

The Norwegian fishery on Atlantic bluefin tuna 1920-1985

An abstract based on the book
“Størjefiske på Vestlandet”
(The bluefin tuna fishery in western Norway)

Magnus Tangen

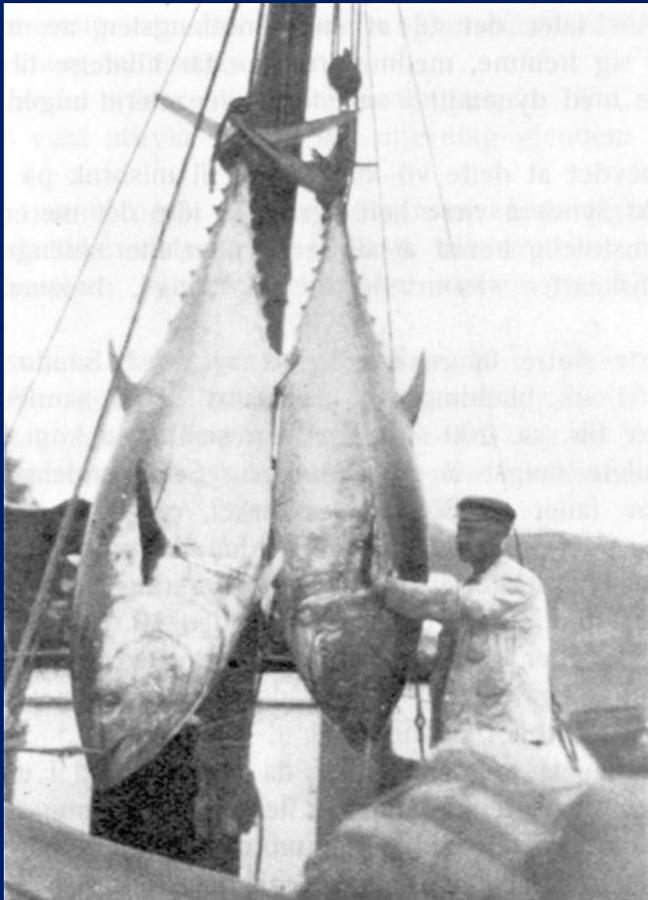


Three ways of catching bluefin tuna in the 1920's

- Fishing with hook and line. Handing out free hooks to fishermen.
- Using harpoon rifle. Educating fishermen in how to use the rifle.
- Fishing with an extra strong purse seine.

The first catches in the 1920 s

Mr. Haagensen hired Mr. Bernard Hanson to work with a new harpoon rifle. The harpoon rifle was used in the inner coastal areas and the hunt was dependent on calm sea.



In 1924 Haagensen got help from Mr. Emanuel Santi from Italy to establish a cannery in Trondheim. Tuna caught with hand harpoon, fishing hooks, harpoon rifle and purse seine were sent to the cannery.

The first successful catch using purse seine



24 bluefin tuna landed in Trondheim in 1926. This was by then believed to be the breakthrough for the purse seine fishery on tuna in Norway

Two purse seine vessels in 1928

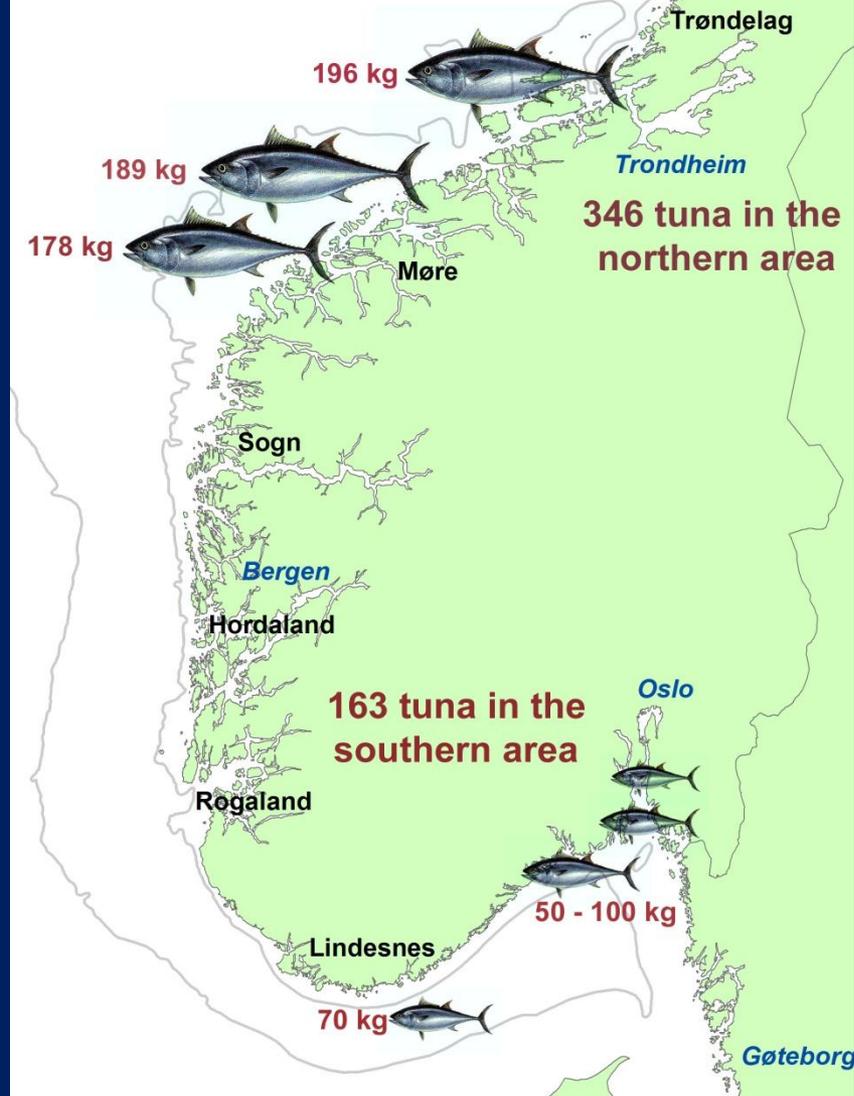


A purse seine vessel fishing near Trondheim. 33 bluefin tuna were taken in this catch. They were sold to the cannery in Trondheim



A vessel fishing south of Trondheim (by Møre). The catches were sold to the second newly established cannery near Kristiansund

Average weight of bluefin tuna caught in 1928,
based on catches where number and weight are known



Total catch in 1928: 149 tons. Total catch in 1929: 211 tons



Why the efforts in the 1920's did not result in a growing tuna-industry in the 1930's

- The prices of the tuna dropped with >50 %
- The purse seine was; too expensive, heavy, hard to work with, and still not strong enough
- The 1930's was not the right time to take financial chances due to very unstable economy in USA and Europe
- The bluefin tuna stayed along the coast and did not enter the fjords every year. This made it hard to locate and catch tuna with seine and harpoon rifle
- Hard to tell and predict when the tuna would enter the coast and where it could be found at different times of the tuna feeding season
- Most fishermen was engaged in other fisheries or had important work to do on their farms in late summer and early autumn



The 1940's – a new age for the tuna fishery



There was a growing interest in the tuna fishery in the southwestern part of the country.

After World War II some vessels were trolling for tuna in the North Sea



A new type of purse seine was constructed in the northern part of Norway.

This was the big breakthrough in the Norwegian tuna fishery.

1950: Vessels from all over the country participated in the fishery using purse seine



1952: The tuna adventure

Although the tuna fishery was stopped several times during 1952, it became the best year for the Norwegian tuna fishery.

The main reasons are:

- The tuna fleet had grown and tuna were caught along most of the coastline.
- The summer of 1952 was warm with calm sea.
- The tuna came close to shore and entered the fjords.
- The nice weather made it easy to spot the tuna.
- The calm sea gave good working conditions for the seiners.
- Large schools of small adult tuna (80-90 kg) entered the areas north of Stavanger (Sept./Oct.).
- Large schools of younger adult tuna (120-130 kg) entered the areas west of Bergen (August).



Leverandør	Adresse	Namnet til biten	Reg.nr.k.	Stk.	ca. kg.	Kjøper	Ordre-setel nr.
Olav Olsen	Rausøy	Rausøyseind	H 51A	84	2000	Ring & Strickham	2925
Torgu Torgersen	Devanger	" Fadnes "	H 2A	57	5000	B. Markussen	2926
Karl Karlsen	Tjeldstø	" Rausøy "	H 20A	201	20000	" "	2927
Olav Olsen	Rausøy	Rausøyseind	H 51A	63	5500	H. Bache, Kjesland	2928
Sigvald Høythamm	Fraungsvåg	" Segander "	H 90A	114	11000	" "	2930
Nils Ase	Mørke	" Asemor "	H 79F	24	2400	Ring & Strickham	2931
Kare Sjølling	Hellesøy	" Sjølling "	H 10A	33	3300	" "	2932
" "	" "	" "	H 10A	36	3200	Markussen	2933
Rabobius Eide	Karlveit	" Jakk "	H 120H	73	7000	Indresem	2934
Harald Østvoll	Østvollshella	" Eibjörn "	H 50FE	28	2500	Markussen	2935
Nils Ase	Mørke	" Asemor "	H 79F	10	1000	Indresem	2936
Olav Olsen	Rausøy	Rausøyseind	H 51A	130	13000	Markussen	2937
Nils Ø. Sjølling	Storøyseind	" Sjølling "	H 10F	3	300	" "	2938
Olav Olsen	Rausøy	Rausøyseind	H 51A	110	11000	Holland Ring	2939
Falldal Olsen	Dosoholmen	" Våking "	H 33S	200	20000	B. Markussen	2940
Harald K. Skarstad	Tjeldstø	" Skarstad "	SF 43B	1	20	" "	2941
Hakon Verbeke	Bygonesøy	" Fram "	SF 26B	13	13000	" "	2942
Bjørn Helmsen	" "	" Sandholmen "	SF 25G	6	600	" "	2943
Torgu Ebbesen	Foffundet	" Torgu "	N 47BR	95	9500	Ring & Strickham	2944
Olav Olsen	Rausøy	Rausøyseind	H 51A	300	30000	"Kista" H. F.	2945
Olav Markus	Nautnes	" Brandt "	H 128H	20	2000	Holland Ring	2946
Egil Sjølling	Ørnanger	" Sjølling "	SF 50B	60	6000	H. Bache, Kjesland	2947
Helge Karlsen	Mørke	" Salvi "	H 138J	105	10500	Falldal Ring	2948
Anders Solli	" Bygonesøy "	" Solli "	SF 339SU	3	3000	B. Markussen	2949
Arne Sild	" Silda "	" Sild "	SF 67S	12	1000	" "	2950
Sigvald Høythamm	" Fraungsvåg "	" Segander "	H 90A	74	7400	H. Bache, Kjesland	2951
Johannes Torkvåg	" Torkvåg "	" Torkvåg "	H 133A	70	7000	"Vindenes" H. F.	2952

The tuna fishery in the southwestern part of the country , west of Bergen, was stopped on August 5th. The fishery was opened on August 11th but closed again the next day. The stop lasted until September 2th.



The purse seiner and its assistant vessel



The assistant vessel (seen in the background) is towing the seiner away from the net in order to make space for the tuna to swim natural within the seine.

Use of assisting motor boats



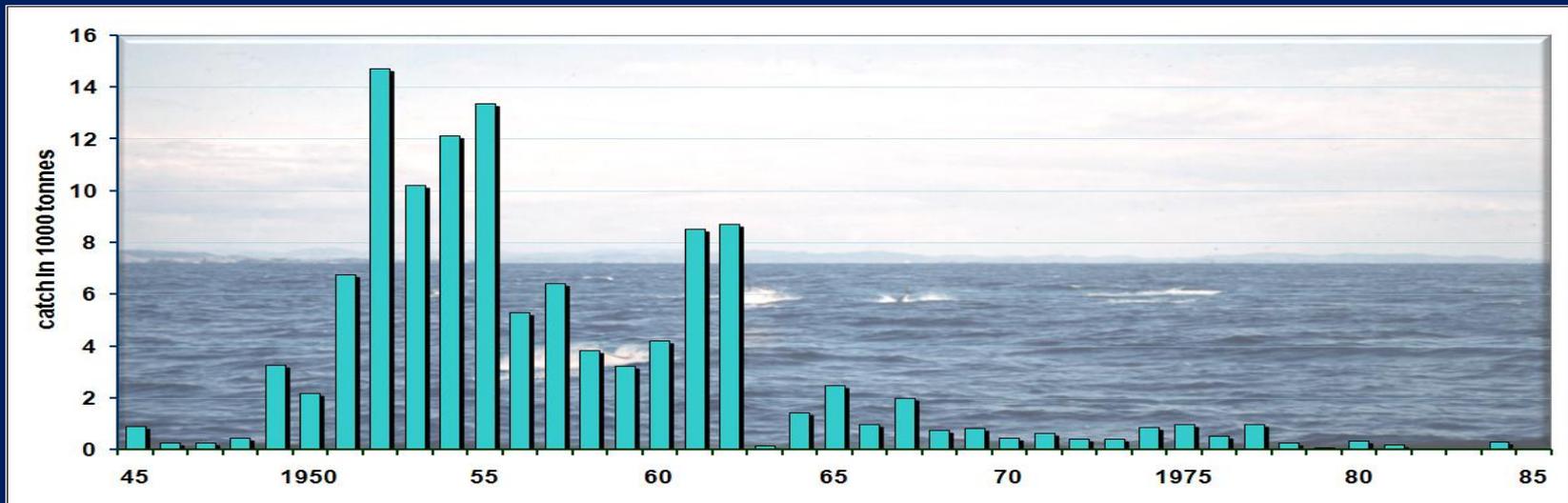
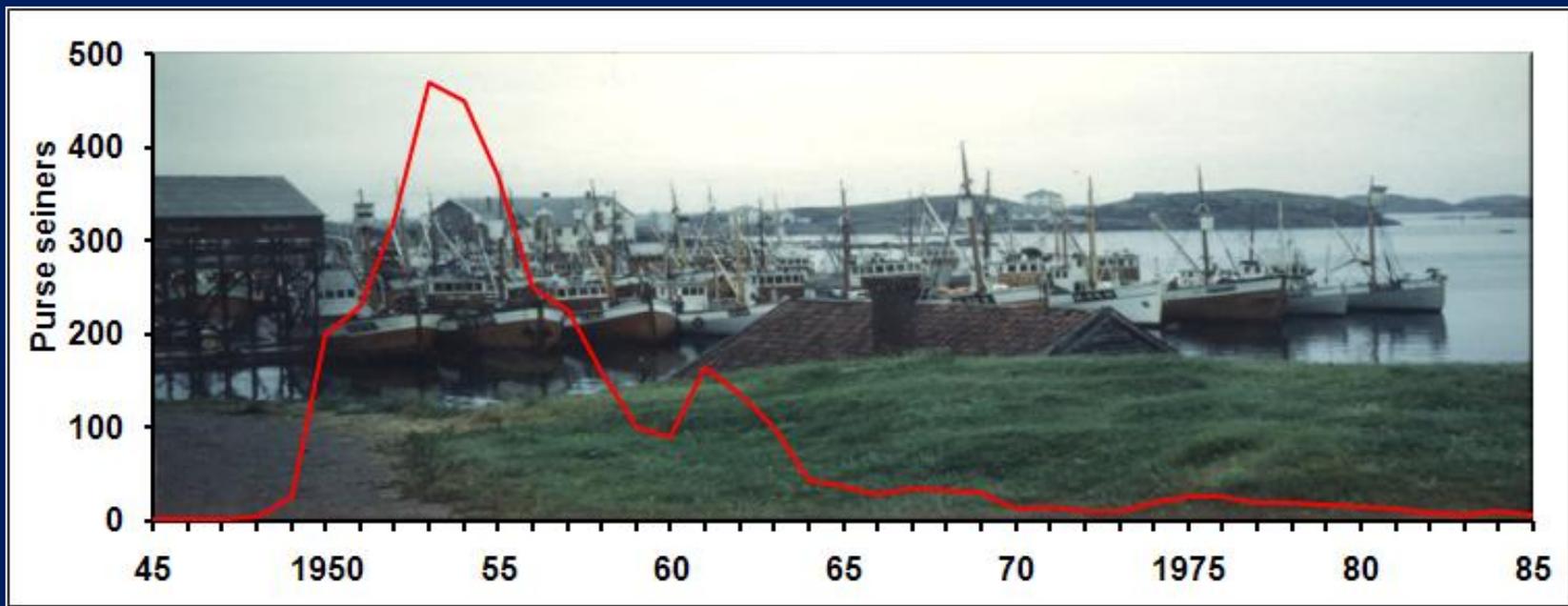
Each purse seine vessel had two motor boats. These boats helped to spread the seine, making space for the tuna in order to prevent them from panicking and trying to penetrate the seine. The motor boats were also used when the tuna were lifted onboard.

Gutting vessels and fish carriers

The fishery was made more efficient by letting gutting vessels take care of the catch on the fishing ground.



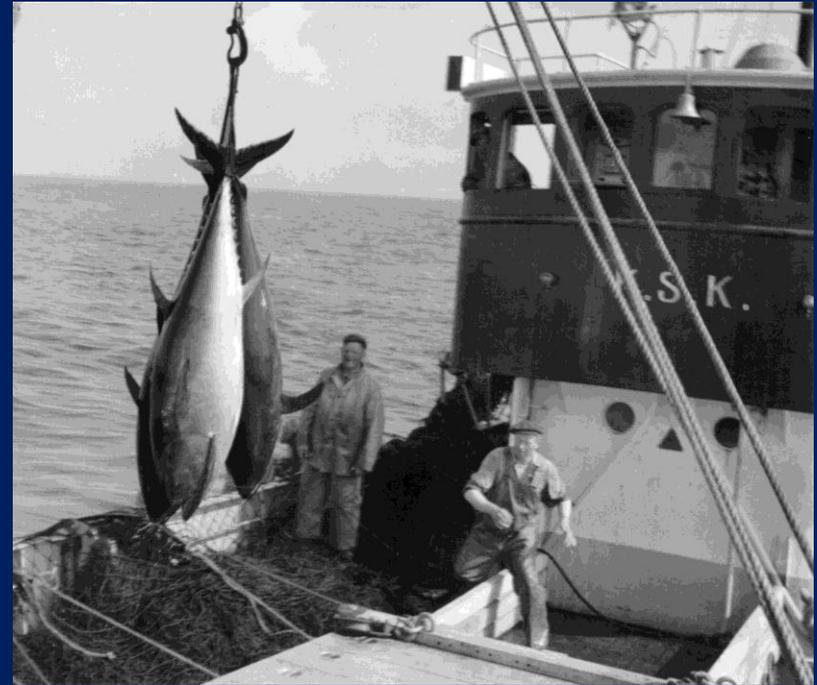
The gutting vessel transported the tuna to a place where the fish could be gutted and cleaned. This job was done by the crew on the gutting vessel. When the tuna was cleaned they were taken care of by fish carriers sent out by the tuna sales organisation. Every fish was weighed before it was stored on ice in the storage room



The fantastic 1952-season led to a rapid growth in the tuna fishing fleet. By 1953 too many purse seine vessels were chasing the same schools of tuna. The competition on the fishing grounds was hard and within the next years the size of the fleet had to be reduced in order to make the fishery profitable.

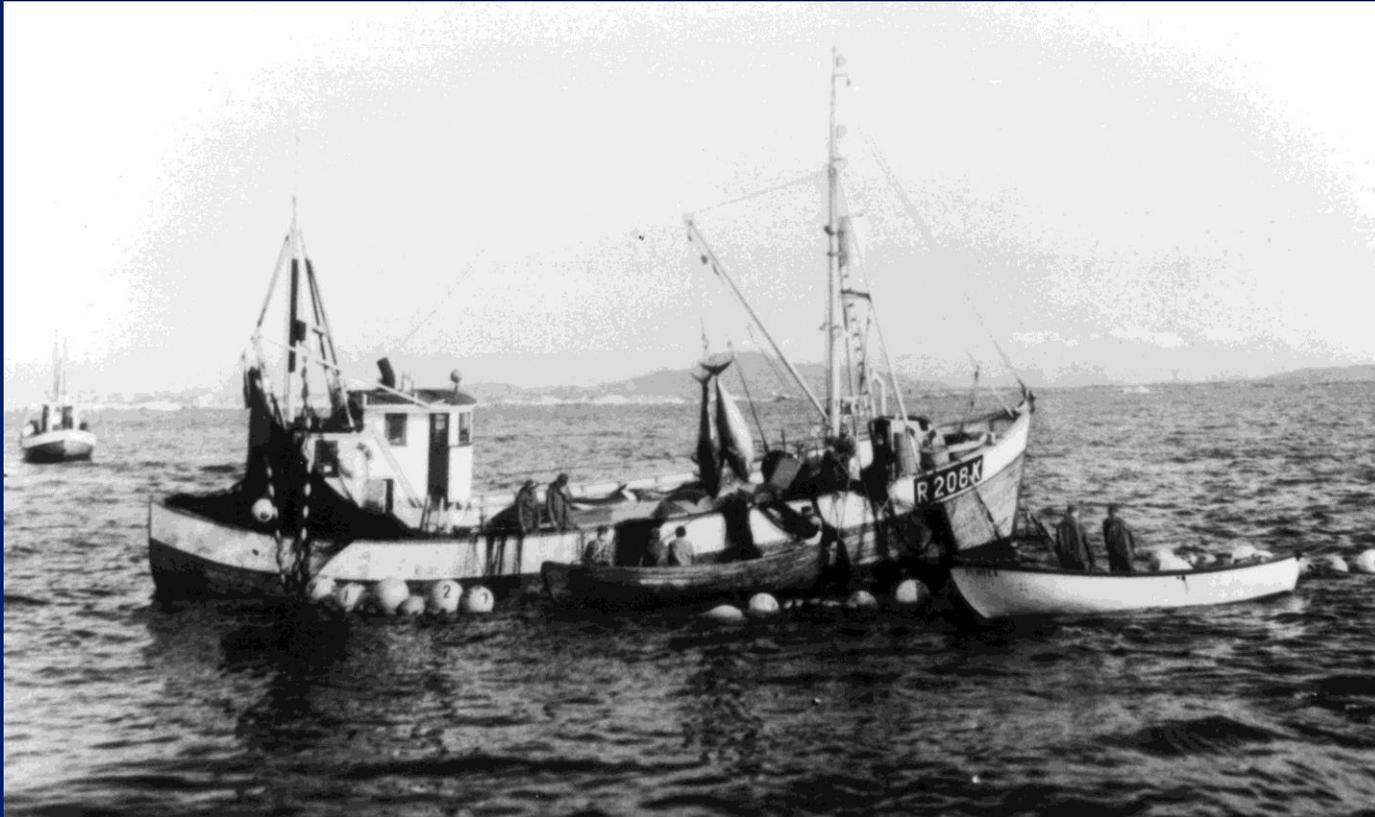
1961 – 1962 Large catches but no young tuna

From 1959 the average size of the tuna caught in Norway grew bigger year by year. In spite of indications of a large spawning stock in 1961 and 1962, no new year classes came to Norway.



The purse seine vessel seen above caught 432 tons of tuna in 1962. This is one of the records in the Norwegian tuna fishing history.

1965: Changes in the migration pattern



In 1965 no tuna were caught in the Northern areas, nor in the southeastern part of the country. All catches were from then on taken along the coast in the southwestern part of the country. The average weight of the caught tuna kept on rising year by year. There were still no signs of young tuna or new strong year classes visiting Norway. Large catches were still taken, and the photo above shows the largest single catch ever by a Norwegian purse seiner; 108 tons (in 1967).

1970-1985: A specialized fishery for a few vessels



The tuna fishery had become a tradition and some vessels from the southwestern part of the country still preferred to spend a couple of weeks in the summers to fish for tuna. The schools became smaller and fewer, but only big tuna appeared along the coast.

A few large tuna could pay the cost for participating in the fishery.

The end of the Norwegian bluefin tuna fishery



The bluefin tuna have migrated to the Norwegian coast for hundreds - and probably thousands - of years. In 1986 four vessels caught 70 tuna. The next year no tuna were caught.