

## Chinese Tuna Fisheries in the Indian Ocean between 1995 and 1999

### Summary

Commercial tuna fishing operations began in the Indian Ocean in 1995. Encouraged by their success, many other fishing companies sent their fishing boats to the Indian Ocean. The main targeted tuna species are bigeye tuna, yellowfin tuna and swordfish. The fleet now numbers some 150 longliners, mostly between 100 and 130 GT, catching nearly 3,000t. In March, the Bureau of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture held an oceanic tuna fishery meeting in which the managers of all fishing companies involved in tuna fishing participated.

### Résumé

*La pêche commerciale thonière a débutée dans l'océan Indien en 1995. Encouragés par son succès, beaucoup d'autres compagnies ont envoyées leur bateaux de pêche dans l'océan Indien.*

*Les espèces principales ciblées sont le thon obèse, l'albacore et l'espadon. La flotte compte maintenant environ 150 palangriers, dont la plupart sont entre 100 et 130 TB, et qui pêchent 3,000t annuellement. En mars, le bureau des pêches, du Ministère de l'agriculture a tenue une réunion de pêcheries thonières océaniques à l'intention des gestionnaires des compagnies impliquées dans la pêche thonière.*

### Brief review of the fishery

The mainland of China began to develop its oceanic tuna fisheries in the middle of the 1980s. Commercial tuna fishing operation in the Indian Ocean began in 1995. In that year, twelve tuna longliners of two fishing companies operated in the Eastern Indian Ocean, with a total catch of 403 tonnes. Encouraged by this successful fishing operation, many other fishing companies sent their fishing boats to the Indian Ocean soon after. Most of them were transferred from the South Pacific Ocean. Since then, the numbers of tuna fishing boats from mainland of China in the Indian Ocean have increased rapidly. The number of tuna longliners reached 52 in 1996 and 120 in 1998 (Table 1). According to the Bureau of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, P. R. China, there were close to 150 tuna fishing boats belonging to 9 fishing companies in the Indian Ocean in the first half of 1999. The fishing fleet of the mainland of China consists mainly of longliners of 100-200 GT, with the dominant dimension between 100 and 130GT and LOA between 24m and 28m (Figure 1). About 15 percent of the boats are smaller than 100 GT. Nearly all the boats are modified trawlers.

At present, all the tuna longliners of mainland China are operating in Area 57 and have a total annual catch of between 2,700 and 2,820 tonnes. The main targeted tuna species are bigeye tuna, yellowfin tuna and swordfish. The proportion of bigeye tuna in the total catch increased

from 31.5 % in 1996 to 56 % in 1997 and attained 70 % in 1998, while proportion of yellowfin tuna reduced from 33.4 % in 1996 to 25 % in 1997 and further down to 13 % in 1998 (Figure 2). Very low fishing efficiency may be attributed to unfamiliarity with the fishing grounds owing to the lack of fishing experience. Non-professional boat types may be another reason for low fishing efficiency because of their low effective fishing time. Seasonal, rather than year around fishing is perhaps a third reason. Although it takes time for fishermen to master a new fishing method, there is an indication that continuous development of this type of fishing can be foreseen in the near future (Figure 3) because fishermen believe that they can increase the catch by improving the fishing technology. Up to now, the tuna products caught by the mainland of China in the Indian Ocean are sold on Japanese, U.S. and Singapore Markets.

### **Measures taken for catch data collection**

The Chinese Government is very concerned by the development of tuna fisheries and resource management in the three Oceans. Since China became a member of IOTC in October 1998, many measures have been taken in order to comply with the obligation and responsibilities incumbent on a member country of IOTC. In March, the Bureau of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture held an oceanic tuna fishery meeting in which the managers of all fishing companies involved in tuna fishing participated. During this meeting, the international management trend of tuna fisheries was introduced and importance was emphasized of data collection as required by relevant regional fisheries management organizations.

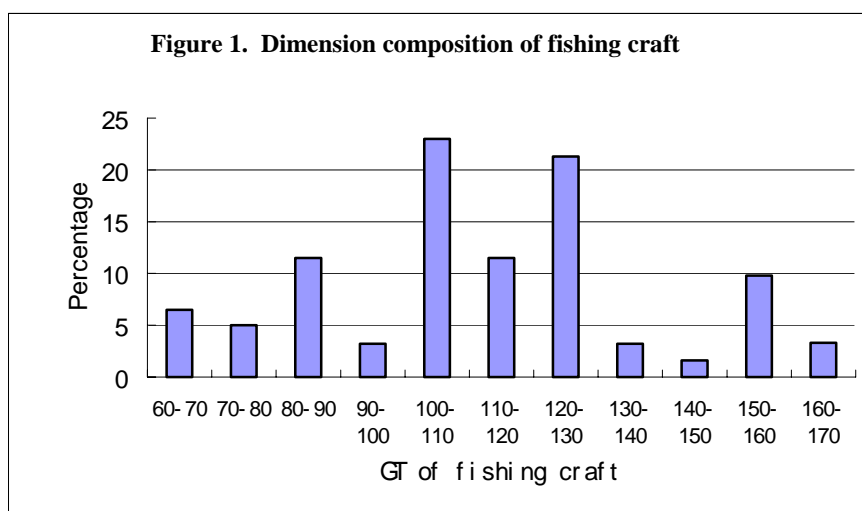
All the companies engaged in tuna fishing have been required to submit their catch data to the China Fisheries Association, a non-governmental organization, before the set deadline every year. At the same time, under the authority of the Bureau of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture of China, a "Tuna Fishery Scientific Research and Working Group" has been established in Shanghai Fisheries University, with the purpose of setting up China's own tuna fisheries management system corresponding with international practice. This special professional group will take responsibility for collecting information on China's tuna fisheries activities in the three Oceans. It will also follow the management measures and arrangements required by tuna fisheries related regional fisheries organizations. The working group is also responsible for collating statistics submitted by the fishing companies. In order to provide catch data as required by IOTC, the Working Group with the support of the China Distant Water Fisheries Association has organized a training course on catch data collection and statistics. Nearly all the fishing companies related to tuna fisheries have sent relevant personnel to the course. The training content includes species identification and biological measurement of tuna and tuna-like species, requirements of relevant international organizations for catch data collection and statistics, as well as the content and completion of data forms. All the participants were familiar with the data form and knew how to fill in it after the training course.

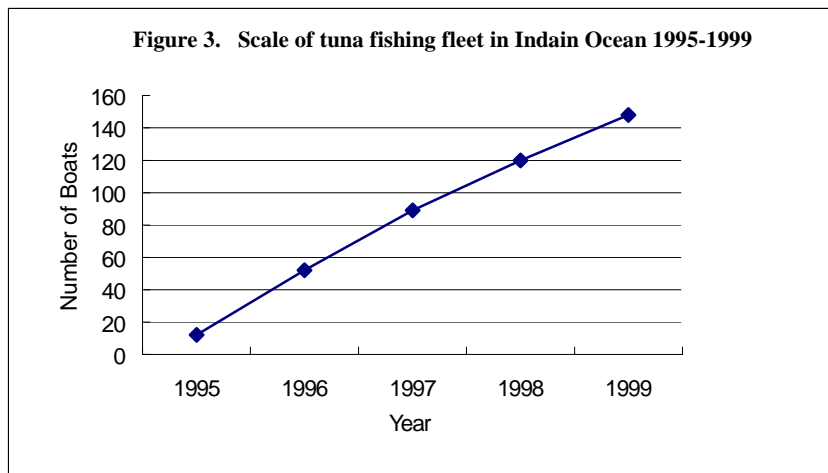
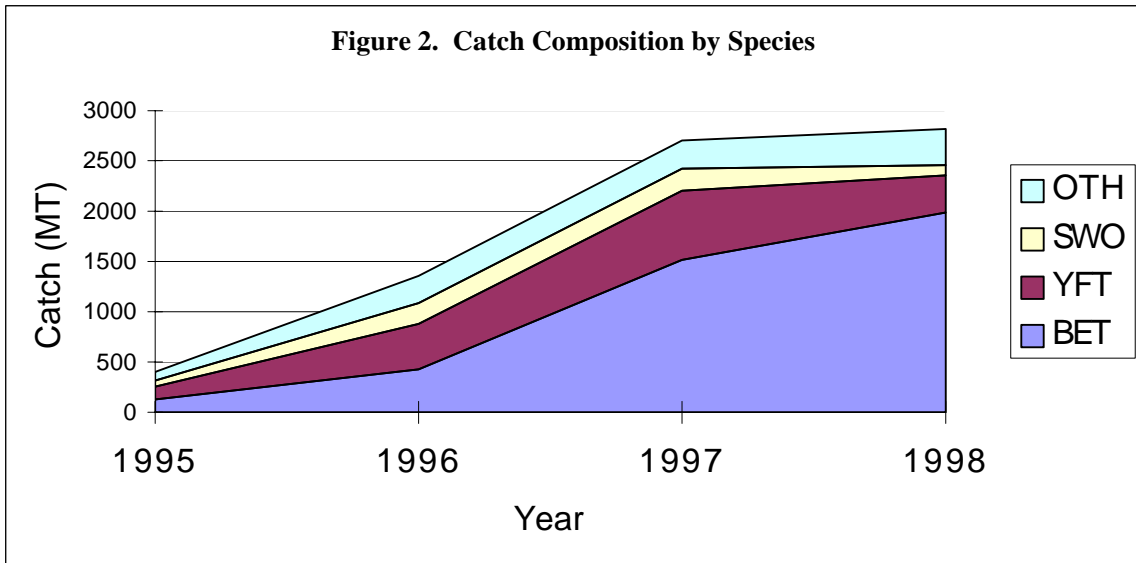
**Table 1. Fishing Craft operated in the Indian Ocean (Area 57) between 1995 and 1999**

No	Name of Fishing Company	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999 (Jan to June)
1	Yantai Fisheries Group Co.	8	16	16	16	20
2	Guangdong General Deep- Sea Fisheries Co.	4	11	9	24	42
3	Guangdong Nanyang Fishery Co.		15	12	19	28
4	Shandong Group Fishery Co.		10	10	10	11
5	Zhanjiang Deep-Sea Fisheries Development Co.			14	14	18
6	Ningbo Deep-Sea Fishery Co.			4	4	4
7	CNFC Deep-Sea Fisheries Co.			10	14	14
8	Guangxi Beihai Deep-Sea Fisheries Company			8	8	
9	Zhoushan Marine Fisheries Co.			6	6	6
10	Fujian Deep-Sea Group Fisheries Co.				5	5
	Total	12	52	89	120	148

**Table 2. Catch in weight (tonnes) by the longline fisheries of mainland China in the Indian Ocean (FAO Area 57), 1995-1998**

Year	Total catch	BET		YFT		SWO		OTH	
		Catch	%	Catch	%	Catch	%	Catch	%
1995	403	128	31.7	126.5	31.2	61.5	15.3	87	21.6
1996	1357	427.8	31.5	453	33.4	205	15.1	272.2	20.1
1997	2702.4	1515.32	56.1	688.2	25.5	220	8.1	278.88	10.3
1998	2816.5	1985.76	70.5	368.93	13.1	101	3.6	360.39	12.8





(This report does not include the catch data and fishing information from Taiwan Province of People's Republic of China)