Chinese tuna longline fishery in the Indian Ocean in 2007

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since mainland China began to tuna longline fishery in the Indian Ocean in 1995, longlining fishing has been the only fishing methods applied by the fishing fleets for tuna and tuna-like species in the IOTC waters. At the peak time in 1998, the recorded number of fishing boats were 120, most of them were small non-professional boats reconstructed from trawlers or gill-netters which were operated along Chinese coastal waters before reconstruction. After 1998 number of fishing boats reduced with year due to the poor management, low economic performance and fishing ground shift to the Pacific Ocean. Total number of tuna fishing boats registered with IOTC Secretariat reduced to 93 in 2001 and down to 63 in 2002 and remain 67 in 2007. The number of the larger scale deep frozen longliners increased from 16 in 2003 to 41 in 2007. Fishing area of Mainland China fishing fleet in 2007 was 40-85ºE, 25ºN-25ºS.

2. CATCH STATISTICS

The total nominal catch of tuna and tuna-like species in the IOTC waters in 2007 is 10890 MT in round weight, 26.7 % reduction compared with that in 2006(see table 2). The catch of BET decreased from 8702MT in 2006 to 7167MT in 2007 and that of the yellowfin tuna (YFT) from 3857MT to 2825 MT accordingly.

Catch of SWO in 2007 reduced significantly compared with 2006. Catch of blue shark and shortfin mako in 2007 are reported as 112 MT and 34MT respectively.

Approximately 92% of the Chinese total tuna catch came from the west part of the Indian Ocean. And 91.0% of the bigeye tuna catch was caught within the above area.

Most catch are obtained from deep LL, accounting for 96% of the total catch.

3. FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Shanghai Ocean University (SOU) has been responsible for the programs of the training and data collection and compilation of the Indian Ocean tuna fishery statistics with the cooperation of the Branch of Distant Water Fisheries of China Fisheries Association.

SOU also run training courses on the data formulation and collection, fisheries management measures adopted by regional international fisheries management

organizations, such as IOTC, and fishing technical related conservation, such as sea turtles and sharks.

A working group for tuna fishery in SOU is also in charge of the national tuna observer program in the Pacific Ocean, Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean which is authorized by the Bureau of fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture. The scientific observer program has been carried out normally under the fully cooperation of the Branch of Distant Water Fisheries of China Fisheries Association and supported by Shanghai Fisheries University. So far, graduate and post graduate students majoring in marine fisheries science & technology, marine fisheries resources from Shanghai Fisheries University have been chosen as the candidates for tuna scientific observers.

Chinese Fisheries Authority will continue to strengthen the management of her tuna fisheries as a responsible fisheries nation, main measures to be taken includes:

1) Strengthening the implementation of fishing license system. Chinese government will issue " High Seas Fishing Permit" to all legal fishing boats operating in high seas, the "fishing permit " explicitly specifies fishing area, main targeting species and quota, fishing time of the boat holding the permit, so that the harbor nations can easily have a check if the boat enters their harbor.
2) All fishing companies have to report their catch data every month to Tuna Working Group of the Branch of Distant Water Fisheries of China Fisheries Association.
3) Continuing to implement the national tuna observer program in three Oceans. Concerning the Indian Ocean, two observers has been dispatched on board the fresh tuna longliners in April 2008. The fishing boat the observer works on will operates at the area 15°00´S～30°00´N , 60°00´E～80°00´E. According to our schedule, the observer will spend about four months on the fishing boat and does both biological and environmental measurements. The observer will also conduct some scientific research works, including application of mitigation measures, such as using the circle hook by request of the Branch of Distant Water Fisheries of China Fisheries Association .
4) Encouraging scientists to conduct research on the incidental catch of sea turtles and sea birds, request fishing companies to report situation about the incidental catch of sea turtles and sea birds if there is any.
5) Logbook system has been carried out as normal data collection work. Pilot logbook data submission system was conducted this year in order to obtain more detailed information about catch and fishing effort. Fisheries Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture this year requests that all fishing boats have to fill logbook as required format and will take implementation of logbook system as one of the main considerations for renewing the fishing permission and licenses.
6) Through improving the data report system, submitting fisheries statistics to regional tuna fisheries management organizations as required.

Reference

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Table 1. Number of Chinese Tuna Fishing Fleet in 2000-2005 in the Indian Ocean

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Number	98	93	63	63	63	67	67	67

Table 2. Catch of tuna and tuna-like species during 2000-2005 (round weight in MT)

Species	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
YET	2362	1771	1325	2279	3781.2	4,259	3857	2825
BET	2699	2994	2792	4569	8321.2	8,867	8702	7167
SWO	372	263	397	753	687.6	625	775	450
ALB	3	21	41	31	62	51	56	116
SBF	-	-	-	14	0	-	-	0
SHX	98	-	-	-	0	-	-	146
BIL	486	380	255	148	218	271	266	80
OTH	487	293	112	79	254.4	234	1189	106
Total	6507	5722	4922	7873	13324.3	14307	14858	10890