



**164th Meeting of the
Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council
October 21 – 22, 2015
H. Rex Lee Auditorium, Utulei Village**

Legislative Report

Tri Marine Petition

The major item to report from the Fono (the American Samoa Legislature) is their support of the purse seine fishery that provides fish to the two local canneries – Tri Marine/Samoa Tuna Processors, and Starkist Samoa. In support of the petition submitted by Tri Marine International which seeks to allow the US purse seine tuna fleet to fish on the high seas, the Fono has passed a joint concurrent resolution supporting the petition. The Fono agreed that petition is necessary to aid the viability of the two canneries which receive over 50% of the catch of the US purse seine tuna fleet. The resolution was introduced by the House and was also passed by the Senate during their last session.

The Senate and House's support of the petition submitted by Tri Marine International echoed the support from the Governor of American Samoa, Congresswoman Aumua Amata Radewagen, and the Department of Interior's Office of Insular (OIA) in supporting the petition. Their support was joined by overwhelming support from the Directors of American Samoa Government, businesses of the Territory, owners and operators of local fishing vessels, and all three major boat-based fishing associations – the Pago Pago Game Fish Association (PPGFA), Tautai O Samoa Association (longline members), and the Pago Alia Fishing Association (PAFA).

OIA Assistant Secretary Esther Kia'aina said her office supported the petition for American Samoa to be recognized as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) as well as an exemption for US flagged purse seine vessels which deliver over 50% of their catch to American Samoa canneries from the closure of the Effort Limit Area for Purse Seine (ELAPS) for 2015 on the high seas. In a letter, Kia'aina wrote that the recognition as a SIDS acknowledges the ecological and geographic vulnerability of the Territory, its economic and social dependence on highly migratory fish stocks, and the need for specific assistance to participate effectively. She concluded that without an exemption and SIDS designation, American Samoa will have to bear a severe and destabilizing hardship on its fragile economy.