

Southern bluefin tuna 'breakthrough'

The international body responsible for managing global stocks of southern bluefin tuna has agreed to adopt sustainable management procedures to rebuild stocks, which are at a critically low level – 5 per cent of the species' pre-fisheries biomass.



Credit: CSIRO

'The decision to adopt a formal rebuilding strategy for southern bluefin tuna is one of the first of its kind,' said Australia's Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Senator Joe Ludwig.

'This means that the management plan will be used as the basis for sustainable global catch limits both now and into the long term.'

'The settings of global catch levels have been based on scientific advice to achieve the outcome of a sustainable stock. By taking a precautionary approach during the early stages of stock industry can be assured that they will have a fishery to use in the long term, as well as today.'

Under the rebuilding strategy agreed to by the Extended Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna, the global catch limit will increase by 1000 tonnes from 2011 to 2012 (9449 to 10 449 tonnes) and by 500 tonnes from 2012 to 2013 (10 449 to 10 949 tonnes).

Australia's national quota will increase from 4015 tonnes in 2011 to 4528 tonnes in 2012 and 4698 tonnes in 2013.

Subject to satisfactory stock assessment in 2013, the global catch limit for 2014 would be set at a maximum of 12 449 tonnes, with an allocation of 5147 tonnes to Australia.

Humane Society International (HSI) welcomed the move to rebuild critically endangered stocks, but did not support the increased quotas.

‘HSI maintains that a zero quota or total allowable catch is the most appropriate option to ensure that the recovery of southern bluefin tuna can be assured,’ commented HSI’s Alexia Wellbelove.

Source: Ministerial media release/HSI

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