



[ABC Online](#)

Overfishing threatens tuna industry

[This is the print version of story <http://www.abc.net.au/ra/programguide/stories/200810/s2399138.htm>]

Overfishing threatens tuna industry

- [Print](#)
- [Email](#)

Updated October 23, 2008 14:47:45

[an error occurred while processing SSI file]

Conservationists say Asia's high end tuna stocks could be threatened by overfishing, as declining catches elsewhere shift the industry to the Western Pacific.

The tuna used for expensive sashimi and tuna steaks is increasingly sought after, but is being wasted in the pursuit of canned tuna. Experts at a conference in Jakarta say the tuna industry needs better regional management, more money devoted to sustainable fishing and an investment in more advanced nets.

Presenter: Liam Cochrane

Speaker: Blane Olsen, vice president of ANOVA seafood company; Jose Ingles is the Tuna Strategy Leader for the World Wide Fund for Nature; Professor Rashid Sumaila is from the School of Economics at the University of British Columbia

Conservation

- **Listen:**
- [Windows Media](#)

OLSEN: Ten years ago Jakarta really was the tuna capital of the world and you would see 4 or 5,000 fish coming into the main port, nowadays you're lucky to see 4 or 500 fish coming into the main port.

COCHRANE: That's Blane Olsen, the vice president of ANOVA seafood company. Over the years he's seen the supply of tuna diminish in the Western Pacific, the result of overfishing and a lack of regulation in waters which span international borders and laws. The area, known as the Coral Triangle, stretches across 5-point-4 million square kilometers and is surrounded by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and East Timor. Scientists say 89 percent of the world's tuna use these waters for spawning, nursing or migration. Trying to implement sustainable fishing in these trans-national waters is tricky, but its never been more urgent, according to speakers at a tuna fisheries conference taking place in Jakarta. Last

week, Spain and Japan - the main suppliers and purchasers of Mediterranean tuna - called a temporary halt to fishing, in a desperate move to save the tuna and their industry.

Jose Ingles is the Tuna Strategy Leader for the World Wide Fund for Nature. He says this temporary ban in the Mediterranean, combined with smaller catches in the Indian ocean, could see more pressure on the Coral Triangle.

INGLES: Well, it could mean that if you dont have enough supply of bluefin tuna, the Japanese market will proably source it out somewhere. So you have probably a shifting threat.

COCHRANE: That scale of that threat still needs to scientifically explored, but the most recent surveys found that while stocks of skipjack tuna - the kind that goes into cans - remain plentiful, the premium species are thinning out.

A scientific panel said bigeye tuna is already overfished and recommended catches be reduced by 30 percent, while yellowfin fishing is at its maximum sustainable level. Mr Ingles says the tuna stocks must be protected, for the sake of the fish but also those whose livelihood depnds on them.

INGLES: In each and every place where they are found it is in the best interests for the resource of the tuna to be managed individually by each country, and regionally and collaborately by the countries where these tuna are found.

COCHRANE: Professor Rashid Sumaila is from the School of Economics at the University of British Colombia. He says another major problem is that nets used to catch the lower-value skipjack tuna, also catch the juveniles of the more expensive bigeye and yellowfin tuna.

SUMAILA: If we want them not to catch the juveniles, they have either reduce fishing or find technological fixes for not catching the juveniles, and this can be costly... but if they do that, what this would do is allow the juveniles to grow up and become more valuable and therefore fetch more dollars in the market.

COCHRANE: Professor Sumaila says that in the short term, the local fishing industry will be hardest hit, as it struggles to invest in better nets which sort the juvenile tuna from the adults. But if the industry can change its fishing habits, consumers are prepared to compensate, says Blane Olsen from ANOVA seafood company.

OLSEN: Sustainability is a need and a reality and also the market is willing to pay that little bit more for the product.

© 2008 Australian Broadcasting Corporation
Copyright information: <http://abc.net.au/common/copyrigh.htm>
Privacy information: <http://abc.net.au/privacy.htm>