

MSC-certified Aussie tuna catches expand by factor of five

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The Australian eastern tuna and billfish fishery has achieved certification to the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standard for the target species of albacore, yellowfin and bigeye tuna, and swordfish.

This fishery was originally certified in August 2015 for longline albacore, yellowfin, and swordfish, with a single operator -- Walker Seafoods -- as the certificate holder. With this recertification, industry body Tuna Australia becomes the certificate holder, and the wider Australian tuna fleet is now part of the certification, increasing the volume of catch eligible to carry the MSC logo by a factor of five, to around 4,000 metric tons.

The certification covers 34 Tuna Australia member longline vessels active in the fishery. The fishery spans the entire eastern seaboard of Australia, from the top of Cape York to the South Australian-Victorian border, and extends 200 nautical miles offshore.

"Through a rigorous independent assessment process, Tuna Australia has demonstrated that this fishery is meeting world's best practice for sustainable fishing," said Anne Gabriel, MSC program director for Oceania and Singapore.

Product is sold direct to consumers in port towns, through wholesalers to restaurants, foodservice outlets, supermarkets and fish shops across Australia, and exported to premium markets overseas, primarily the US, Japan, and Europe.

"The certification recognizes fishing in marine parks can be done sustainably while enabling Tuna Australia members to access new markets and premium prices," said David Ellis, CEO of Tuna Australia.

Tuna Australia received an AUD 506,000 grant from the Australian government's "Our Marine Parks Grants" program, enabling the fishery to be independently assessed against the MSC standard.

The MSC certification was conditional upon the adoption of harvest strategies including harvest control rules by all member states of the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission by 2021.