



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

28 October 2009

Senator Glenn Sterle  
Senator for Western Australia  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Sterle

I am writing to follow up on evidence given last night on southern bluefin tuna (SBT) to the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport.

The evidence provided on current estimates of the SBT spawning stock biomass differed slightly from other numbers in the public domain. I thought it was important to clarify the reason for this difference.

The current spawning stock biomass of SBT has most often been described as being between 3–8 per cent of its unfished levels. This figure is drawn from the 2009 report of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna's (CCSBT) Scientific Committee and reflects 90 per cent probability intervals. The number raised in last night's discussion was 3.6–5.1 per cent. This number is derived from the same analyses by the committee—the narrower range reflects the median across all plausible scenarios for estimating stock status and will be included in some reporting by CCSBT over the coming months. The numbers are consistent and their relevance depends on the context in which they are being used.

Another issue that caused some confusion last night was the level of quota allocated to each member at last week's CCSBT meeting. The following table is extracted from the final draft report of the CCSBT meeting:

	Nominal catch (tonnes)	Allocated catch (tonnes)	Effective catch limit
Japan	5665	2261 (2010 – 2011)	2261 (2010 – 2011)
Australia	5665	4270 (2010 – 2011)	4015 (2010 – 2011)
New Zealand	1000	754 (2010 – 2011)	709 (2010 – 2011)
Korea	1140	859 (2010 – 2011)	859 (2010 – 2011)
Taiwan	1140	859 (2010 – 2011)	859 (2010 – 2011)
Indonesia	750	651 (2010 – 2011)	651 (2010 – 2011)

The CCSBT agreed that each member shall be bound to the allocation in the column entitled 'allocated catch (tonnes)' above. Furthermore, to contribute to the rebuilding of the SBT stock, Australia and New Zealand agreed to make additional annual voluntary reductions of 255 tonnes and 45 tonnes respectively for 2010 and 2011, as outlined in the 'effective catch limit' (column 4) of the above table.

CCSBT also agreed to catch allocations for cooperating non members for 2010, as follows:

	Allocated catch (tonnes)
The Philippines	45
South Africa	40
European Community	10

As mentioned at last night's Senate standing committee meeting the report of last week's CCSBT meeting is undergoing final edits and cross-checking and is not expected to be publicly available until early next week. In the meantime, I have attached a copy of the final draft report of the meeting, which has been provided by the CCSBT Secretariat but should not be distributed.

Finally, the response provided last night to Senator Colbeck's inquiry about the make-up of the Australian delegation to the CCSBT meeting was incomplete as Mr Paul Murphy from the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, and Mr Rick Kolega from the Australian domestic industry, also attended.

I would appreciate if you could provide copies of this note to other committee members.

Yours sincerely,



Daryl Quinlivan  
Deputy Secretary

28/10/09.

\*Please note that Mr Quinlivan's letter requests that the CCSBT report should not be distributed. The committee has since been advised that this report can now be distributed, with the proviso that it is a draft version with editorial changes still to be made.