



FACTSHEET

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PACIFIC ISLANDS
OCEANIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT



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Offshore Fisheries

ENSURING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF PACIFIC TUNA

The US Treaty



**THE US TREATY
ALLOWED AMERICAN
FISHING VESSELS TO
FISH WITHOUT LIMIT.**

The Multilateral Treaty on Fisheries Between Certain Governments of the Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States of America (commonly known as the “US Treaty”) began in 1987. It entered into force in 1988 and has since been renewed twice, with the last renewal in 2003 allowing the US Treaty to continue for an additional 10 years until 2013.

The treaty enables a maximum of 40 US purse seine vessels to fish in the waters of the 16 Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) member states. These are Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. From the 16 countries, Australia and New Zealand do not receive any development aid from the treaty.

In exchange for fishing access the US contributes an agreed annual amount, regardless of how much fish they take out. Under this arrangement the USA has, in the first 16 years of operation, paid the FFA a total of US\$276 million. Once the administration fee is put aside, the FFA then divides these funds in two parts. First, each Pacific Island party receives a fixed minimum payment and the other, a major component, is based on the amount of tuna caught in national waters of each member states. In effect 79 per cent of the money has been diverted to five countries (Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea and Tuvalu) suggesting the uneven distribution of tuna stock in the region.

The US Treaty also:

- Provides medium term certainty about the basis of fee payments;
- Provides a US Government undertaking to enforce the terms and conditions of the treaty includes, for example, good fishing practices;
- Makes provision for member-state observers on US vessels to monitor compliance with the treaty.

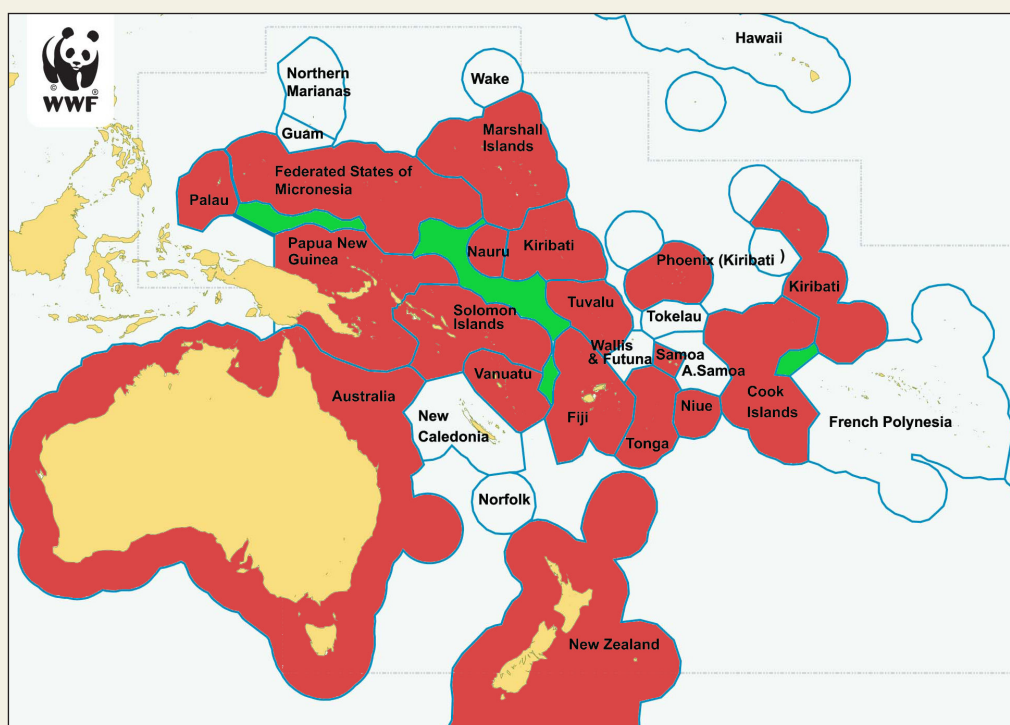
Source: Asian Development Bank, ADB (2010)

Lucrative tuna deal comes to an end

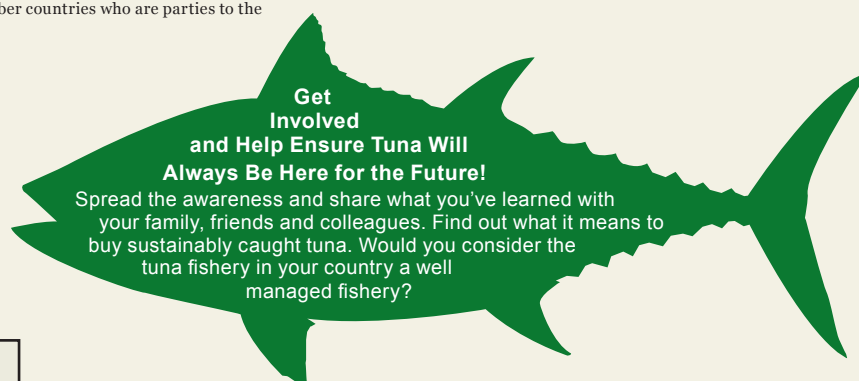
April, 2011 – Papua New Guinea (PNG) has withdrawn from the treaty after the US failed to renegotiate new fishing agreements with Pacific Island states. This not only isolates PNG but the rest of the Pacific Island nations who are party to the US Treaty. According to the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) Secretariat Director, Dr Transform Aqorau, nothing is wrong with the US Treaty, however, it needs to reflect the changing state of fisheries. “We have a stock that is not as healthy as we once thought it was, especially bigeye tuna and other tuna species,” he added.

PNG is also one of the eight PNA members, who collectively, among other things, agree on and introduce measures that would regulate fishing in the region. The Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) and banning of Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) are two such measures. Under the VDS, vessels pay a set of daily fees, ranging from US\$3,000 to \$4,500, to be able to fish in the PNA waters. The PNA has also recently extended the ban on FADs, which unnecessarily cause the death of juvenile bigeye tuna in the purse seine fishery, from 3 months in 2011 to 6 months in 2012. Attempts to incorporate these conservation measures into the US Treaty have been unsuccessful over the last 2 years of negotiations. This is part of the reason behind PNG's withdrawal. However, PNG is open to renegotiate a new fishing agreement with the US on the proviso that it offers new arrangements.

Source: PNG Post-Courier, 5 April 2011 & Radio Australia News, 12 July 2011



Shaded in red are the exclusive economic zones of FFA member countries who are parties to the US Treaty.



For more information

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To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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