

DESCRIPTION OF THE TUNA FISHERY IN TUNISIA

by

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1. HISTORY OF THE FISHERY

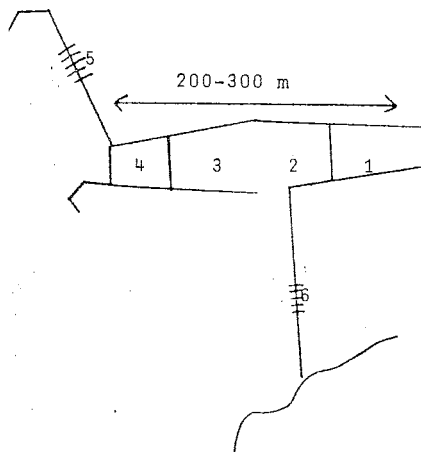
Tuna fishing in Tunisia was introduced by the Phoenicians. From the 7th century on it has been somewhat neglected. From the 19th century up to the present, the trap fishery has developed considerably. Since 1977, a purse seine fishery has been tentatively initiated (presently 3 vessels), of tonnage similar to that of Mediterranean purse seiners. At the present time, catches from this fishery are very minor, but they should increase in the future.

2. FISHING SEASONS AND AREAS

The two traps are set from May 1 until July 15, one at Sidi-Daoud, close to the coast (1 km) and the other at Monastir (12 km from the coast), close to an island. Catches are centralized at Sidi-Daoud where the cannery that processes the Tunisian catch is located. (The cannery is nationalized and managed by the "Office Nationale de Peche".)

3. GEAR DESCRIPTION

The two traps are large



- 1 Cod end
- 2 Pre-cod end
- 3 Foratigo
- 4 Chamber
- 5 Guide net
- 6 Fence net

The above drawing, taken from Hattour (1979) shows the trap when set, with the fende nets (land fence and guide fence) and the chambers where the tunas remain before they are taken to the cod end or death chamber. The length of the fence net varies according to the set but is always between 1000 and 3000 m. The traps are manned by a several crewmen, in particular when the net of chamber 1 (cod end) is lifted and kills the tunas. Approximately 50 persons are necessary for a trap.

Original report in French.

4. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER SPECIES

Euthynnus alletteratus and Sarda sarda are caught regularly along with bluefin (Thunnus thynnus) tuna. Auxis thazard and Thunnus alalunga are sometimes caught with bluefin.

5. TYPE OF BAIT USED

Not applicable or no information available.

6. FISHING OPERATION

Fishing operations carried out normally for traps are as follows: at dawn the different chambers are examined and according to the number of tunas caught, a decision is made on whether or not to kill the tunas. Then the fish are chased towards the death chamber which is lifted to where the shallowness of the water permits capture of the fish.

7. CATCH AND CATCH TRENDS

Catches since 1962 are shown in the following table:

	1962	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76
Monastir	33	27	20	36.5	93	81	105	13	41	104	31	33.5	77.5	41.5	34.8
Sidi Daoud	371	233	356	564	199.5	226	79	64	207	134	32.5	18	45	59.5	30.3
TOTAL	404	260	376	600.5	292.5	307	184	77	248	238	63.5	51.5	122.5	101	65.1

Catch trends are difficult to define. However, the average for 1962 to 1968 is 346 MT; from 1969 to 1976 the average is 121 MT. It, therefore, seems that the catch is decreasing. This must be carefully considered. It is not known for sure that this catch decrease is proportionally related to a stock decrease. In effect, even though fishing effort has not changed in number, the efficiency of the gear used may have varied, in particular, considering the trap setting conditions. Weather conditions may also have influenced catches.

8. FISHING EFFORT

Fishing effort is stable concerning traps. The developing purse seine fishery can, in the future, become large. The unit of effort used is the number of days that the trap is set. However, catches are not proportional to effort. Catches are concentrated in a small number of days during the fishing season. In effect, perhaps the number of traps would better represent the effort with less risk of erroneous interpretation.

9. SIZE AND AGE OF FISH CAUGHT

The fish caught have an average weight of 150 kg. The fishermen can distinguish between pre-spawning and post-spawning tunas, similar to the pre-spawning and post-spawning tunas observed by Rodríguez-Roda, but at the present time these are not identified in catch statistics.

10. PROCESSING AND CONSUMPTION

The majority of the catches are canned at Sidi Daoud. When the local catch is insufficient, the remaining portion is imported. Approximately 1000 MT per year are canned in order to supply the national market. The price is approximately \$1.50 per kilo.