



## REGIONAL COOPERATION

### US signals renewed geopolitical engagement in Pacific, regional negotiations in flux

The US Biden Administration, Congress and Federal Agencies are seeing a flurry of activity related to geopolitical relations with the Pacific. In February 2022, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken visited Fiji. In Fiji, Blinken announced plans to place more diplomatic staff in the Pacific region and re-open its Solomon Islands' embassy, which closed in 1993; at present the US is represented by a consulate in Honiara.<sup>2</sup> The meeting coincided with the US release of its full Indo-Pacific Strategy that details an approach to 'sustained, innovative, mutually reinforcing partnerships across the Indo-Pacific'<sup>3</sup> with allies and partners. The US Indo-Pacific Strategy explicitly indicates that the intensifying US focus in the region is a response to China's work to combine economic, diplomatic, military and technological might to pursue a sphere of influence in the region.<sup>4</sup> Blinken's visit followed meetings of the 'Quad' (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) partners – US, Australia, India and Japan – in which those countries pledged to deepen cooperation to ensure an Indo-Pacific region free from 'coercion', presumably from China.<sup>5</sup>

US diplomatic re-engagement comes around at the same time as other geopolitical relations between the US and Pacific Island countries are up for renegotiation. The negotiations for renewed Compacts of Free Association with the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and Palau are presently stalled, and time pressure is emerging. The arrangements with the Marshall Islands and FSM expire in 2023 and with Palau expire in 2024.<sup>6</sup> The Compact countries have expressed their concern over lack of negotiating progress, and US lawmakers and key figures in the Biden administration are urging action to complete negotiations and build the political infrastructure required for meaningful engagement between the US and the Freely Associated States.<sup>7</sup>

Likewise, the Multilateral US Tuna Treaty is also approaching expiration and has an unsure future. The US Treaty was most recently renegotiated in 2016 with an agreement running through 2022. That agreement accommodated changes in access relations that have emerged with the PNA's Purse Seine Vessel Day Scheme and maintained an economic development package from the US State Department alongside licensing fees paid by the US fleet.<sup>8</sup> However, in recent years, a number of vessels have left the US flag.<sup>9</sup> At present, the fleet has roughly fourteen active vessels, all of which aim to fish close to American Samoa to supply the StarKist processing plant in Pago Pago. Negotiations to renew the Treaty have been underway with meetings most recently held in October 2021. The next meeting is planned for May or earlier, noting that the parties have agreed to try to complete the negotiations by mid-year 2022. However, if renegotiations do not yield an agreement, the Treaty will officially end in December 2022.

Across these points of engagement, Pacific Island countries report seeking meaningful and reciprocal relationships that show that the US values the Pacific, and that the US can contribute to priorities defined in the region, including around infrastructure development, educational opportunities, and climate resilience. Pacific Island countries are also anxious to see the US and other regional partners reduce their carbon emissions.<sup>10</sup>

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## FISHERIES REGULATION

### US concludes Vanuatu-flagged tuna longliner has used forced labour

On 28 January 2022, the US Customs and Border Protection (CPB) issued a forced labour finding against Vanuatu-flagged, Taiwanese-owned distant water tuna longliner, *Da Wang* which is owned by Yong Feng Fishery Ltd.<sup>11</sup> This follows from a Withhold Release Order (WRO) issued for this vessel which became effective in August 2020, based on information that reasonably indicated the use of forced labour, including physical violence, debt bondage, withholding of wages, and abusive living and working conditions.<sup>12</sup>

Under the US *Tariff Act of 1930* (Section 307), the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) can issue Withhold Release Orders (WRO) when information reasonably, but not conclusively, indicates that an imported product is being or likely to be produced by forced labour. Shipments subject to WROs are detained and then must be re-exported by the importer, unless information can be provided to CBP demonstrating the detained goods are not in violation of the Tariff Act. A Notice of Finding is issued when information conclusively demonstrates use of forced labour, with shipments seized.

To date, the US is the main market prohibiting the import of tuna (and all other types of goods) produced in foreign countries using forced labour through government-level regulation. However, industry contacts indicate that the marketability of catches in other markets from vessels issued US CBP WROs or findings also proves difficult given the reputational risk to buyers of handling tuna which was allegedly or proven to be caught by vessels engaged in forced labour practices.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the *Da Wang*, four active tuna fishing vessel-related WROs remain in place – Hangton No. 112 (Fiji); Lien Yi Shing No. 12 (Taiwan); Yu Long No. 2 (Taiwan) and Dalian Ocean Fishing Co’s entire fleet (China). One WRO has been revoked for Tunago No. 61 (Vanuatu-flag/Taiwan owned).<sup>14</sup> Hence, three PIC-flag vessels (one Fiji; two Vanuatu) have been publicly associated with forced labour. To ensure continued market access for tuna products from PIC-flagged vessels to the US and other markets, PIC governments are going to need to carefully review and where necessary, upgrade their legislation and monitoring and enforcement capabilities in line with international requirements concerning forced labour. While domestic fishing vessels are typically foreign-owned, ultimately PICs bear flag-state responsibility for them.<sup>15</sup>

### FFA report quantifies IUU fishing in Pacific Islands

A recent study has re-estimated the nature and extent of IUU fishing in Pacific tuna fisheries between 2017 and 2019<sup>16</sup>, following a 2016 study that estimated the total volume of IUU caught or transhipped Pacific tuna at 306,440mt, with an ex-vessel value of USD 616 million.<sup>17</sup> Replicating the 2016 methodology and updating it with new data sources, the study estimated the 2017-2019 IUU volume to be 192,186mt with 90 percent confidence that the figure is within a range of 183,809mt to 200,884mt. This equates to roughly 6.5 percent of total volume of WCPFC catch in 2019. The estimated ex-vessel value figure of these products is USD 333.5 million, with a confidence range of 90 percent that the value is between USD 312-358 million. These results suggest a considerable reduction from the 2016 estimates, though these findings must be contextualized. Changes were driven by substantial reductions in estimates for illegal transshipment and FAD fishing during the closure period, the removal of ‘unauthorised landings in foreign posts’ as a risk, changes in

**Vanuatu-flag,  
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fishery dynamics and data availability. The authors emphasize that findings should be seen as a part of an evolving process of developing methods for quantifying IUU fishing.

Results also offer nuance into IUU fishing activity by IUU type and across fleets. IUU was quantified across four categories: unlicensed/unauthorized fishing, misreporting, non-compliance with other license conditions (e.g. shark-finning) and post-harvest risks (e.g. illegal transshipment) in the purse seine, tropical longline and southern longline sectors. Results indicate that 80 percent of total IUU volume was attributable to misreporting and misidentifying target species in the purse seine sectors. Various types of unlicensed fishing collectively accounted for five percent of IUU volume and non-compliance with licensing conditions and post-harvest offenses accounted for three percent each. The tropical longline and southern longline sectors accounted for 21 percent and 7 percent of the overall IUU volume respectively; however, the higher market value of target species in longline fisheries meant that the tropical longline sector made a proportionally higher contribution by value (40 percent) than volume to overall estimates. The southern longline fishery had the lowest overall estimates of IUU product value (14 percent).

Several take away points and directions for future work emerge from the report:

- Cooperative regional monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures contribute to reducing IUU fishing in the region. These include: the FFA Vessel Register and Good Standing requirement, the Harmonised Minimum Terms and Conditions for foreign vessels access, the FFA VMS, and the Pacific Islands Regional Fisheries Observers Standards, among others.
- IUU activity comes primarily from licensed vessels, with only five percent coming from unlicensed vessels.
- While longline vessels have a far lower volume of IUU infractions, longline sectors remain a priority for strengthened MCS. Areas identified for strengthened MCS include: expansion of observer coverage requirements, strengthened surveillance of high seas fishing activities and at sea transshipment, and monitoring and validating catch on longline vessels and as catch moves through supply chains.
- Ongoing MCS work and technological developments – such as the WPCFC Transshipment Declaration and Global Fishing Watch’s transshipment portal – will continue to enhance understanding of IUU fishing.

## China updates its distant water fleet policy framework

China’s Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) launched its 14th Five-year Plan for National Fishery Development in January 2022, which combines emphases on industry modernisation and sustainability.<sup>18</sup> In mid-February, MARA released a follow-on policy document ‘Opinions on Promoting the High-Quality Development of Distant Ocean Fisheries During the 14th Five-Year Plan’.<sup>19</sup>

This establishes an annual catch target volume of 2.3 million tonnes for the national distant-water fleet (DWF). This is significant because the target volume is unchanged from the 2016-2020 period of the prior plan. It also commits to strict controls over the DWF, but that these vessels will also be modernised, suggesting potential effort-creep.

*The most common source of IUU fishing in the WCPFC is misreporting in the purse seine sector*

*Monitoring and validating longline catch throughout supply chains is a priority area in the effort to curb IUU fishing*

In terms of DWF regulation, MARA intends to modernise its MCS and traceability systems including introducing vessel positioning, electronic catch logs, remote video monitoring, supervision of transshipments and product traceability.<sup>20</sup> It also commits to improve national implementation of international fisheries agreements.

In terms of corporate governance, it suggests also that China will continue to promote a policy of agglomeration among its DWF operators, perhaps to enhance global competitiveness and to simplify government oversight capacity.<sup>21</sup> The latter introduces a potential risk for PICs because a smaller number of more powerful firms controlling China's DWF may have greater bargaining power in the region.

China is also reportedly overhauling its fisheries subsidies system to try to make them compliant with the WTO draft Fisheries Subsidies Agreement's sustainability criteria.<sup>22</sup> Vessel-owners have been asked by two provincial authorities to improve their practices using 'fishery stewardship subsidies' which are awarded through demonstrable compliance with catch quotas and seasonal closures. However, the details are currently scarce as the programme is not yet public and so the jury is out as to whether these may have an effect on China's DWF operations in the WCPO.

### **US Government moves to enhance seafood traceability and labour conditions**

The US is updating and developing actions related to IUU fishing and labour abuse in seafood sectors. The US House of representatives has introduced and passed a bill that includes an expansion of the Seafood Import Monitoring Programme (SIMP), though the text will also have to pass the Senate to go into effect and no changes have been finalized to date. The proposed SIMP changes are part of a large bill that broadly aims to increase American competitiveness with China.<sup>23</sup> SIMP is NOAA's regulation that currently requires the submission of 17 data elements on 13 seafood species, including tuna, in order for those products to be eligible to enter the US market. The new provisions would add record-keeping requirements and apply SIMP to *all* forms of imported seafood. Additional data elements would include: location of catch, electronic reports of chain of custody records, maritime mobile service identity number of harvesting and transshipment vessels, and beneficial owner of each harvesting and transshipment vessel or aquaculture facility. Should the bill pass through the Senate in its current form, it would also authorize USD 20 million annually until 2026 for the US Commerce Department to combat human trafficking through seafood import monitoring and international fisheries management. The bill would support efforts to prioritise audits of imports from countries identified by other federal agencies as having human trafficking, forced labour and child labour in any part of the seafood supply chain. It would also expand the federal government's authority to withhold or revoke US port privileges for fishing vessels from nations that have been identified for illegal or unreported fishing.

Sponsors of the SIMP expansion aim to use the enhanced reporting requirements to level the playing field for American fishing industries and make US production more competitive in the long run.<sup>24</sup> However, over 120 representatives of the seafood industry – including the National Fisheries Institute (NFI), the nation-wide lobby group that also represents tuna processing firms – have signed letters in opposition to SIMP expansion. The letters generally express support for challenging illegal fishing, but argue that the SIMP reporting provisions are not effective at achieving these goals and will instead introduce costs and complexities that will hamper international seafood supply chains.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, conservation groups have applauded the bill and some indicate that it positions the US as a leader in ocean conservation.<sup>26</sup> Since tuna are already covered by SIMP, importers of record in the

*China plans to stabilise distant-water catch, modernise its fleet and to make fisheries subsidies WTO-compliant*

*US lawmakers have proposed an expansion of SIMP reporting requirements*



US have already developed the required infrastructure for compliance, though these will need to be updated and expanded in the event that the proposed changes go through.

In addition, the Biden administration continues to hone in on labour issues in the seafood sector. In late 2021, the Biden administration released a National Action Plan to combat human trafficking at home and abroad. The National Action Plan's updates build on the foundational pillars of US and global anti-trafficking efforts: prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership.<sup>27</sup> Priority Action 4.4.5 of the Plan - 'Strengthen international frameworks to combat human trafficking in the maritime domain and seafood supply chain' – speaks explicitly to concerns in fisheries sectors. This priority item outlines that the US government's response to human trafficking and labour exploitation must rely on inter-governmental cooperation. It pledges that US military and federal agencies will work to create frameworks to coordinate and cooperate with international partners to identify and protect victims of human trafficking and investigate and prosecute perpetrators. The frameworks will focus on labour concerns on vessels and other potential risk areas throughout the seafood supply chains, including processing operations. Further, the US Department of Transportation will play a key role in engaging with international multilateral maritime organisations to share best practices in combatting trafficking in the transportation sector, and to develop culturally sensitive counter-trafficking awareness materials.<sup>28</sup> As part of the plan, the US Trade Representative will encourage other countries to also place bans on imports of goods made with forced labour. US Seafood Industry trade group National Fisheries Institute applauded the effort, recognising that labour issues will remain a top concern for the seafood industry in near future.<sup>29</sup>

## TUNA INDUSTRY

### Marshall Islands welcomes an increase in purse seine transshipping at Majuro

During the five years prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Majuro had been one of the top, if not top, tuna transshipment ports in the WCPO. The Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA) reported that from 2015 to 2019 annual pre-COVID tuna transshipment volumes from purse seiners in Majuro lagoon averaged 346,901mt from 466 transshipments (i.e. 39 per month).<sup>30</sup> All this changed in March 2020, when the Marshall Islands Government instituted strict restrictions on all ship visits, including those of purse seiners and refrigerated fish carriers. Fishing vessels that transited through or departed from COVID-19 infected countries were temporarily suspended from entering RMI ports, and those that were allowed were required to spend 14 days at sea prior to entry.<sup>31</sup>

The Marshall Islands Government has long recognized the importance of tuna transshipment to the country's economy and eventually enacted some provisions that would enable such activities to continue. In February 2021 there was an exemption for "a limited number of carrier vessels" which were still required to spend 14 days at sea prior to port entry. Only after clearance by the government's Ministry of Health, Ports Authority, MIMRA, and Immigration department, were vessels allowed to enter for transshipment purposes. A limit of twenty purse seiners and ten carrier vessels was placed on the number of vessels that could enter and tranship at any one time, and crews were still prohibited from coming ashore.<sup>32</sup>

*Biden's human trafficking National Action Plan includes provisions targeting seafood supply chains*

*Pre-COVID-19, on average, almost 470 transshipments were conducted in Majuro annually*



As covered previously in *FFA Trade and Industry News*, in June 2021, the Marshall Islands Government began offering voluntary COVID-19 vaccinations to fishing vessel crews using the one-shot Johnson and Johnson vaccine.<sup>33</sup> After a few weeks the program was suspended temporarily while public health officials concentrated on vaccinations in the outer islands of the Marshalls. The program resumed two months later in mid-August 2021, when it was announced by MIMRA that Fridays would be set aside for crew vaccination at a secure location on the Majuro dock. The first such scheduled vaccination saw 132 fishermen vaccinated during a two-hour period on Friday, 18 August.<sup>34</sup>

The various steps taken by the Marshall Islands government to protect its citizens while balancing the needs of the tuna industry appear to be working. In January 2022, there were 38 transhipments and unloadings in Majuro in total, equal to the 4-year monthly average prior to the pandemic. The January total included 33 transhipments directly to carriers, as well as five vessels that split their tonnage between carriers and unloading at the dock. Dockside unloading has seen a slow but steady increase in the amount of tuna unloaded into containers. In 2021 there were 39 vessels that split their catches between carriers and unloading at the dock. At least one business is planning on the expansion of dock side containerization - Majuro Stevedoring and Terminal Company is reportedly gearing up to install an additional 100 reefer container plug-in points in anticipation of the further development in the export of tuna in containers.<sup>35</sup>

### **MSC's proposed new Fisheries Standard provides some flexibility on harvest strategies**

On 1 February 2022, the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) released the final draft version of its new MSC Fisheries Standard (Version 3.0). This review commenced in 2018 and reportedly, has involved the most extensive stakeholder consultation ever undertaken by MSC, involving over 1,000 stakeholders including fisheries experts, MSC assessors, NGOs and industry representatives. A 60-day final stakeholder review period is now underway until 4 April. Following this, MSC's Board of Trustees will finalize the new standard in June 2022, which is then expected to come into effect by September 2022.<sup>36</sup>

As reported previously in *FFA Trade and Industry News*, one of the most highly anticipated elements of MSC's Fisheries Standard v3.0 relates to changes to MSC's requirements on harvest strategies and how this will impact MSC-certified WCPO tuna fisheries. Under current harmonized Principle 1 conditions, harvest strategies need to be adopted for key WCPO tuna stocks (skipjack, yellowfin, bigeye and albacore) by the end of June 2023, or existing certifications will be suspended.

The new standard does provide some flexibility around timeframes for RFMO-managed fisheries without harvest strategies already developed. However, this is paired with a requirement that fisheries making use of this flexibility must reach higher best practice standards in harvest strategy development and implementation. These fisheries will be able to be assessed under a "bespoke scoring tree" which is laid out in Annex SE of the MSC Fisheries Standard (v 3.0) using a conditional "phased condition pathway", provided target stocks are healthy. Milestones categorised under two phases – science and policy – must be met within ten years for new fisheries whose target stock have never been assessed; five years for fisheries in their first five-year certification period and two years for fisheries which are in their second certification period:

**Following RMI Government steps to safeguard its population and foreign crews from COVID-19, the number of transhipments in Majuro are rebounding to pre-COVID levels**

**MSC's proposed new Fisheries Standard provides additional time for harvest strategy adoption in exchange for higher performance**

- *Phase 1: Science focus* – Fisheries need to demonstrate they are developing a harvest strategy and have completed Monitoring Strategy Evaluation (MSE) (i.e. a simulation tool used to compare the likely performance of various harvest strategies).
- *Phase 2: Policy focus* – Fisheries managers agree to and adopt the strategy proposed and put in place mechanisms to manage catches accordingly.

At the end of this extension, fisheries will need to attain a perfect score on harvest strategies (SG100) and an unconditional pass for harvest control rules (SG80), otherwise the fisheries' MSC certifications will be suspended.<sup>37</sup>

RFMO-managed fisheries with robust and precautionary harvest strategies already developed and in place will be assessed under the same default assessment tree in v3.0 as the previous version of the standard (v2.0). However, this situation does not apply to any WCPO MSC-certified fisheries, as WCPFC is still in the process of developing harvest strategies for all key tuna stocks. If WCPO MSC-certified tuna fisheries switch to v3.0 to make use of the harvest strategies extension to avoid the current suspension deadline (i.e. June 2023), they have two years to close out the phased conditions (i.e. June 2025). This means that harvest strategies would need to be adopted for all four species by WCPFC's annual session in December 2024. Based on milestones laid out in the current version of WCPFC's Harvest Strategy Workplan, this is possibly achievable for skipjack and albacore, whose harvest strategies are scheduled for adoption in December 2022. However, the likelihood of timely harvest strategy adoption by bigeye and yellowfin is much lower. While currently scheduled for adoption in December 2024, there is a high risk that these timeframes will be shifted out, particularly as negotiations around these two species have historically been more complicated. Yellowfin and bigeye are target species for tropical longline fisheries; yellowfin (adult) is a target species for purse seiners and juvenile bigeye is incidental by-catch. Hence, management trade-offs between these two gear types are difficult to navigate and are quite politically charged.

During a Q&A session in a public webinar hosted by MSC on 15 February, an MSC Standards Team representative indicated that as per MSC's current Fisheries Certification Process (FCP v2.2), an existing certified fishery cannot enter re-assessment until it has completed four surveillance periods. Hence, WCPO fisheries which are in their first to third surveillance periods may not be permitted to voluntarily re-assess under v3.0 to avoid suspension before the June 2023 deadline. Guidance is still forthcoming on whether a WCPO tuna fishery which is suspended in June 2023 could then enter immediate re-assessment under the new Standard to minimise the suspension period. Given the current re-assessment timeframe is typically 10-12 months, this would still result in considerable supply-chain interruptions in the meantime. Clarification is also still required on harmonization of harvest strategy condition timelines between fisheries targeting the same stock and/or certified under the current standard vs. new standard.<sup>38</sup>

If further delays are encountered in harvest strategy adoption at WCPFC, this means that WCPO tuna fisheries certifications may still face suspension, despite the flexibility offered under the new Fisheries Standard. It is anticipated that strong advocacy efforts of WCPO MSC client fisheries, supply chain partners and NGOs around timely adoption of harvest strategies by WCPFC will continue to ramp up in 2022 and beyond.

Other proposed updates to MSC's Fisheries Standard include: strengthened requirements on shark finning whereby all MSC-certified fisheries retaining sharks must have a fins naturally attached policy; use of a new method for classifying

*It remains unclear if flexibility provided by MSC on harvest strategy adoption timeframes will enable WCPO tuna fisheries to avoid suspension in June 2023*

endangered, threatened and protected species (ETP); strengthened requirements for lost or discarded fishing gear to minimise ecosystem impacts; and, streamlined requirements to make MSC assessments less complex, while still requiring the same level of performance.<sup>39</sup>

## Russia's invasion of Ukraine hits the global seafood industry

The invasion of Ukraine by Putin's regime in Russia has destabilised Europe and the world economy. The projected increase in oil prices will have enormous impacts on the tuna industry given the high proportion of gasoil to overall operating costs in marine fisheries.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) agreed to release 60 million barrels of oil to combat surging prices on 1 March in response to Russia's invasion. But given the flurry of actual and proposed sanctions and that Russian oil exports provide around 5% of global crude demand and 10% of the export market for refined products, this rare IEA action was not enough to stem a price rise a week later to USD 139/ barrel. Some projections suggest that the oil price may rise to USD 200/ barrel, should other major markets impose sanctions on Russia oil, following the US and UK decision on 8 March.<sup>40</sup> This is already reflected in world bunker prices for marine gasoil with a Global 20 Ports Average almost doubling between December 2021 and March 2022.<sup>41</sup>

Not only will the oil price rise impact boat owners; it will also hurt container shipping and airfreight, potentially disproportionately hurting longer distance and/ or more complex routes in the international seafood trade, which have already faced sustained cost increases during the pandemic.

Financial sanctions imposed by the EU and Japan by disconnecting commercial operators from the SWIFT payment system mean that the export-dependent Russian seafood industry will likely be hit hard (e.g. pollock, cod and crab). For example, the Netherlands and Japan are the third and fourth most important buyers respectively, and Western Europe is the site of its fastest growing import markets. Further, some US politicians are threatening to use new sanctions to target Russian seafood, in particular.<sup>42</sup>

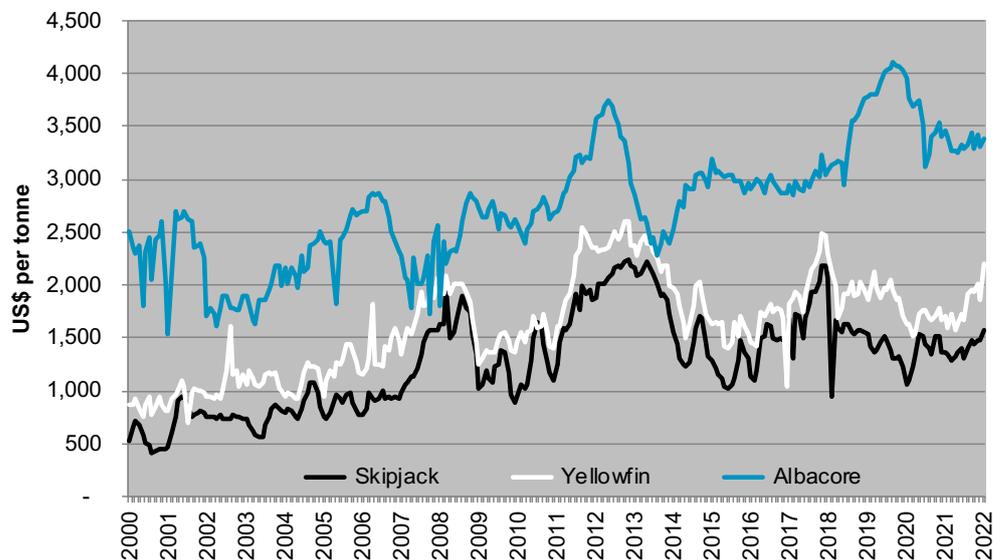
Russian exports may be diverted to South Korea and China – its number one and two seafood import markets – as neither looks likely to impose their own sanctions.<sup>43</sup> However, marine insurers have dropped automatic war coverage for cargo vessels offloading in areas affected by the invasion, seeing leading shipping lines suspend routes to and from Russia. Further, several major seafood companies have unilaterally decided to stop buying Russian seafood.<sup>44</sup>

*Political instability and oil sanctions are seeing run-away bunker fuel prices*

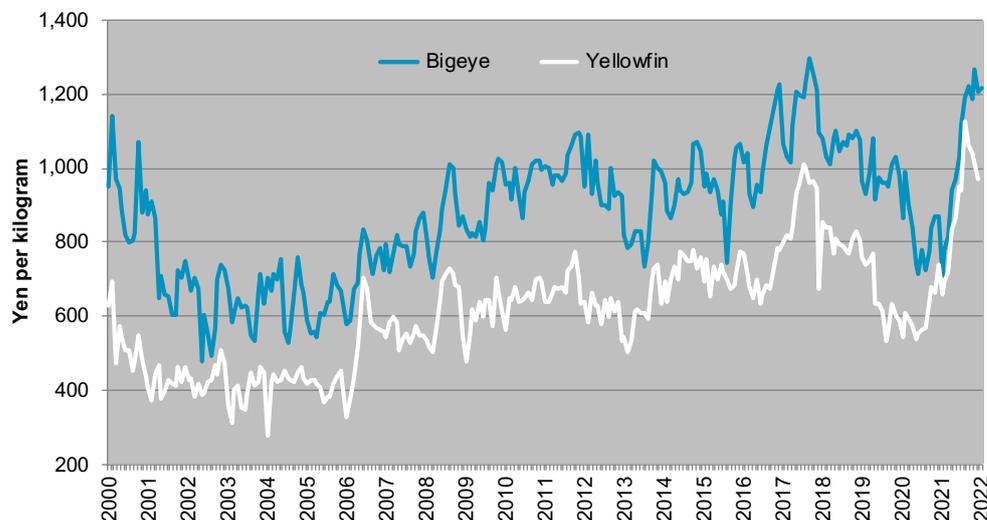
*Russia's seafood industry hit hard by costs, sanctions and marine insurance crisis*

## TUNA PRICE TRENDS<sup>45</sup>

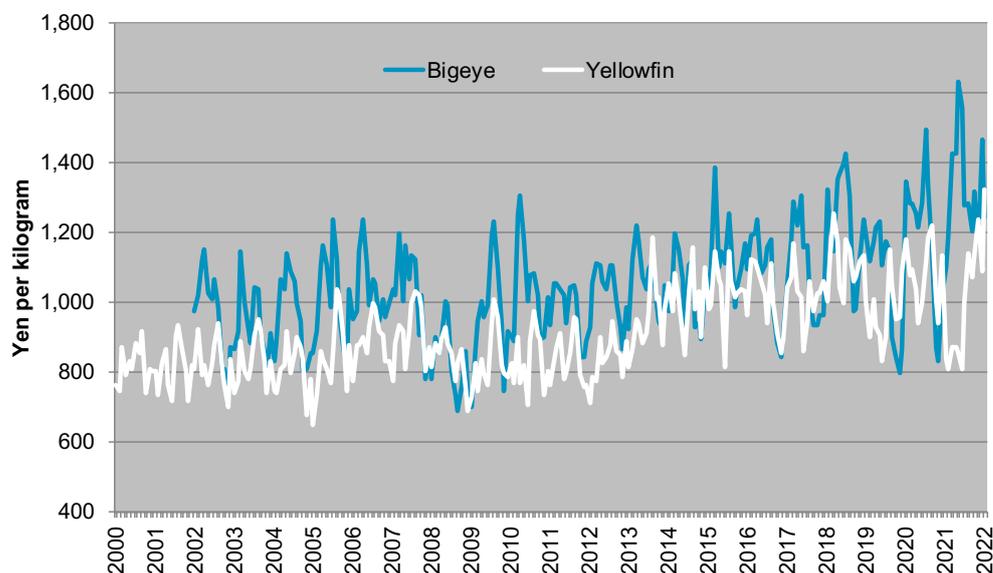
### Bangkok canning-grade prices to January 2022<sup>46</sup>



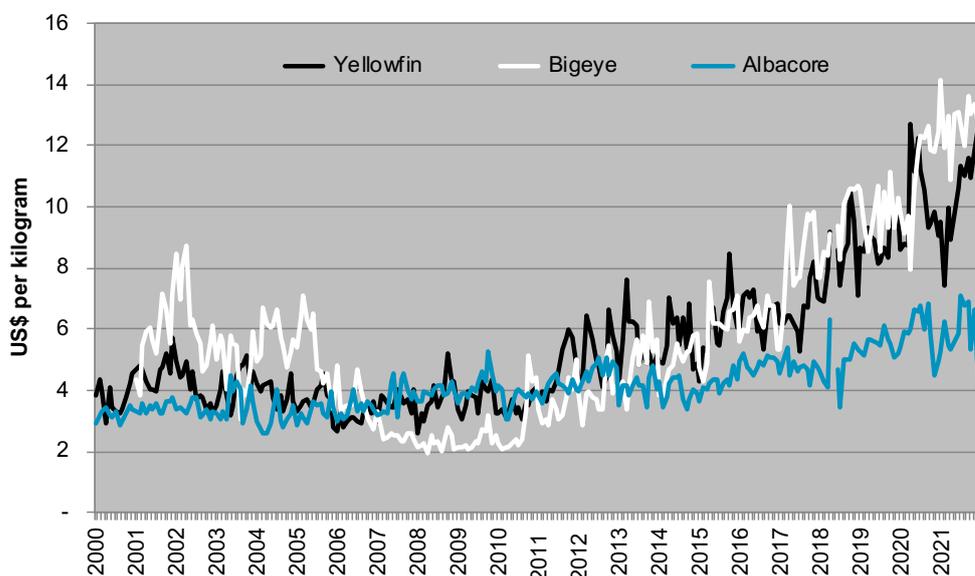
### Japan frozen sashimi prices (ex-vessel, Japanese ports) to January 2022<sup>47</sup>



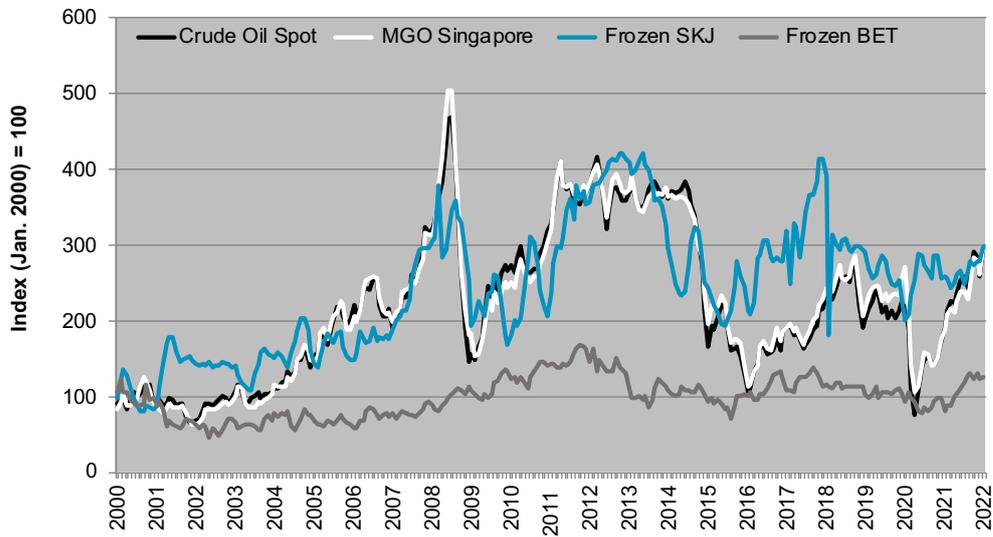
### Japan fresh sashimi prices (origin Oceania) to January 2022<sup>48</sup>



### US imported fresh sashimi prices to December 2021<sup>49</sup>



## Crude oil, canning-grade frozen skipjack (SKJ) and frozen bigeye (BET) price index to January 2022<sup>50</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Prepared for the FFA Fisheries Development Division by Professor Liam Campling, School of Business and Management, Queen Mary University of London, Dr Elizabeth Havice, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Mike McCoy, independent consultant, all Consultant Fisheries Trade and Market Intelligence Analysts, Fisheries Development Division, FFA. Desktop publishing by Antony Price. The authors would like to thank FFA for their input on an earlier draft of this briefing. The contents of this briefing (including all analysis and opinions) are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or thinking of the FFA Secretariat or its Members.

<sup>2</sup> 'US plans to reopen Solomon Islands embassy in push to counter China', *The Guardian*, 12 February 2022. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com>

<sup>3</sup> 'Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Acting Fijian Prime Minister Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum at a Joint Press Availability', *Remarks*. 12 February 2022. Available at: <http://www.state.gov>

<sup>4</sup> *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States*. February 2022. Full text available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Humeyra Pamuk and Kirsty Needham 2022. 'Quad ministers address Indo-Pacific "coercion", climate, COVID', *Reuters*, 11 February. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com>

<sup>6</sup> Patricia O'Brien 2022. 'The US is squandering its COFA advantage in the Pacific', *The Diplomat*, 8 February. Available at: <http://www.thediplomat.com>

<sup>7</sup> Alan Tidwell 2022. 'Being a better partner in the Pacific', *Texas National Security Review*, 28 January.

<sup>8</sup> For reference, see Elizabeth Havice 2018, 'Unsettled sovereignty and the sea: Mobilities and more-than-territorial configurations of state power', *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 108(5): 1280-1297. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324814512\\_Unsettled\\_Sovereignty\\_and\\_the\\_Sea\\_Mobilities\\_and\\_More-Than-Territorial\\_Configurations\\_of\\_State\\_Power](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324814512_Unsettled_Sovereignty_and_the_Sea_Mobilities_and_More-Than-Territorial_Configurations_of_State_Power)

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Havice, Mike McCoy and Antony Lewis 2019. *Market and Industry Dynamics: Western and Central Pacific Ocean Distant Water Tuna Purse Seine Fishery*. Honiara: Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency. August. Available at: [https://www.ffa.int/system/files/FFA\\_Purse\\_Seine\\_Study\\_2019\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](https://www.ffa.int/system/files/FFA_Purse_Seine_Study_2019_Final_Report.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Grant Wyeth 2022. 'With Blinken's visit to Fiji, the US returns to the Pacific', *The Diplomat*, 16 February. Available at: <http://www.thediplomat.com>

<sup>11</sup> Federal Register 2022, Notice of Finding That Certain Seafood Harvested by the Taiwanese Da Wang Fishing Vessel With the Use of Convict, Forced or Indentured Labor Is Being, or Is Likely To Be, Imported Into the United States in Violation of 19 U.S.C. i307, Vol. 87, No. 19, 28 January 2022. Available at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/>

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Customs and Border Protection 2022, 'CBP issues detention order on seafood harvested with forced labour', *National Media Release*, 18 August 2020. Available at: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom>

<sup>13</sup> Industry representative, pers. comm., 5 March 2022.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Customs and Border Protection 2022, Withhold Release Orders and Findings List. Available at: <https://www.cbp.gov/trade/forced-labor/withhold-release-orders-and-findings>. Accessed 5 March.

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