Compliance of Regulations in Tuna Fisheries in the Solomon Islands

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ABSTRACT

A resource that Pacific island Countries have in abundant supply is tuna. The Ocean surrounding Island States supply one third of the world’s tuna and between 40 to 50% of raw materials for the global canneries. The high concentration of tuna stock in the Western Central Pacific Ocean and the depletion of this resource in the other oceans have attracted increased fishing activities in the Region. This emanates with high illegally unreported and unregulated fishing activities. Despite formulations of fisheries rules to control harvesting of tuna resources, illegal fishing continues to exist. This paper examines this problem in the Solomon Islands’ fisheries by addressing three basic questions: (1) Why fishers break rules? (2) the circumstances in which fishers break them? and (3) the objective of complying with rules.

A qualitative methodological approach using in-depth interviews with former and current fishers of various ranks and other key stakeholders was conducted. This included about thirty three personal interviews and two focus group interviews.

The study shows most fishers resolved to Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing activities for economic gain. They thrive to maximise their profits which makes deterring such activities difficult. The study also reveals that Solomon Islands has weak enforcement and stumpy penalties. Additionally, politicians often compromise their decisions in favour of violators. All these factors have compounded to the difficulty of countering IUU activities difficult. Theoretically, ‘The Tragedy of the Commons’ by Hardin (Colebatch and Larmour 1993) clearly explains that if fishers continue to serve their interest, every fisher will become worse off in the long run. Solomon Islands tuna fisheries are lowly moving in that direction if enforcement continues to be weak and fishers are not aware of this threat.

KEYWORDS: Compliance, tuna, regulations