ENSURING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF TUNA IN THE PACIFIC

Palau & FSM Arrangements

CONCERNS about the expansion of the purse seine fishery led to the development of the Palau Arrangement in 1992 and the Federated States of Micronesia Arrangement for Regional Fisheries Access (FSM Arrangement) in 1994.

The Palau Arrangement provides the legal basis through which the Purse Seine and Longline Vessel Day Schemes have been established to provide limits and increase the economic returns from the tuna fishery.

THE PALAU ARRANGEMENT

In the late 1980s, concerns over the near over-exploitation of the Western and Central Pacific yellowfin tuna stock led to the establishment of the Palau Arrangement. This raised the urgency for action to be taken to reduce tuna catches.

The Palau Arrangement was negotiated by the PNA (excluding Tuvalu) and came into force in November, 1995. The arrangement restricted the number of purse-seine vessels that could be licensed by the Parties to fish in their waters.

The arrangement underwent a review in the early 2000s which led to the adoption of the Palau Arrangement Purse-seine Vessel Days Management Scheme which replaced limits on the number of vessels with a limit on the number of ‘purse seine days’ allocated as national Total Allowable Efforts (TAEs), where a ‘purse seine day’ is any day that a purse-seiner is at sea while present in an EEZ of a Party.

The Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) allows for the transferability of ‘fishing days’ amongst Parties, allowing them to take advantage of migration of the fishery in the PNA waters and increases competition among the purse seiners, improving economic returns for access.

Like the purse seine skipjack fishery, PNA are now implementing the Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) to manage their longline fishery that targets yellowfin, bigeye and albacore tuna.
FISHING VESSELS ARE ELIGIBLE, BASED ON THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- Good standing on FFA Vessel Register
- Details of a vessel
- Home-Party bilateral licence for one year
- Sponsored by Home-Party
- Vessels must meet FSMA Eligibility Criteria with a minimum of 25 points.

THE FSM ARRANGEMENT FOR REGIONAL FISHERIES ACCESS

The FSM Arrangement was signed on November 30, 1994 and came into force on September 23, 1995. It is a mechanism for domestic vessels of the PNA to access the fishing resources of other parties. This is to encourage greater employment, technology transfer and training of the coastal states. The concept behind the FSM Arrangement brings about the establishment of terms and conditions that allow Parties to grant preferential access to those vessels that provide long-term, sustainable and quantifiable economic benefits. It features the following objectives:

- Provide access for domestic vessels to Parties’ waters on terms no less favourable than those granted to distant water fishing nations (DWFNs);
- Secure maximum sustainable economic benefits from tuna resources;
- Promote greater participation by nationals of Parties in fisheries and assist in development of national fisheries industries.
- Allow access to vessels on terms consistent with the Palau Arrangement

THE POINTS SYSTEM IS AS FOLLOWS:

1. Equity - 8 Maximum Points,
2. Vessel Flags - 8 Maximum Points,
3. Employment - 10 Maximum Points,
4. Offloading - 8 Maximum Points,
5. Fuel Purchase - 8 Maximum Points and either
6. Gov’t Revenue - 10 Maximum Points or
7. Onshore Development - 10 Maximum Points.

HOW THE PNA PURSE SEINE VDS WORKS

The PNA operates a Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) to maintain the overall purse seine fishing effort in the PNA area within sustainable limits. The VDS sets an overall Total Allowable Effort (TAE) limit on the number of days fishing vessels can be licensed to fish in PNA Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) per year. Each country is allocated a share of the TAE or party allowable effort (PAE) for use in its zone each year. The criteria for allocating fishing days is based on the most recent stock assessment on the target species, information relating to the maximisation of economic returns from the members, and the optimal utilisation of their tuna resource. These VDS days can be traded between countries in cases where a country has used up all its days while another has spare days. When a member exhausts its PAE, it must close its fishery and can only open it if it is able to purchase available fishing days from another country. The VDS operates through the purchase and trade of days fishing at sea between the PNA members and occurs within the combined waters of the PNA plus one non-PNA member - Niue.

The VDS is both a management and economic tool implemented by the PNA to: (a) limit fishing within sustainable levels; and (b) increase the economic benefits through access fees paid to them by distant water fishing nations (DWFNs).