\$792.49 million) and Netherlands (US\$313.75 million). And the top 5 canned tuna export markets for Thailand were US (US\$482.06 million, 23.1% share); Japan (US\$257.27 million, 12.33%); Australia (US\$172.68 million, 8.27%); Libya (US\$150.37 million, 7.20%); and Saudi Arabia (US\$137.92 million, 6.61%).

Tuna products are Thailand's highest export product and are highly valued. Thailand is the world's leading producer of tuna products. Because Thailand has no Thai-flagged vessels operated outside Thai waters. Most tuna is imported from both the Indian and Pacific oceans. There are many species of imported tuna, including tropical tuna such as Skipjack tuna Yellowfin tuna and Bigeye tuna, which are imported as the main proportion of the total volume.

Most tuna imports come from cargo ships, which make about 42-45 trips per year. Imported products are frozen and chilled tuna caught by trawlers and purse seines. The largest catching countries are the Maldives and the Seychelles, which fish in the Maldives EEZ, Seychelles EEZ and High Sea 51 area.

This paper describes the trends in tropical tuna landings at Thai fishing ports during 2021-2023, particularly skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna, including the value of Thailand's imports over the past 3 years, as well as the proportions of import volume and catch area in the Indian Ocean by vessels landing in Thailand.

Material

The data used in this study included the collection of volume (tons), value (million USD), number of vessel trips, and Catch areas of vessels landing at Thai fishing ports from 2021 - 2023, which were recorded and compiled by the Department of Fisheries.

Result and discussion

1. Statistics on landing of Topical tuna

The Volume of tropical tuna landings during 2021 - 2023 totaled 54,520 tons, with skipjack tuna being the largest. Next are yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna. Total volumes over the past 3 years were 43,133.53 tons, 8,348.14 tons, and 3,038.78 tons, respectively. In 2023, skipjack tuna imports reached 17,698.37 tons, followed by 8,348.14 tons of yellowfin tuna and 3,038.78 tons of bigeye tuna. (Figure 1)

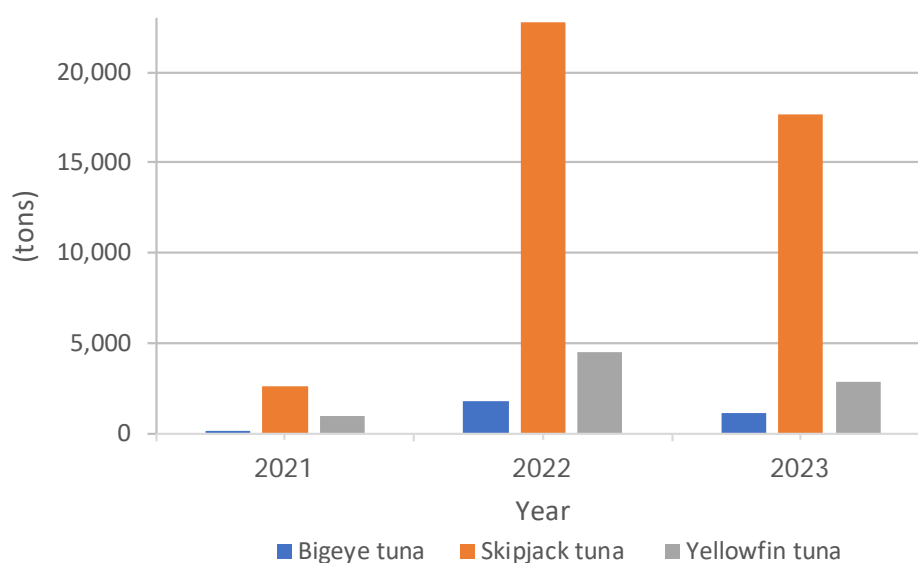


Figure 1 Tropical tuna landings in Thai fishing ports during 2021 – 2021

The volume of Tropical tuna is likely to decrease significantly in 2023, Meanwhile, the imported value is trending in the same direction. The total value of skipjack tuna yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna over the past 3 years were 75.77 million USD, 15.28 million USD, and 5.16 million USD, respectively. The highest imported tuna is skipjack tuna with 33.38 million USD, yellowfin tuna with 5.77 million USD and bigeye tuna with 2.06 million USD in 2023. (Figure 2)

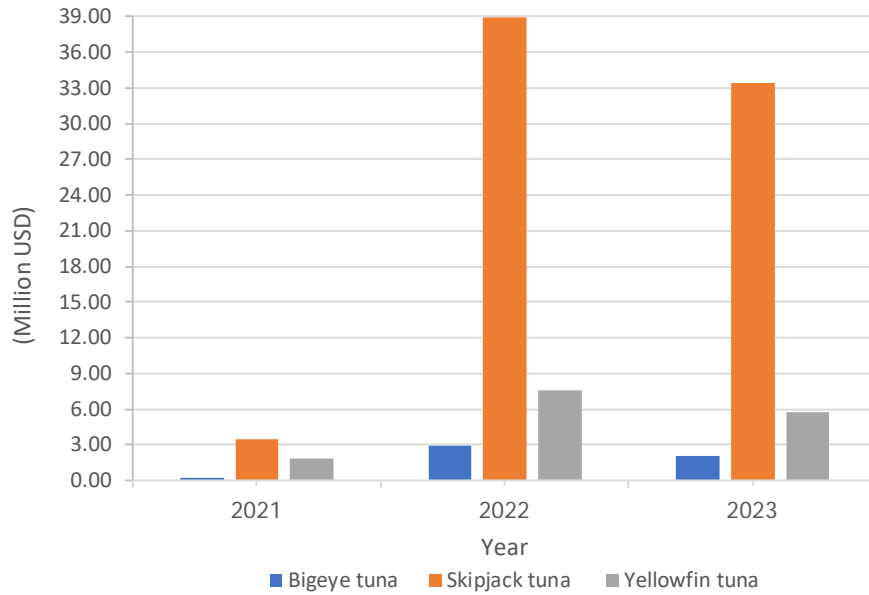


Figure 2 Value of tropical tuna imported in Thailand during 2021-2023

2. Proportion of imported tropical tuna species

In 2023, a total of 21,665.42 tons of tropical tunas caught in the Indian Ocean were imported to Thailand. Skipjack tuna was the main species accounting for 17,698.37 tons followed by yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna, 2,850.22 tons and 1,116.83 tons respectively. Most of the imported tuna were unloaded from carrier vessels by purse seiners and longliners landing at Thai fishing ports. (Figure 3).

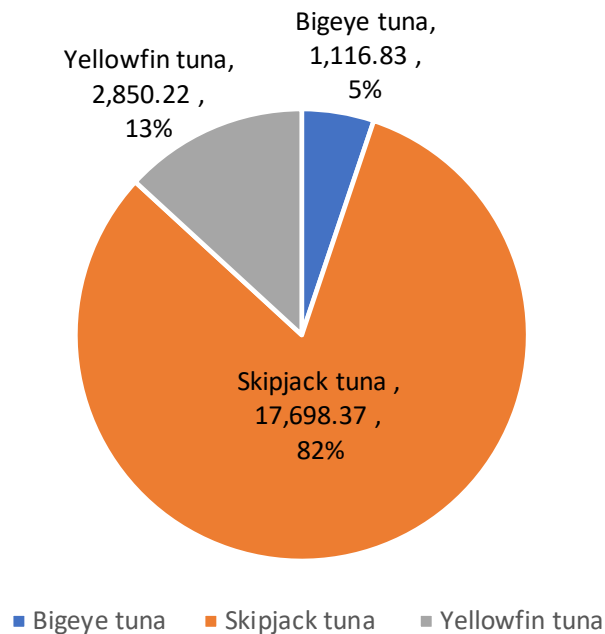


Figure 3 Proportion of imported tropical tuna species caught in the Indian Ocean, 2023

When comparing import volumes for tropical tuna, skipjack tuna is the main species accounting for 82% of the Indian Ocean catch, followed by yellowfin tuna with 13% and bigeye tuna with 5% in 2023.

The catch of tropical tuna in the Indian Ocean landed in Thailand is in 3 areas: High Sea 51, Maldives EEZ/High Sea 51 and Seychelles EEZ/High Sea 51, which are mainly fished by Purse seine, in 2023 a catch 2,086.73 tons in High Sea 51, followed by 6,680.48 tons in Maldives EEZ/High Sea 51 and 12,898.21 tons in Seychelles EEZ/High Sea 51. (Table 1)

Volume: tons

Species	2021			2022			2023		
	High Sea 51	Maldives EEZ/High Sea 51	Seychelles EEZ/High Sea 51	High Sea 51	Maldives EEZ/High Sea 51	Seychelles EEZ/High Sea 51	High Sea 51	Maldives EEZ/High Sea 51	Seychelles EEZ/High Sea 51
Skipjack tuna	-	-	5,935.20	586.07	5,345.17	16,873.19	1,390.19	6,091.23	10,216.94
Yellowfin tuna	6.98	-	964.74	151.16	103.38	4,271.65	528.32	373.01	1,948.90
Bigeye tuna	5.66	-	126.20	83.55	7.95	1,698.59	168.23	216.24	732.36

From the table, the tropical tuna catch in High Sea 51 and Maldives EEZ/High Sea 51 has been continuously increasing, while the catch from Seychelles EEZ/High Sea 51 has been increasing in 2022 but decreasing in 2023.

Conclusion

The tropical tuna landing in Thailand has 3 main species: skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna. The Skipjack tuna has the highest volume of imported, which is in line with the import value. The imported tuna is frozen and chilled tuna used as raw material in the processing industry. The proportion of imported tropical tuna of skipjack tuna is the main species, accounting for 82% followed by yellowfin tuna with 13% and bigeye tuna with 5% in 2023. The largest import value of tropical tuna is skipjack tuna, in line with volume, but at the same time, yellowfin tuna has the highest import value when compared to the unit price. The tuna fishing area in the Indian Ocean with the highest volume of landings in Thailand is Seychelles EEZ/High Sea 51.

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