

MSC Fishery Fact Sheet: AAFA albacore tuna



Latin name	<i>Thunnus alalunga</i>
Deutsch	Weisser Thun
English	Albacore tuna
Español	Albacora, atún blanco
Français	Thon blanc
Nederlands	Albacore tonijn

Basic information

Location	North and South Pacific Ocean
Fishing gear	Trolling (north and south Pacific) and Pole and line (north Pacific)
Season	North Pacific – June – November South Pacific – December - May
Quota / TAC	There is no TAC or quota, the average season harvest in the North Pacific is 10,000MT
Products	Canned, smoked, sashimi grade blast frozen loins, blast frozen steaks, blast frozen medallions, whole round brine frozen, whole round blast frozen,
Date certified	August 2007

Background information

Albacore are highly migratory and found in all oceans and the Mediterranean Sea. In the Pacific Ocean, there are two distinct stocks, the northern and the southern. Albacore are resilient to fishing pressure due to their high growth rate, early maturity and high fecundity.

In the North Pacific, US troll and pole-and-line fisheries started in the early 1900s to provide fish for tuna canneries in California. US troll fisheries expanded to the South Pacific in the 1980s, to follow the North Pacific albacore fishing season. Trolling involves towing artificial lures with barbless hooks. Pole-and-line vessels locate albacore schools, and then fishers catch fish individually using a stout pole with a short line and single barbless hook.

MSC webpage www.msc.org/track-a-fishery/certified/pacific/aafa-pacific-albacore-tuna-north
www.msc.org/track-a-fishery/certified/pacific/aafa-pacific-albacore-tuna-south



Photos © American Albacore Fishing Association



Sustainability notes

- Stock levels** At the last annual surveillance (Sept 2009), and based on the best available science, the North Pacific albacore stock was determined to be at high abundance. Stock biomass is well above precautionary limits, and fishing pressure well below levels likely to cause overfishing.
- Environmental Impact** Both fishing methods are notably 'clean' methods that catch one fish at a time. Bycatch of non-target species is relatively rare and barbless hooks allow rapid and effective release of any bycatch species. No significant impacts on protected or endangered species have been identified. Discards are low, as fishers avoid schools of small sized fish due to lower prices. Pole-and-line fishing in the North Pacific uses anchovy for chum or bait. Anchovy catches are monitored, and assessments indicate that Northern anchovy stocks are healthy.
- Management plan** International management of Pacific albacore is shared between the Inter American Tropical Tuna Commission and the Western and Central Pacific Ocean Fisheries Commission. Working groups of these Commissions conduct scientific stock assessments and co-ordinate research programs. Implementation of Commission regulatory mechanisms occurs in the US through the Pacific Fishery Management Council, which has developed a Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (HMS FMP).
- Further notes** Both Commissions have adopted a formalized precautionary approach to management. While specific precautionary control rules for albacore are in the process of being developed, the recent cap on effort for Northern albacore is a precautionary response to the scientific advice that the stock is approaching full exploitation. In the US, the HMS FMP defines precautionary control rules that account for uncertainties in data and assessment.
- Fishery Improvements** As neither stock is not overfished, there is no need for a recovery plan. Maintaining fishing effort at current levels through the cap on effort in the North Pacific fishery is likely to ensure that the stock is not depleted below sustainable levels.

Useful websites

- Suppliers:** www.msc.org/where-to-buy/find-a-supplier
Fishbase: www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.php?id=142

Certificate holder

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