



SENATOR THE HON RICHARD COLBECK

Senator for Tasmania

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture

M E D I A R E L E A S E

1 December, 2014

Southern Bluefin Tuna well managed and sustainable

Australia's Southern Bluefin Tuna industry is set for its best season in more than two decades with the total catch limit increased by almost 10 per cent for the 2014-15 season which starts today.

Senator Richard Colbeck, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, welcomed the increase for this season and said it was a result of strong and sustainable management action for the species.

"I commend AFMA, Australian scientists and industry for working hard in recent years to ensure the long term sustainability of SBT. It is rewarding to see some difficult decisions starting to reap rewards for the industry," Senator Colbeck said.

"A recent SBT stock assessment shows the stock size is increasing and has almost doubled in recent years. This is a great testament of our science based management of the fishery."

Andrew Wilkinson, General Manager of Tony's Tuna International Pty Ltd and member of the Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association, agreed that the increase in catch was recognition of industry's and government's commitment to ensuring a healthy supply of SBT and a strong industry.

"The scientific approach used by Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) and AFMA to set quota is very precautionary and gives our industry even greater assurance for the future," Mr Wilkinson said.

"The Australian SBT fishing communities, especially Port Lincoln, have been hurt badly by past illegal catches of SBT but we now have strong measures in place to avoid any over catch."

The catch limit for the 2014-15 season is 5665 tonnes, up from 5193 tonnes in 2013-14.

Australia is a founding member of the CCSBT, which is responsible for the international management of the global SBT stock. We work with other fishing nations to ensure the global sustainability of SBT fisheries and supply.

The Commission's Management Procedure determines global catch limits to rebuild the stock. This procedure is one of the first of its kind for an internationally managed species and is already proving a success.

Around 96 per cent of Australia's southern bluefin tuna quota is taken by about 5 purse seine vessels fishing in the Great Australian Bight and grown out in marine farms adjacent to Port Lincoln, South Australia. Nearly all of Australia's SBT harvested is exported to Japan.

More information of AFMA's management of SBT can be found at afma.gov.au