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Port-In Entry Authorization Processes and Import Statistics for Tropical Tuna in Thailand in 2025

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Discussions (for information and open discussion):

This study evaluates Thailand's 2025 maritime enforcement frameworks and tropical tuna import dynamics, driven by a robust Port State Measures (PSM) framework. Thailand enforces a three-stage digitalized traceability chain comprising pre-port authorization, in-port vessel inspections, and factory-level offloading controls to combat Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. Total tropical tuna imports reached 23,243.93 tonnes worth 39.19 million USD in 2025, dominated by Skipjack tuna (15,454.10 tonnes; 25.65 million USD), followed by Yellowfin and Bigeye tuna. Ultimately, the seamless alignment between strict port controls and substantial import volumes demonstrates that rigorous regulatory compliance does not impede trade fluidity, but instead enhances the transparency, competitiveness, and global sustainability of Thailand's seafood processing sector.

Feedback (to collect input and suggestions)

[The paper is to request review and comments on…, as set out in Section X]

Conclusion (to record a concluded position or summary)

[The paper is to seek confirmation that…, as set out in Section X]

Recommendation (to ask the meeting to endorse a recommendation)

[The paper is to seek endorsement on…, as set out in Section X]

Decisions (to request formal approval of actions)

[The paper is to seek approval on…, as set out in Section X]

Abstract

As the world's leading processor and exporter of canned tuna, Thailand heavily relies on foreign raw materials to sustain its large-scale processing sector. To maintain supply chain integrity and ensure compliance with international regulations, Thailand has implemented a rigorous Port State Measures (PSM) framework. This study outlines Thailand's vessel port-entry authorization process and systematically analyses statistical data regarding tropical tuna imports for the year 2025. It details a robust monitoring mechanism comprising three stages: pre-authorization controls, strict vessel inspections during port calls, and oversight of transshipment and landing operations at processing facilities. Analysis of the landed tropical tuna volume reveals a total of 23,243.93 tonne, with a market value of 39.19 million USD. By species, Skipjack tuna accounted for the largest share of imports, totalling 15,454.10 tonne valued at 25.65 million USD, followed by Yellowfin tuna at 6,449.93 tonne (11.29 million USD) and Bigeye tuna at 1,339.90 tonne (2.25 million USD). In conclusion, the systematic integration of port control measures with smooth trade operations demonstrates that strict regulatory enforcement does not hinder commercial activity. Instead, it helps strengthen the traceability system, safeguard the country's biosecurity, and enhance the long-term sustainability of the Thai seafood industry in the global market.

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Key words: Canned tuna industry, Import statistics, Port-in entry authorization, Tropical tuna

Introduction

The tuna industry is vital to both the global economy and food security, as tuna represents a high-value commercial commodity that generates extensive employment and provides a crucial source of high-quality marine protein worldwide (FAO, 2024). Thailand plays a pivotal role in this global sector, ranking as the world's leading producer and exporter of canned tuna, controlling approximately 40% of the global market share (Lingard, 2026; SCB EIC, 2024). Due to limited catches within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the Thai processing sector operates as an export-oriented industry that relies heavily on importing raw fresh and frozen tuna to satisfy over 90% of its factory capacities (DOF, 2026; SEAFDEC, 2025). In 2025, Thailand's canned tuna export value grew by approximately 6.2%, driven by the massive import of around 737,135 tonne of raw tuna and the subsequent export of approximately 542,814 tonne of canned and processed tuna products to major destinations including the United States, Japan, and Australia (Nation Thailand, 2024; PRD, 2025).

Given the industry's profound reliance on foreign-sourced raw materials, establishing rigorous port-in entry authorization processes for carrier and fishing vessels is essential for effective supply chain management and strict regulatory compliance. Following the European Union's IUU "yellow card" warning, Thailand underwent major fisheries reforms under the Royal Ordinance on Fisheries, formally acceding to the FAO Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) to prevent, deter, and eliminate Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. Under this international framework, port entry control acts as the primary defense line, blocking illegally caught fish from infiltrating the domestic supply chain and safeguarding the traceability of seafood exports (SEAFDEC/TD, 2025; TTIA, 2024). Tropical tuna specifically skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye remain the primary raw material driver of this canned processing sector. To provide a comprehensive overview of Thailand's current tuna trade framework, this study outlines the operational and administrative procedures involved in authorizing fishing vessel port entry, and systematically analyzes empirical data regarding import volumes, values, and fish landing statistics of tropical tuna caught from the Indian Ocean at Thai fishing ports throughout 2025.

Materials and Methods

1. Data Collection and Sources

The data utilized in this study were collected and compiled by the Department of Fisheries (DOF) of Thailand in 2025. The dataset encompasses comprehensive records of tropical tuna landings at Thai fishing ports, specifically capturing key trade and operational metrics: import volumes (tonnes) and values (million USD). These data were systematically extracted from the official inspector within Thailand's Port State Measures (PSM) system.

2. Framework of the Port State Measures (PSM) Procedures

The standard operating procedures of Thailand's Port State Measures (PSM) framework. The administrative and enforcement protocols implemented by the Department of Fisheries are chronologically categorized into three primary operational phases:

Phase 1: Pre-Port Entry Authorization Controls

The initial phase of the regulatory framework focuses on evaluating and authorizing foreign fishing and carrier vessels requesting access to Thai ports. This administrative screening process follows a strict sequential protocol:

· Advance Notification Submission: Ship operators or their designated agents are legally required to submit an Advance Request for Port Entry (AREP) form within the mandatory advance period stipulated by Thai fisheries regulations before the vessel's estimated time of arrival (ETA).

· Document Verification: Department of Fisheries (DOF) officers cross-reference and validate all information declared in the AREP against mandatory supporting documentation, including registration licenses, fishing permits, logbooks, and catch certificates.

· Risk Assessment Framework: A rigorous risk analysis mechanism is applied to each submission. Officers retrieve and evaluate a comprehensive Risk Assessment Report for the vessel to identify potential indicators of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing activities.

· Inter-Agency Notification and Inspector Briefing: Upon successful verification and approval of port entry by the DOF, authorization notices are automatically dispatched via the integrated electronic system to the Marine Department, the Customs Department, and the ship agent. Concurrently, specific high-risk factors identified

during the screening phase are communicated to port inspectors to ensure targeted inspections upon the vessel's arrival.

· Denial of Entry: In cases where compliance with Thai laws and international conservation measures cannot be verified, or where discrepancies suggest illegal activity, authorizing officers hold the statutory power to formally deny port entry to the vessel.

Phase 2: In-Port Vessel Inspection Procedures

Upon the vessel's arrival at the designated Thai port, Department of Fisheries (DOF) inspectors execute a mandatory two-stage physical and administrative inspection protocol to verify compliance before cargo discharge is permitted:

· Vessel Identification and Physical Inspection: The initial stage involves a physical identification inspection conducted from the pier prior to boarding. Inspectors verify the vessel's external markings, including its name, international radio call sign (IRCS), registration numbers, and flag state indicators, against the authorized records.

· Onboard Verification and Interrogation: The second stage requires inspectors to board the vessel to conduct formal interviews with the shipmaster and crew members. Concurrently, a rigorous audit is performed on all original documentation, physical evidence, navigational logs, and fishing gear configurations onboard to substantiate the legality of both the vessel and its accumulated catch.

· Authorization of Offloading and PIR Issuance: If the vessel successfully satisfies all regulatory criteria and its legality is confirmed, DOF officers formally grant clearance for fish offloading operations and generate an official Port Inspection Report (PIR).

· Inter-Agency Information Sharing and Flag State Notification: The finalized PIR is immediately distributed via the integrated electronic system to the Marine Department, the Customs Department, and the authorized vessel agent. Furthermore, in strict compliance with international Port State Measures protocols, a copy of the PIR is formally transmitted to the vessel's flag State via electronic communication.

Phase 3: Offloading and Landing Control Protocols

Following successful in-port inspection and formal clearance, the discharge and transport of the catch are subject to a strict monitoring protocol:

· Pre-Discharge Hatch Verification: Before the importer is permitted to initiate offloading operations, DOF officers conduct a preliminary inspection of the vessel's cargo holds and fish hatches to verify seal integrity and condition.

· Landing Monitoring and Transit Security: Throughout the active offloading process, DOF personnel maintain continuous on-site monitoring to record the weight, species composition, and associated fishing ground data of the catch. Prior to leaving the port area, transport trucks are formally secured with tamper-evident seals applied by the officers to guarantee cargo security during transit to the processing facility.

· Factory-Level Verification and Sorting Control: Upon the arrival of the transport vehicles at the designated processing factory, DOF officers inspect and remove the seals, cross-reference the transport logs, and physically supervise the subsequent fish sorting and sizing operations on the factory floor.

· Weight Reconciliation and Final Import Approval: The importer is required to declare the exact final processed weight of the landing. DOF officers then execute a rigorous data reconciliation process, cross-checking the importer's declared weight against the volumes recorded during port offloading.

· Issuance of the Import Movement Document (IMD): Once the data reconciliation is successfully validated and approved, the DOF formally issues an Import Movement Document (IMD), finalizing the administrative and legal importation process.

Result

1. Species Composition of Imported Tropical Tuna

The empirical landing records compiled from the Port State Measures (PSM) electronic reporting system for the 2025 calendar year reveal the specific distribution of tropical tuna species imported into Thailand. During this period, the cumulative monitored landing volume of the primary tropical tuna species group reached 23,243.93 tonne.

A species-specific breakdown demonstrates that Skipjack constituted the vast majority of the raw material landings, accounting for 15,454.10 tonne approximately 66.5% of the total. This was followed by Yellowfin, which contributed 6,449.93 tonne approximately 27.7%. Bigeye tuna represented the smallest share among the three major tropical tuna species, with a recorded landing volume of 1,339.90 tonne approximately 5.8% (Figure 1)

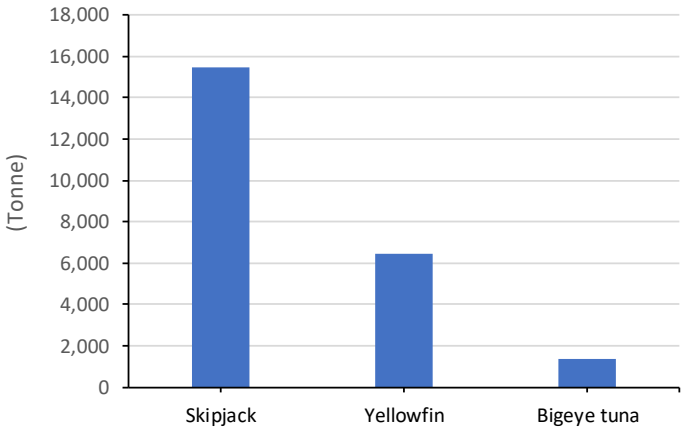

Figure 1. Landing volumes (tonne) of imported tropical tuna at Thai fishing port in 2025

2. Value of Imported Tropical Tuna

In addition to physical volumes, the economic scale of the 2025 tropical tuna imports was evaluated based on their total financial value. The cumulative import value of the monitored species reached 39.19 million USD.

The distribution of financial value closely mirrors the species composition observed in landing volumes. Skipjack commanded the largest economic share, generating an import value of 25.65 million USD. Yellowfin represented the second-largest economic component, valued at 11.29 million USD. Bigeye tuna accounted for the remaining market share, with a recorded import value of 2.25 million USD (Figure 2).

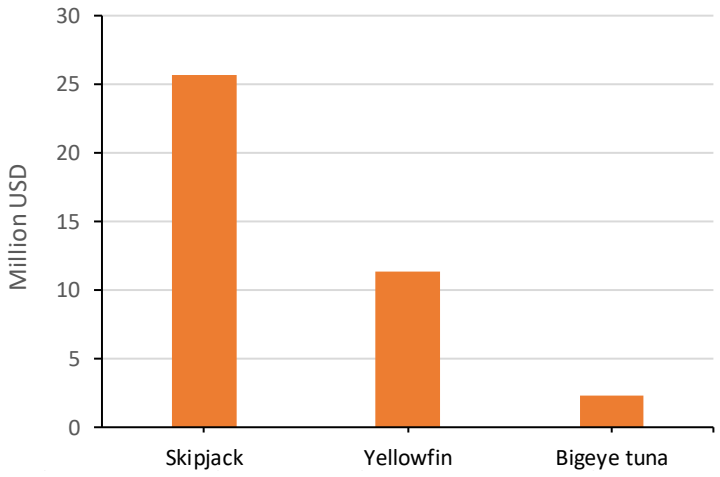

Figure 2 Value (million USD) of imported tropical tuna imported at Thai fishing port in 2025

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive assessment of Thailand's maritime enforcement frameworks and import dynamics for tropical tuna during the 2025 calendar year. Structurally, the country's Port State Measures (PSM) framework operates via a robust three-stage traceability chain: pre-port entry authorization controls, strict in-port vessel inspections, and systematic factory-level offloading controls. This digitalized and interconnected enforcement pipeline serves as a critical mechanism for securing supply chain transparency, safeguarding national interests, and maintaining international compliance, particularly in combating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

In 2025, the total volume of tropical tuna imports stood at 23,243.93 tonne, representing an economic value of 39.19 million USD. A species-based analysis indicates that Skipjack tuna remains the primary driver of this sector, accounting for the largest share in terms of both volume (15,454.10 tonne) and monetary value (25.65 million USD), followed by Yellowfin and Bigeye tuna, respectively. Ultimately, the strict alignment between Thailand's operational port controls and its massive import volumes proves that rigorous regulatory compliance does not bottleneck trade fluidity; rather, it strengthens the resilience, marketability, and long-term sustainability of the domestic seafood processing industry in the global market.

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