



The Politics of Tuna

Background Information

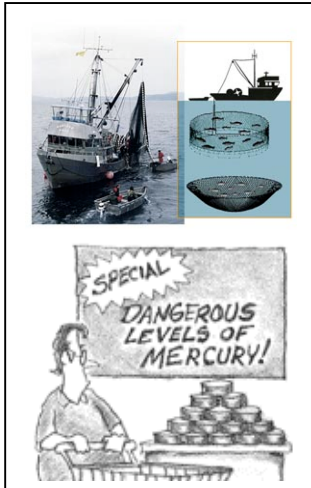
There are eight major species of tuna which are fished commercially. The Southern Bluefin is the most economically viable reaching \$30,000 per fish in Tokyo. Some current methods of tuna fishing come under severe criticism because of the bycatch. This means for many already scarce species of fish, mammals, and birds numbers are plummeting as they become unintentionally caught in the tuna nets. This leads to environmental degradation, but also affects the livelihoods of many people who live along the world's coastal areas. Many rely on sustainable stocks of fish for their sustenance and survival.

Another major global concern is the amount of methylmercury (MeHg) found in tuna. This highly toxic substance affects humans. Mothers-to-be and fetuses are especially susceptible. The source-point is in large part the burning of fossil fuels. Tuna contain high amounts because they are top predators. They retain all the methylmercury consumed by all lower on the food chain.

Nations, governments and politicians need to do more to stop the over-fishing of stocks, bring attention to the declining populations of other animals because of bycatch, and the burning of fossil fuels which is having a grave impact on the world's oceans and the humans which

Ten Things Every Consumer Should Know...

1. Many species of dolphins, porpoises, sharks, albatrosses become unnecessary victims of the tuna catch.
2. Bycatch1 is the unintended catching of non-tuna species which has led to many environmental problems and in turn developed into direct problems for humans.
3. Tuna has been the basis of major conflicts between countries since territorial waters were extended in the 1940s.
4. Bluefin tuna are the most economically valuable animal in the world.
5. Methylmercury (MeHg) found in tuna is highly toxic to humans.
6. Methylmercury is particularly dangerous to mothers-to-be and fetuses.
7. Mercury Policy Project suggests the levels of methylmercury in the white tuna were considerably higher than the industry and government claims from outdated FDA tests.
8. The FDA recommends 1 part per million (ppm) of methylmercury in fish as the limit. Many predatory fish (again, including tuna) are in excess of this guideline.
9. Japan is one of the world's largest consumers of tuna.
10. Dolphin-friendly Tuna cans carry a logo of a dolphin.



Five Things you can do...

1. Only eat tuna marked with the dolphin friendly logo.
2. Limit eating tuna to 1 can per week
3. Support renewable energy.
4. Tell your Senator of the issues with tuna.
5. Eat equally nutritious local vegetables.

Information Sources:

1. Berrill, Michael. The Plundered Seas: Can the World's Fish be Saved? San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1997.
2. Kraepiel, Anne, M. L. Sources and Variations of Mercury in Tuna. Environ. Sci. Technol. 2003, 37, 5551-5558
3. Myers, G. J., Davidson, P. W. Does methylmercury have a role in causing developmental disabilities in children? Environ Health Perspect. June 2000; 108 (Suppl 3): 413-420.
4. Safina, Carl. Song for the Blue Ocean: Encounters Along the World's Coasts and Beneath the Seas. New York. Henry Holt and Company, inc. 1998.

How you can learn more...

1. Read *The Empty Ocean* by Richard Ellis. Island Press/Shearwater books
2. Visit Oceans Alive: <http://www.oceansalive.org/eat.cfm?sub%20nav=fishpage&fish=154>.
3. Carry this Seafood selector with you: http://www.environmentaldefense.org/documents/1980_pocket_seafood_selector.pdf

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Date Created: 12/03/2007