

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: CERTIFIED TUNA FISHERY DEVELOPS A RESPONSIBLE SOURCING POLICY

By Marcelo Hidalgo

Since 2016, the Fishing Industry Association of Papua New Guinea (FIA PNG), in collaboration with the National Fisheries Authority (NFA), the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and others, has focused successfully on elevating responsible management of the country's tuna fisheries. Its activities are based on four main pillars: Marine Stewardship Council certification (MSC); Catch traceability in the supply chain; Marine litter and fishing gear management practices; and Social accountability. The Association feels that in maintaining this focus, seafood supply chains can become more environmentally sustainable and socially responsible over time.



Tuna purse seiners (FIA fleet), Lae, PNG

Fisheries are vital for food security, livelihood and sustainable development through businesses worldwide and at the same time they are also linked to the health of our oceans. Over the years, the global tuna industry has made tremendous progress and heightened collaboration with governments, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders in addressing sustainability and ethical concerns related to societies, economies and environmental practices. In doing so, the industry remains in tandem with at least 12 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2016, the Fishing Industry Association of Papua New Guinea (FIA PNG), in coordination with the National Fisheries Authority (NFA), embarked on a journey toward responsible management of the country's tuna fisheries, with the aim of obtaining Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) fishery certification for the domestic fleet. This was based on the outcome of a FIA-NFA joint fisheries trade lobby committee that had recommended immediate work and implementation of a national MSC fishery certification for Papua New Guinea.

Since then, much progress has been made, aligning the country's tuna industry with the Tuna 2020 Traceability Declaration, which is a non-legally binding declaration on the implementation of SDG 14, and which was announced at the United Nations' The Ocean Conference in June 2017.

Focus on responsible management

The Fishing Industry Association is a non-profit organisation founded in 1991, with membership consisting of the fishing companies and seafood processors of Papua New Guinea, all of whom are working to promote responsible management of the fisheries industry. For instance, the FIA PNG members are encouraged to implement practices that drive social responsibility practices related to labour conditions; to mitigate and minimise the impact of marine litter and fishing gear; as well as manage their fishing operations in a responsible manner by preserving biodiversity and conforming to the conservation measures included in the terms of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification.

The tuna members of the Association are involved in all aspects of the tuna supply chain – fishing, trading, logistics, processing, sales and marketing. These member companies are as follows:

- Frabelle Processing PNG Limited
- Frabelle Fishing Corporation
- RD tuna Cannery Ltd PNG
- RD Fishing
- International Food Corporation (IFC)
- Majestic Seafood Corporation Limited
- Nambawan Seafood Corporation limited
- South Seas Tuna Corporation Limited (SSTC)
- Fair Well Fishery
- Trans Pacific Journey Fishing (TPJ)
- TPS marine fishing

The core business of the FIA PNG fishing and processing comprises selling whole round frozen tuna, pre-cooked frozen tuna loins, raw packed canned tuna, and canned tuna. The processors are mainly foreign investors who also have other processing sites in the Philippines and Thailand producing tuna in glass jars and pouches, among others.

The Association's mission is to drive domestic fisheries industrialisation to create and enable maximum long term economic benefits from the sustainable use of the country's fishery resources. The Association also promotes and supports initiatives that guide certain activities associated with its members' fishing operations, as outlined below:

- minimise incidental mortality of non-target species and impacts on marine ecosystems;
- manage and prevent abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear in the marine environment; and
- manage and mitigate marine pollution and its impacts on ocean and coastal environments, wildlife, economies and ecosystems, including the sustainable management of fishing aggregating devices.

FIA PNG tuna purse seiners



- 86 tuna purse seiners 2 268 Crew (onboard)
- 100% observer coverage (NFA)
- MSC fishery certified (skipjack, yellowfin and big eye*)

Tuna processing



- Six tuna processing factories
- 15 000 PNG local worker force
- MSC Chain of Custody certified
- Installed processing capacity 980 MT/day

**Scope extension to be included October 2021*

- being able to track and trace all catches from fishing ground to point of transshipment and/or unloading, processed into finished product for entry into the market,
- manage and cares not only the health of the fishery but also the human factor, when it comes to crew welfare and living on-board conditions in order to eliminate forced labor, and risk against human rights at the sea that are direct related to IUU.

The Responsible Sourcing Policy

The FIA PNG recognises that national fisheries management will be improved and enhanced only through vigorous compliance and enforcement during fishing operations, which will assist in its drive to meet certification requirements and standards.

In 2017 the Association undertook to develop and implement the Responsible Sourcing Policy (RSP) to increase the level of transparency in fishing operation and thereby to enhance fishery management. The RSP was launched officially in 2018 together with the announcement of the FIA PNG tuna fishery entering for the full MSC fishery assessment. Amongst other things, the Policy and procedures are meant to help protect marine ecosystems, sensitive habitats and biodiversity, control the use of fishing gear and mitigate marine litter and labour conditions.


The Responsible Sourcing Policy consists of four pillars: (i) Marine Stewardship Council certification (MSC); (ii) Catch traceability in the supply chain; (iii) Marine litter and fishing gear management practices; and (iv) Social accountability (labour welfare policy). These pillars, the most rigorous in the tuna industry, drive improvements across a range of fishing operations and help to safeguard the social rights, crew welfare, and safety of those who work on board as well as the communities depending on the resources. Implementation of the RSP started in 2019 with the setting up of a base line after carrying out gap analysis for crew welfare and labour conditions onboard, as well as marine litter and fishing gear.

Through the Responsible Sourcing Policy, FIA PNG aims to be the world's best industry advocate for fisheries management and reputable business, social welfare and sustainable resources. Its members are encouraged to have a strong governance and management system; adopt and promote sustainable fishing practices; minimise environmental impact; develop their employees' wellbeing and create a positive social impact along the supply chain; and produce high quality products for healthy nutrition.

Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification

The FIA PNG fishery operates in the Exclusive Economic Zone and archipelagic waters, consisting of associated tuna sets (FADs) and unassociated tuna sets (free school), and including 86 tuna purse seiners. Between 2013 and 2017, 74% of the catches were sets done on free schools, but according to data on landings from June to December 2020, 91% of the catches were sets done on free schools (Table 1). This improvement is due to several factors like increased use of technology in fishing and understanding of current oceanic conditions. Meanwhile, it is worth noting that the stocks of the three tuna species *Thunnus obesus*, *Thunnus albacares* and *Katsuwonus pelamis* are considered to be healthy, according to the Western and Central Pacific Commission's Kobe Process.

Table 1: Production of MSC-certified tuna catches and canned tuna for global markets, July-December 2020



Skipjack tuna (SJT)	51 793 MT
Yellowfin tuna (YFT)	22 129 MT
Total catches (YFT & SJT)	73 922 MT
FCL (units)	2 737 (1 787 boxes)
Canned tuna (units)	234 768 900 tuna cans

Source: Data Integrated Fisheries Information System – iFIMS. 91% unassociated sets / catches (Free school) and 9% associated sets / catches (aFAD & dFAD)

Being the first tuna fishery certified in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) including all types of sets (free school and FADs), FIA PNG MSC fishery certification demonstrates comprehensive and responsible management of the fishery including for all species, gear and geographical areas. However, the MSC-certified tuna fisheries are mostly certified partially - for instance, only free school sets are certified, which do not assess the real and full impact of the fleet on the biodiversity of the target and non-target species, and overall marine environment of the fishery. Partial fishery assessment only shows 50% of the reality of the fishery.

Table 2: Top largest MSC-certified tuna fisheries

#	MSC-certified tuna fishery	MT (allowed)	Species
1	PNA	735 000	SJT/YFT
2	Dongwon	161 700	SJT/YFT
3	FIA PNG	129 000	SJT/YFT/BET (all tuna industrial fishing gear)
4	TMI / Solomon I.	105 000	SJT/YFT
5	Alianza Pacifico	98 400	YFT

Source: www.msc.org



Credit: Marcelo Hidalgo

After NFA observer coverage at sea, tuna landings at port are sampled by NFA officers and inspected by FIA officers and fishing companies representatives

The role of the National Fishery Authority (NFA) should be mentioned here, in that it has been improving the PNG fishery management plan since 2003 and in September 2015, a regulation and law was set up to monitor, control, assess and report FADs (PNG FAD management plan).

Fishery traceability



Tuna unloading, PNG

The fishery traceability pillar aims to promote and profile PNG FIA's Responsible Sourcing Policy in view of the current traceability systems required by global markets. Such traceability systems are the best method to prevent fraud and illegal products from entering the supply chain as certified products. They are key in delivering the MSC's vision of healthy oceans and providing consumers with sustainable seafood that they can trust. Currently, the MSC programme is

the only scheme of its kind to offer ocean-to-plate traceability through supply chain certification. Its Chain of Custody Standard requires that MSC-certified seafood is kept separate from other seafood, and can be traced through the entire supply chain, thereby ensuring its certified sustainable origin.

The FIA PNG tuna fleet is aligned with the National Fishery Authority's track, monitor, control, and record online system (Fishery Integrated Management System – FIMS) which ensure high transparency in real-time for fishing operation.

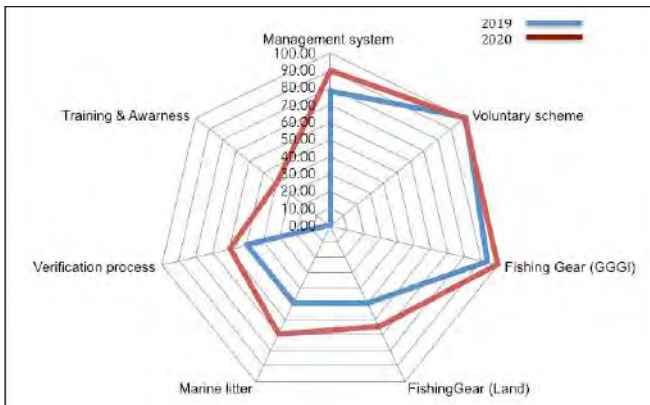
Marine litter and fishing gear

This pillar's purpose is to mitigate the catastrophic impact of ghost gear such as derelict FAD and fishing materials on natural marine resources and the environment, besides reducing ocean pollution. It aims to define, support, and promote comprehensive and science-based approaches to mitigation in gear use, with emphasis on FAD and fishing gear management. FIA PNG will continue to assess the risks of different types of fishing gear when lost or abandoned and to support the development of policies and strategies to prevent and remedy the problem throughout the supply chain, as well as conserve the health of the country's marine ecosystem.

The FIA PNG marine litter and fishing gear procedure and the audit tool is collecting data from vessels and also fishing companies at port. This procedure and tool is guided by policies relating to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), EU single use

plastic, FADs best management practices, FAO, the NFA FAD management plan and 12 other public guidance, regulations, and standards. The FIA PNG marine litter and fishing gear audit tool (Figure 1) assesses seven principles and 41 performance indicators. To date, the FIA PNG office has started to assess some fishing companies' members on marine litter and fishing gear, a process which will be done on an annual basis.

Fig 1: FIA PNG marine litter and fishing gear assessment tool



Source: Developed by Seafoodmatter

Crew welfare and labour conditions

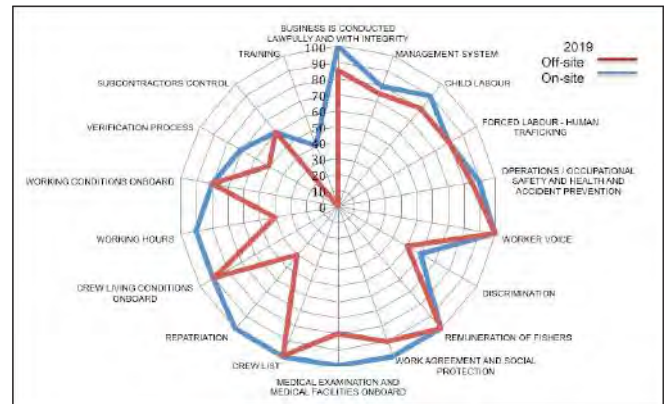
In alignment with the SDGs and the Tuna 2020 Declaration, and acknowledging the growing expectation of social accountability compliance, PNG FIA is ensuring that all its members in the tuna industry, both those in fishing operations and shore-based processing operations in Papua New Guinea, have implemented social accountability assessment processes (Figure 2). The Association is conducting an independent initial assessment of industry performance against ILO Convention 188 and the SA8000 Standard for social accountability (which is applicable for fishing operations) and building local capacity to undertake self-assessment following gap identification by the independent assessment.

During the assessment process onboard, wherever it is apparent that the FIA members' operations lacked documentation of systems and procedures in place against ILO Convention 188 and the SA8000 Standard, then the FIA follows up with programmes/activities to document systems, produce manuals and develop compliance and monitoring strategies to achieve and adhere to these guidance and standards. The FIA PNG crew welfare and labour conditions

onboard procedure and audit tool has assessed 45% of the FIA members' fleet. This procedure and tool is rooted in ILO Convention 188, FFA FFC106 on crew employment conditions, SA8000 for at-sea operations and 30 additional related public guidance, regulations and standards.

In 2019, the crew welfare and labour onboard assessment and fishing vessel audit started, following the onboard social accountability methodology developed by On-board Social Accountability International Limited (OSA International). The FIA PNG has stated that it will audit its tuna fishing members on an annual basis.

Fig 2: FIA PNG crew welfare and labour conditions on-board



Note: Assessed by On-board Social Accountability (OSA)

Looking toward the future

The Fishing Industry Association (FIA PNG) has come a long way from its humble beginnings in 1987 to where it is today. In 2018 the FIA PNG signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Fisheries Authority (NFA); in 2021 it became a member of Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions (CASS) and the Global Seafood Sustainable Initiative (GSSI) through its membership in the Alliance Global Hub. Its focus throughout has been on leading in innovation, conservation, and also looking at human rights in the tuna supply chain.

Looking to the future, FIA PNG will seek to network with more stakeholders in the tuna supply chain, labour and social programmes, and environmental organisations. The Association's stance is that by working together, seafood supply chains become more environmentally sustainable and socially responsible. 🌱



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