



The Hawaii longline fishery is 93 percent compliant with the UN Food & Agriculture Organization's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and serves as a model for longline fleets elsewhere in the Pacific.

Pacific Island Longline Fisheries Benefit from U.S. Management Model, Canneries

The recently released National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) annual report on fisheries of the United States has ranked Honolulu as the fourth most valuable fishing port in the United States with landings in FY2005-2006 worth \$54,600,000. The value of the landings is almost exclusively attributed to the Hawaii-based longline fishery for tuna and swordfish.

The longline vessels in Hawaii and the U.S. Territory of American Samoa comprise the largest U.S. industrial domestic fishing fleet in the Central and Western Pacific. They also hold the distinction of being model fisheries in terms of ecologically sustainable longline fishing. They employ high observer coverage, vessel monitoring systems, limited entry programs, spatial management to minimize fishery interactions, and innovative turtle and seabird bycatch

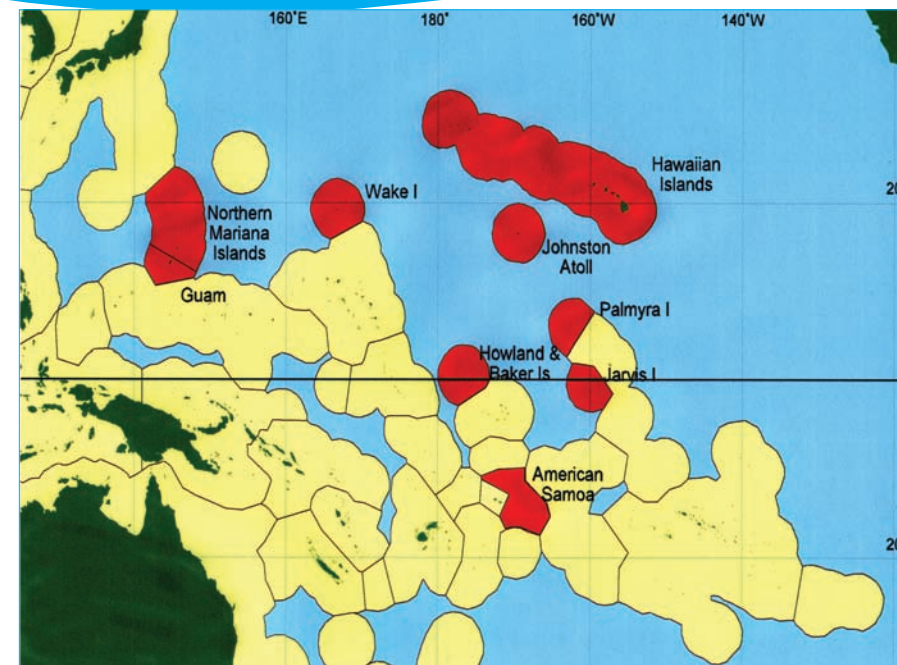
reduction methods. Indeed, the Hawaii fishery was recently evaluated and found to be overall 93 percent compliant with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

Countries neighboring American Samoa—such as the Cook Islands, Samoa and Niue—have taken a serious interest in U.S. longline fisheries management and seek to emulate its success in developing environmentally responsible longline fisheries. Moreover, longline fishing seems poised to begin developing in the U.S. Territory of Guam and the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), where if successful, will provide additional role models for neighboring Micronesian countries, such as the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and Palau. Given the strategic location of Guam and CNMI in the Western Pacific, both also have great potential to be international transportation hubs

for fishing fleets air-freighting fish to the United States and Asia. Guam and CNMI could also provide needed infrastructure to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), which is headquartered in Pohnpei, FSM. The United States became a full member of the WCPFC on July 27, 2007, with CNMI, Guam and American Samoa authorized as full participants.

The American Samoa longline fishery and the domestic longline fisheries in the surrounding countries of Cook Islands, Niue, Tonga and Samoa are supported by the easily accessible tuna canneries in Pago Pago, American Samoa. Further, most countries across the entire South Pacific, including those with canneries—such as Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Fiji—ship longline caught albacore to Pago Pago for canning.

In the past three years, the American Samoa longline fishery has experienced low albacore catch rates with the attrition of the longline fleet in Pago Pago. With an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of nearly 118,000 square miles and up to 60 longline



Exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of the Western and Central Pacific, with jurisdiction of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council shown in red.



In the North Pacific, the Honolulu fish auction (pictured here) has had consistent landings five days per week of swordfish during the 2007 season. In the South Pacific, fishing trials for swordfish by American Samoa longline vessels have been positive, and other island nations and the European Union are already catching swordfish for U.S. and European markets.

vessels permitted to fish in within that area, American Samoa has had one of the highest hook densities globally. For this reason, several American Samoa-based longline vessels have pursued individual fishing agreements with neighboring Cook Islands. Indeed, the Cook Islands and American Samoa longline fisheries have become closely interlinked through access of U.S. vessels to the Cook Islands EEZ, to the point where representatives of both governments hold regular colloqui-

ums on fishery management issues.

One possible alternative to cannery albacore may be a longline fishery targeting swordfish found south of American Samoa and sold in markets in the United States and elsewhere. Countries such as the Cook Islands and French Polynesia are already supplying these markets, and longline fleets from Spain are transshipping to European markets through French Polynesia. Developing such a fishery in American Samoa, however, would require the development of new value-added fishery infrastructure in Pago Pago. Fishing trials for swordfish by American Samoa longline vessels have been positive, and some catches have yielded large swordfish of nearly 600 pounds per fish.

These and other initiatives could ensure that Pago Pago maintains its position as one of the preeminent fisheries centers in the region to the benefit of longline fleets throughout the South Pacific.



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The Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association received its federal longline fishing permit in June 2006, which allowed them to operate the 60-foot *Galaide I* as a longline training vessel.

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

The Council is the policy-making organization for the management of fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ, generally 3–200 miles from shore) around the Territory of American Samoa, Territory of Guam, State of Hawaii, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and U.S. Pacific island possessions—an area of nearly 1.5 million square miles. The Council is tasked with maintaining opportunities for domestic fishing while preventing adverse impacts to stocks, habitat, protected species and ecosystem resources.



Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

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