



REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI

# FISHING LICENSE REVENUES IN KIRIBATI

2025 Report



**Ministry of Fisheries  
& Ocean Resources**



**Ministry of Finance and  
Economic Development**  
Government of Kiribati



# Table of Content

- 1. Introduction** . . . . . 6
  - 1.1 Purpose and scope of the report . . . . . 6
  - 1.2 Overview of the fishing sector’s importance to Kiribati economy . . . . . 6
  - 1.3 Brief description of data sources and coverage period . . . . . 6
- 2. Fishing License Revenue** . . . . . 7
  - 2.1 Annual trends in total fishing license revenue . . . . . 7
  - 2.2 License Revenue as proportion of the Kiribati National Revenue . . . . . 8
  - 2.3 Revenue as proportion of value . . . . . 9
  - 2.4 License Revenue by Gear Type and Access Agreement . . . . . 9
    - 2.4.1 Fishing License Revenue by Gear . . . . . 9
    - 2.4.2 Fishing License Revenue by Access Agreement with Fishing Partners . . 10
- 3. Key Drivers and Influencing Factors** . . . . . 12
  - 3.1 Tuna Catch and Value . . . . . 12
    - 3.1.1 Tuna Catch and Value by Gear in Kiribati National Waters . . . . . 12
    - 3.1.2 Tuna Catch by Gear Across Kiribati EEZ Zone . . . . . 13
    - 3.1.3 Tuna Catch and Value by Species in Kiribati National Waters . . . . . 14
  - 3.2 Vessel Activity and Access Arrangements . . . . . 15
    - 3.2.1 Catch by Fleet and Number of Vessels operating in Kiribati EEZ . . . . . 15
    - 3.2.2 Pre- Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) vs Post-VDS Comparisons . . . . . 16
  - 3.3 Market Conditions . . . . . 17
    - 3.3.1 Tuna Market Prices . . . . . 17
    - 3.3.2 Fuel Prices . . . . . 18
  - 3.4 Environmental and Climate Factors . . . . . 19
- 4. Revenue Projections** . . . . . 20
- 5. Tuna Stock Assessment** . . . . . 21
- 6. International and Regional Agreements** . . . . . 22
  - 6.1 Phoenix Islands Protected Area . . . . . 23
- 7. Future Directions** . . . . . 24

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 1.</b> Fishing license revenue. ....	7
<b>Figure 2.</b> Real and Nominal AUD Fishing Revenue (Left Panel). Nominal USD Fishing Revenue and AUD/USD Exchange rate (Right Panel). ...	7
<b>Figure 4.</b> Revenue as proportion of value and per tonne .....	9
<b>Figure 5.</b> Fishing license revenue by Gears. ....	9
<b>Figure 6.</b> Fishing Revenue by Agreement .....	11
<b>Figure 7.</b> Tuna catch (Left panel) and value by Gear ( Right panel) in Kiribati national waters .....	12
<b>Figure 8.</b> Tuna catch Across Kiribati EEZ Zone .....	13
<b>Figure 9.</b> Tuna catch and value by Species in Kiribati national waters .....	14
<b>Figure 10.</b> Catch by fleet in Kiribati national waters .....	15
<b>Figure 11.</b> Fishing license revenue and Total Tuna Catch .....	16
<b>Figure 12.</b> Thai frozen skipjack import price .....	17
<b>Figure 13.</b> Thai frozen skipjack import price .....	18
<b>Figure 14.</b> ENSO Forecasts. ....	19
<b>Figure 15.</b> Thai Frozen Skipjack Import Price Forecast(Left Panel). Singapore Marine Diesel Oil Price Forecast (Right Panel). ....	20

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1 .</b> Total Revenue and Fishing License Revenue Proportion 2015-2024.....	8
<b>Table 2.</b> Fishing License Revenue as a proportion of value .....	9
<b>Table 3.</b> Fishing Revenue by Agreement with Fishing Partners.....	10
<b>Table 4.</b> Tuna catch and value by Gear in Kiribati national waters .....	13
<b>Table 5.</b> Tuna catch and value by Species in Kiribati national waters .....	14
<b>Table 6.</b> Annual number of vessels licensed by Kiribati (2020-2024) .....	16

## Acronyms

<b>EEZ</b>	Exclusive Economic Zone
<b>FAD</b>	Fish Aggregating Device
<b>FFA</b>	Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency
<b>FIMS</b>	Fisheries Information Management System
<b>iFIMS</b>	Industry Fisheries Information Management System
<b>MFED</b>	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
<b>MFOR</b>	Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources
<b>PAE</b>	Party Allowable Effort
<b>PMU</b>	Police Maritime Unit
<b>PNA</b>	Party to Nauru Agreement
<b>TAE</b>	Total Allowable Effort
<b>VDS</b>	Vessel Day Scheme
<b>VMS</b>	Vessel Monitoring System
<b>WCP-CA</b>	Western Central Pacific Convention Area

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose and scope of the report

This report provides an overview and analysis of fishing revenue generated from Kiribati's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), with a particular focus on license revenue from distant water fishing nations. It serves as an important tool for tracking revenue trends and identifying key challenges relevant to the Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources (MFOR) in achieving its revenue target.

The purpose is to assess how fishing revenue has evolved over time and to understand the main factors influencing its trends, including tuna catch volumes and values, market conditions, management arrangements, and environmental variability. The report also highlights the impacts of regional mechanisms such as the Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) and access agreements under the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), and the broader economic and climatic drivers that shape Kiribati's fisheries revenue outcomes.

The scope of the report includes both economic and environmental dimensions, providing insights to support policy decisions, price and revenue forecasting, and sustainable management of Kiribati's tuna resources. Fisheries, in particular tuna, remain an important source of economic driver for Kiribati apart from its traditional role in sustaining community livelihoods and food security.

## 1.2 Overview of the fishing sector's importance to Kiribati economy

The fishing sector has long been a cornerstone of Kiribati's export economy, although its dominance has declined in recent years. Export data from 2019-2024 shows that fish products fell from 56% of the total exports in 2019 to 28% in 2024, largely due to the rising contribution of copra crude oil. This reflects a gradual shift toward a more diversified export base. As a result, the contribution of fish exports to GDP through net exports has also declined from 3% in 2019 to only 0.7% in 2024. It should be noted that these export figures may underestimate the true level of fish exports, as the data currently reflects exports from only one reporting company.

Kiribati's large Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 3.5 million km<sup>2</sup>, places the country at the central of the Pacific tuna fishery. The sector generates significant government revenue through fishing License fees and access payments, which support government services, infrastructure, and development initiatives. In addition to revenue generation, fisheries provide local employment in port operations, transshipment, and fish processing, contributing directly to livelihoods. As one of the world's largest tuna-producing zones, the sector is crucial not only for Kiribati's economic stability but also for the broader regional tuna industry. However, this heavy reliance on fisheries revenue also makes the economy vulnerable to fluctuations in catch volumes, tuna prices, and environmental or climatic conditions.

## 1.3 Brief description of data sources and coverage period

The data in this report is based on official government data, including fishing License records from the Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources (MFOR), revenue statistics from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MFED), and catch and effort data from regional bodies such as Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Parties to the Nauru Agreement Office (PNAO). The report covers the period from 2001 to 2024, providing a comprehensive view of trends in fishing revenue, tuna catch, and related economic and environmental factors over more than two decades.

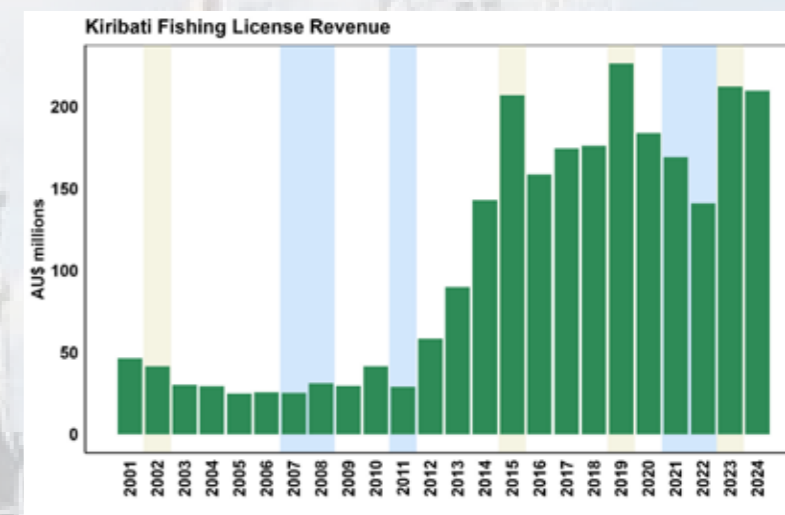
In some of the figures, however, data for the early years (e.g., 2001) may not be available for specific datasets or gear types. In these cases, the plots present the earliest year for which complete data are available.

# 2. Fishing License Revenue

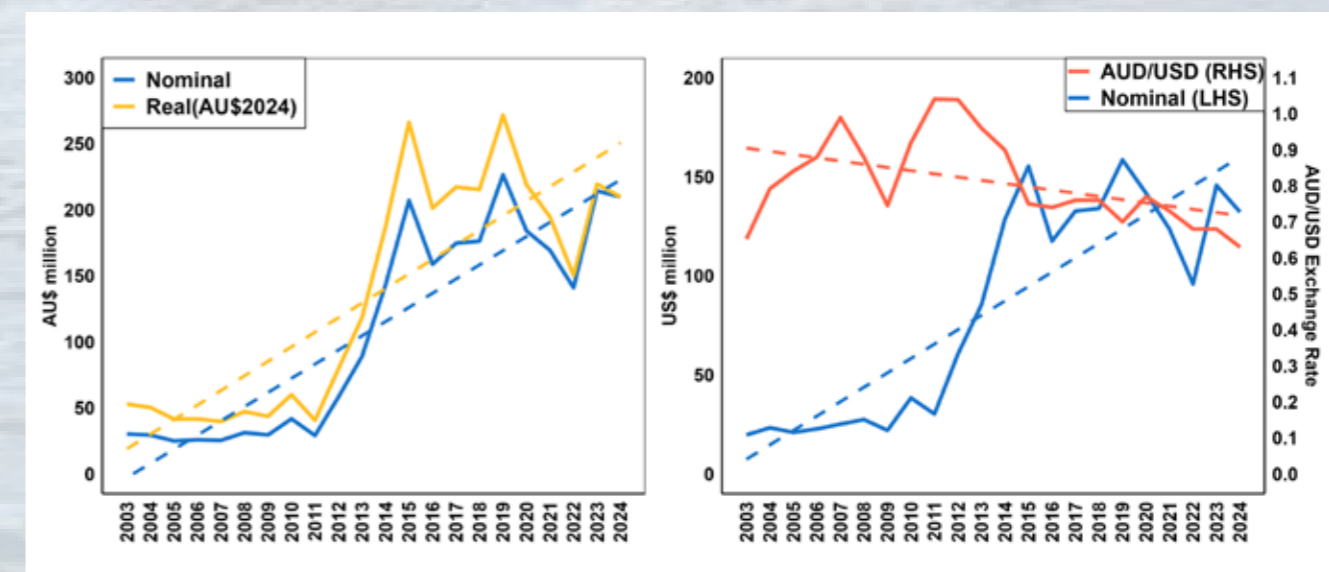
## 2.1 Annual trends in total fishing license revenue

**Figure 1** shows Kiribati's fishing license revenue from 2001 to 2024, highlighting both long-term structural changes and the influence of major ENSO phases. The plots illustrate that while nominal revenue has risen strongly over time (Figure 2- left panel) particularly after 2013 with strengthened VDS arrangements and higher vessel day prices, the increase is more moderate when adjusted to real 2024 dollars, reflecting the erosion of purchasing power from inflation. ENSO conditions (Figure 1) remain a key driver of revenue performance, with El Niño years (antique white shading) in the early 2000s, 2015, 2019, and 2023 aligning with higher revenue peaks due to the eastward shift of skipjack biomass into Kiribati's zones.

In contrast, La Niña periods (light purple), such as 2007-2008, 2011, and 2021-2022, often coincide with slower growth as fishing effort shifts westward, reducing activity in Kiribati's EEZ. The AUD/USD exchange-rate plot (Figure 2- right panel) reinforces that recent weakening of the AUD has increased the Australian dollar equivalent of USD denominated revenue, helping to partially offsetting these climatic and economic pressures. Overall, the combined evidence shows that inflation, currency movements, ENSO variability, and strong VDS pricing together shape the real economic benefit Kiribati derives from its fisheries sector. In 2024 the fishing revenue for Kiribati was AUD 210 million, a marginal decline of 2% from the previous year.



**Figure 1.** Fishing license revenue  
Source: MFOR and MFED.

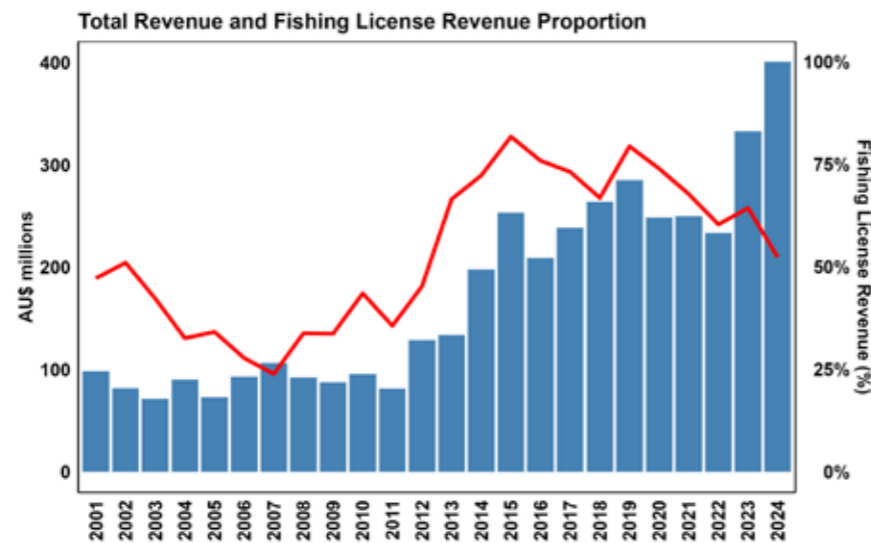


**Figure 2.** Real and Nominal AUD Fishing Revenue (Left Panel). Nominal USD Fishing Revenue and AUD/USD Exchange rate (Right Panel).

Source: MFOR and MFED

## 2.2 License Revenue as proportion of the Kiribati National Revenue

**Figure 3** highlights the growing dominance of fishing license revenue within Kiribati's public finances. While total government revenue has increased steadily since 2013, the proportion derived from fishing license fees shown by the red line, has become particularly significant. Since around 2014, fishing revenue has consistently accounted for more than 70% of total national revenue, peaking close to 80% in 2015. In recent years, it is important to note that although fishing revenue remains high in absolute terms, its share of total government revenue has declined. This reflects the growing contribution of other revenue sources- including, investment income, tax income and other domestic revenue reforms which have diversified Kiribati's fiscal base. As a result, while fishing continues to be a major and strategically important revenue source, its proportion relative to total national revenue has reduced.



**Figure 3. Fishing license revenue proportion**

Source: MFOR and MFED

This trend underscores Kiribati's heavy fiscal reliance on the tuna fishery and the Vessel Day Scheme. The elevated proportions reflect both strong vessel day prices and the central role of fisheries in sustaining government budgets. However, it also highlights a structural vulnerability. The national revenue base remains highly exposed to fluctuations in fishing effort, stock movements, and market conditions. A supporting table (Table 1) is provided to present Fishing revenue and Total revenue data for Kiribati Government from 2015 to 2024.

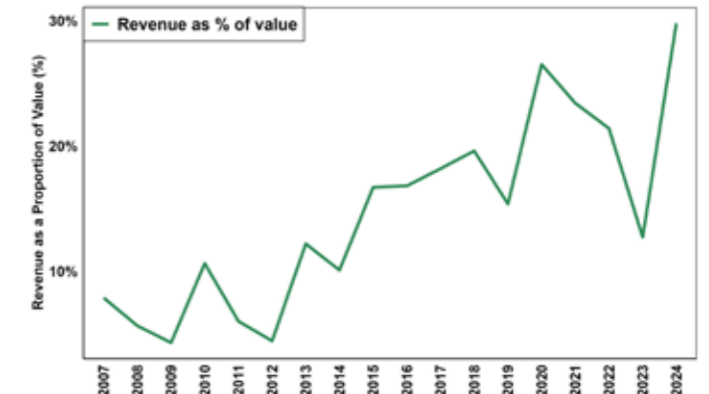
Total Revenue AUD (millions) and Fishing License Revenue Proportion 2015-2024										
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
License Revenue	197.8	147.1	169.1	170.2	210.6	170.7	161.4	130.6	205.8	199.5
Transshipment revenue	9.2	11.7	5.3	5.1	14.5	12.0	7.5	9.6	5.0	8.7
Other fishing revenue	0.1	0.0	0.2	1.1	1.4	1.3	0.4	0.9	1.5	1.7
<b>Total Fishing Revenue</b>	<b>207.1</b>	<b>158.8</b>	<b>174.7</b>	<b>176.3</b>	<b>226.5</b>	<b>184.1</b>	<b>169.4</b>	<b>141.0</b>	<b>212.3</b>	<b>209.9</b>
<i>as percentage of total revenue</i>	81.8	75.2	72.0	70.9	79.4	74.0	65.9	60.4	63.8	51.8
<i>as percentage nominal GDP*</i>	90.9	66.2	72.1	58.3	72.6	59.3	50.3	40.3	48.4	40.4
<b>Domestic Revenue**</b>	41.4	43.8	49.2	58.1	58.3	57.8	84.0	78.3	97.1	190.8
<b>Budget Support***</b>	4.8	8.6	18.8	14.4	0.5	7.0	3.5	14.3	23.6	4.8
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>253.3</b>	<b>211.2</b>	<b>242.7</b>	<b>248.8</b>	<b>285.3</b>	<b>248.9</b>	<b>256.9</b>	<b>233.6</b>	<b>333.0</b>	<b>405.5</b>

**Table 1 . Total Revenue and Fishing License Revenue Proportion 2015-2024**

Source: MFOR and MFED

## 2.3 Revenue as proportion of value

**Figure 4** presents trends in fishing License revenue in the Kiribati EEZ over the period 2007-2024, expressed as a share of the total value of catch taken within the EEZ. The line illustrates how Kiribati's proportion of overall catch value has evolved over time.



**Figure 4. Revenue as proportion of value and per tonne**

Source: MFOR, MFED and FFA

The series is relatively volatile, reflecting the sensitivity of revenue shares to changes in catch composition, market prices particularly for skipjack tuna and variations in fishing effort by major fleets. Overall, the pattern highlights the dynamic nature of Kiribati's economic returns from fishing access and underscores the importance of market conditions and fleet behaviour in determining the share of total fishery value accruing to the country.

A supporting table (**Table 2**) presents the underlying data for revenue as a proportion of value from 2015 to 2024.

Revenue as a Proportion of Value, Kiribati, 2015-2024										
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Revenue as a Proportion of Value	16.7%	16.8%	18.2%	19.6%	15.4%	26.5%	23.4%	21.4%	12.7%	29.8%

**Table 2. Fishing License Revenue as a proportion of value**

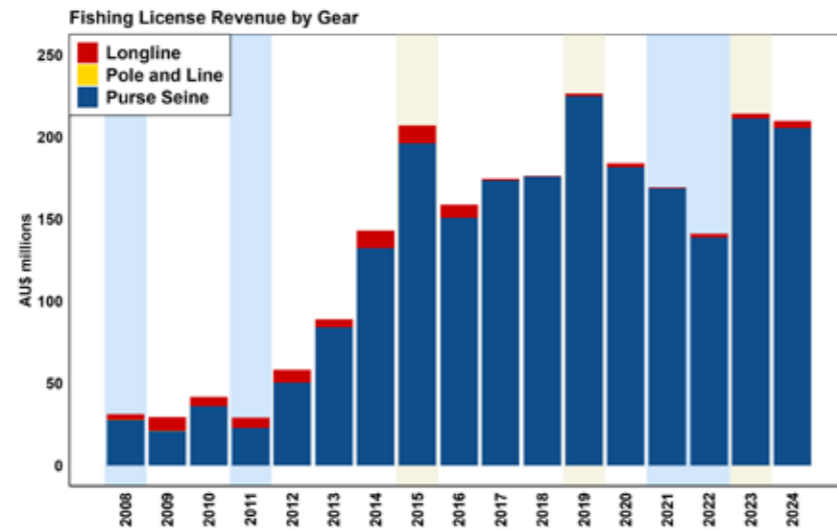
Source: MFOR, MFED and FFA

## 2.4 License Revenue by Gear Type and Access Agreement

### 2.4.1 Fishing License Revenue by Gear

**Figure 5** highlights the clear dominance of purse-seine fishing in Kiribati's license revenue. From 2013 onward, purse-seine fees consistently contribute over 90% of total fishing license revenue, reflecting Kiribati's central role in the regional skipjack fishery and the strong performance of the Vessel Day Scheme.

In the earlier period 2008 to 2012, the purse-seine share was noticeably lower, falling below 90% as longline and pole-and-line activities made relatively larger contributions to the overall revenue mix. However, as the VDS matured and purse-seine effort increasingly concentrated in Kiribati's national waters, the purse-seine sector became the overwhelmingly dominant source of revenue.



**Figure 5.** Fishing license revenue by Gears

Source: MFOR and FFA

Overall, the data show that recent year-to-year increases in total fishing license earnings are almost entirely driven by the purse-seine fleet, underscoring both the economic importance of this fishery and the need for continued strong management and pricing within the VDS framework.

### 2.4.2 Fishing License Revenue by Access Agreement with Fishing Partners

Kiribati has established bilateral access agreements with distant water fishing nations and actively maintains these relationships through annual consultations and the renewal of fishing agreements. The majority of fishing companies with bilateral agreements with the Government of Kiribati are from Asia, including individual operators and fishing associations from Korea, Japan, Chinese Taipei, and China, with a few from the Philippines.

Additionally, Kiribati has fishing agreements with countries like the United States, where vessels are licensed under a multilateral treaty administered by the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency based in Honiara. The new U.S. treaty has been extended for a further 10 years. Under this renewed treaty, total U.S. contributions have increased from US\$21 million to US\$60 million, providing a boost in revenue for Pacific Island nations starting in 2024.

Kiribati recently renewed its fishing agreement with the European Union in 2023, following a period of stalled negotiations since 2017 over the application of the VDS to the EU fleet. After extensive discussions, both sides reached a common ground, allowing for the adoption of the VDS as the basis for licensing EU purse seiners operating in Kiribati waters. The new protocol also includes financial support for the fisheries sector.

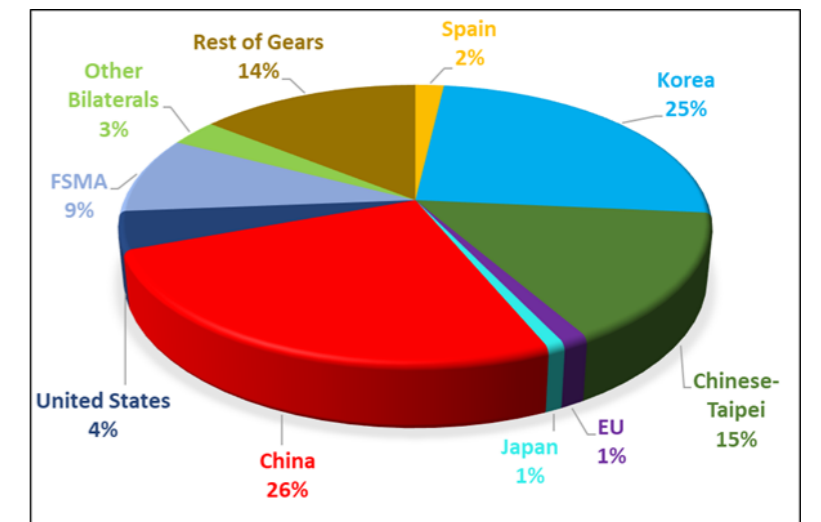
**Table 3** presents the total revenue received from agreements between Kiribati and its fishing partners, from 2020 to 2024<sup>1</sup>. Fishing revenue under these agreements is based on the number of days vessels allowed to fish, under the Vessel Day Scheme (VDS). While each fishing day typically has a fixed value within a given agreement, the value per day can differ across agreements and fishing partners.

Based on the average revenue shares for 2020–2024 (Figure 6), China, Chinese Taipei, and Korea together account for the largest proportion of Kiribati's fishing revenue, contributing around two-thirds of the total. China represents the single largest share (26%), followed closely by Korea (25%) and then Chinese Taipei (15%), underscoring their central role as Kiribati's most important fishing partners. In contrast, revenue contributions from the United States, FSMA arrangements, and other bilateral partners are comparatively smaller, while Japan, the EU, and Spain account for only marginal shares. Overall, the distribution highlights Kiribati's strong reliance on agreements with China, Chinese Taipei, and Korea relative to other fishing partners in recent years.

Country	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Spain	2.9	3	3.7	3.6	3.7
Korea	47.8	51.5	25.7	52.6	48.6
Chinese-Taipei	30.9	26.2	16.2	39.3	26.7
EU	0	0	0	6	5.3
Japan	1.3	1.2	0.7	2.6	2
China	40.2	39.4	44.5	59	52.5
United States	7.4	9.4	7.9	7.4	8.4
FSMA	19.8	14.6	16.2	9.4	22
Other Bilaterals	4.6	4.1	5.7	7.3	6.8
Rest of Gears	28.1	20.6	21	27.1	34.2
<b>Total Fishing Revenue</b>	<b>183.0</b>	<b>170.0</b>	<b>141.7</b>	<b>214.3</b>	<b>210.2</b>

**Table 3.** Fishing Revenue by Agreement with Fishing Partners

Source: MFOR



**Figure 6.** Fishing Revenue by Agreement with Fishing Partners: Average 2020-2024

Source: MFOR

<sup>1</sup> Note: Totals presented in this table may not exactly match published sums in previous tables in this report due to rounding.

### 3. Key Drivers and Influencing Factors

#### 3.1 Tuna Catch and Value

##### 3.1.1 Tuna Catch and Value by Gear in Kiribati National Waters

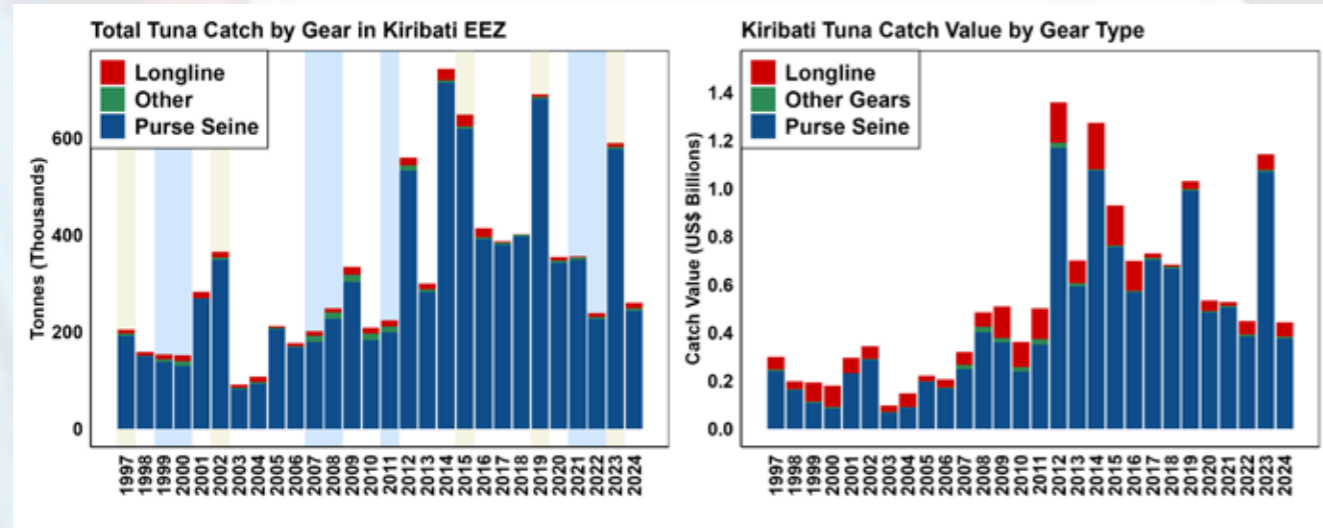


Figure 7. Tuna catch (Left panel) and value by Gear (Right panel) in Kiribati national waters  
Source: FFA and SPC(2025)

Figure 7 shows two plots of a long-term trends in tuna catch and catch value in the Kiribati EEZ from 1997 to 2024. Across both figures, the purse-seine fishery remains overwhelmingly dominant, contributing above 90% of total catch and the vast majority of economic value. Longline and other gears consistently account between 1-5% each. The catch-volume trend aligns closely with ENSO cycles, showing higher catches during El Niño phases and lower catches during La Niña. The highest catch on record 743,455 tonnes in 2014 occurred during a strong El Niño event. Catches declined over the following three years but rebounded sharply in 2019 to 689,669 tonnes, an increase by 72% from 401,677 tonnes in 2018. Although substantial, this increase did not surpass the 2014 peak. Subsequent catches fell to approximately 350,000 tonnes in 2020 and 2021, before dropping further to 226,758 tonnes in 2022, the second-lowest since 2010.

Catches improved again in 2023, reaching 589,705 tonnes, a significant increase of more than 100% reflecting more favourable conditions and a partial recovery in fishing effort. However, in 2024, total catch fell sharply by 56% to 260,013 tonnes, signaling a significant contraction in fishing activity within the EEZ. Between 2020 and 2024, average catch totaled around 360,000, tonnes, with the purse-seine fleet contributing 399,941 tonnes (97%). Species composition underscores this dominance: skipjack accounts for 80% of purse-seine catch, followed by yellowfin (15%), bigeye (5%), and albacore (<1%). Although these latter species are targets of the longline fleet, they also appear in notable quantities in purse-seine sets.

The catch-value plot reveals even more pronounced peaks than the catch volume trend. The highest value years particularly 2012- 2015 and 2019 and 2023, reflect strong market conditions, especially high skipjack prices combined with elevated catch volumes during those periods. The significance of price effects is evident again in the recent years. In 2023, with total catch at 589,705 tonnes, the corresponding catch value reached US\$1,143 million, driven by improved purse-seine activity and favourable skipjack prices. In 2024, despite catch falling to 260,013 tonnes, the total value remained relatively high at US\$444 million, showing the continued influence of price dynamics even when volumes decline. These patterns confirm that peak catch-value years are driven primarily by high skipjack purse-seine prices combined with strong catch levels, which together

elevate the economic value of the fishery far beyond what catch volume alone would generate. A supporting table (Table 4) is provided to present the specific catch and value data for Kiribati's EEZ from 2015 to 2024.

Tuna Catch in metric tonnes (000) in Kiribati national waters										
Gear	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Purse Seine	619	391	380	396	680	343	349	227	577	244
Longline	25	18	2	1	5	7	2	7	8	12
Other	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>260</b>

Tuna Catch in US\$ (millions) in Kiribati national waters										
Gear	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Purse Seine	757	568	703	669	991	484	504	384	1070	376
Longline	167	124	18	7	32	44	17	56	65	60
Other	6	7	8	8	7	7	7	8	9	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>929</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>683</b>	<b>1,030</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>1,143</b>	<b>444</b>

Table 4. Tuna catch and value by Gear in Kiribati national waters  
Source: FFA and SPC(2025)

Overall, the two plots highlight three key factors shaping Kiribati's tuna economy. ENSO influences, which drive fluctuations in catch levels; Purse-seine dominance, which accounts for nearly all catch and value; and Skipjack price cycles, which determine the scale of value peaks during high-earning years. Together, these dynamics explain the strong alignment between catch, value, and ENSO conditions across the 28-year time series.

##### 3.1.2 Tuna Catch by Gear Across Kiribati EEZ Zone

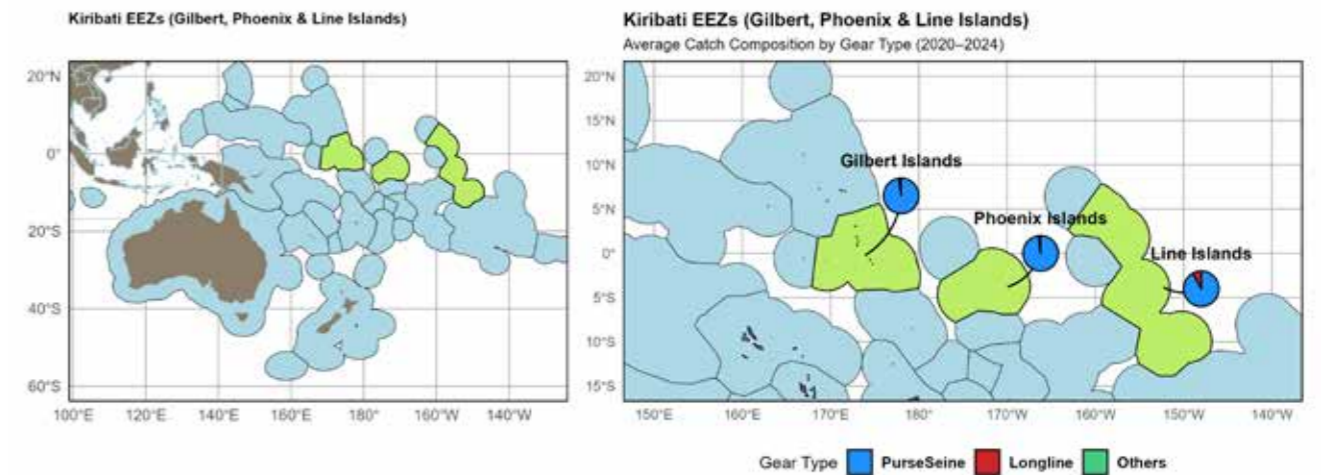


Figure 8. Tuna catch Across Kiribati EEZ Zone  
Source: FFA and SPC

Figure 8 shows the catch composition across Kiribati's three EEZ zones which clearly demonstrates the overwhelming dominance of purse-seine fishing. The Gilbert Islands represent the most productive area for purse-seine operations, while longline fishing is mainly concentrated in the Line Islands. During strong El Niño events, purse-seine activities can extend to the easternmost islands of the southern Line Islands. In all zones, Gilbert, Phoenix, and Line Islands, purse-seine effort accounts for the vast majority of total catch during 2020–2024, as illustrated by the pie charts. While longline and other gears make up only a small portion of the total catch, their distribution is uneven, with longline activity largely focused in the Line Islands and minimal in the Gilbert and Phoenix zones. This pattern reflects both the operational preferences of fleets and the ocean conditions that make the Line Islands more suitable for longline targeting of high-value species. Overall, the charts highlight the central role of purse-seine fisheries in Kiribati's waters, while longline operations remain secondary and are mostly concentrated in the Line and the Phoenix Islands.

### 3.1.3 Tuna Catch and Value by Species in Kiribati National Waters

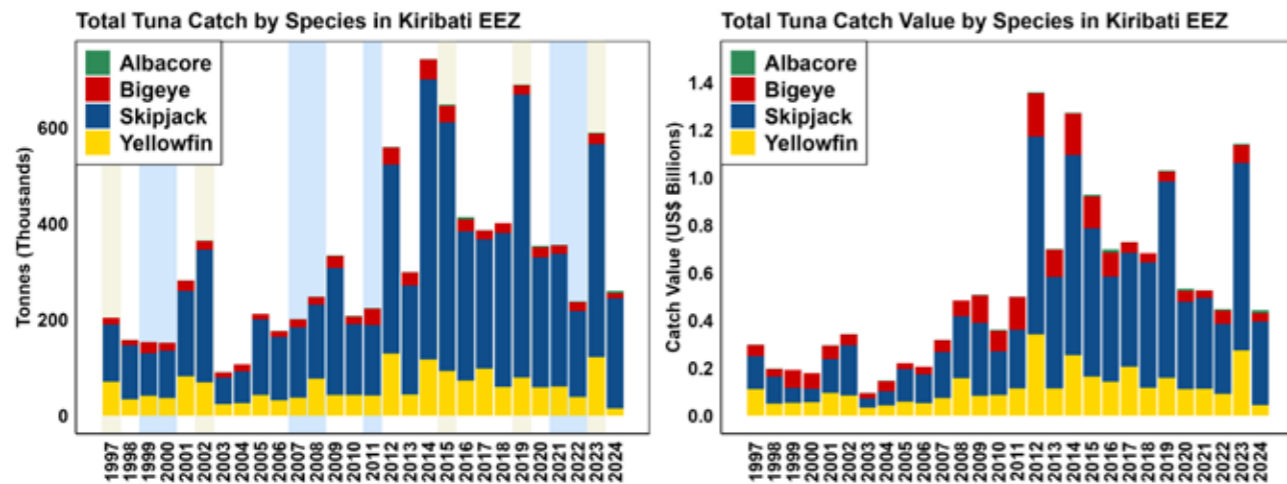


Figure 9. Tuna catch and value by Species in Kiribati national waters

Source: FFA and SPC(2025)

The two plots (Figure 9) present complementary perspectives on tuna fisheries performance in the Kiribati EEZ. One showing total catch volume by species, and the other depicting the corresponding catch value. While the overall year-to-year patterns look broadly similar, the proportional contributions of each species differ significantly due to large differences in market value among the four key commercial tuna species. The catch volume plot highlights the dominance of skipjack, which accounts for the vast majority of total catch across the entire time series. Peaks in total catch particularly during strong El Niño years are driven almost entirely by large increases in skipjack purse-seine effort and catchability in Kiribati waters. Yellowfin and bigeye contribute relatively smaller shares, while albacore makes up only a marginal portion of total tonnage.

In contrast, the catch value plot shows a more balanced species contribution, despite skipjack still providing the largest share in most years. This is because yellowfin, bigeye, and albacore command significantly higher prices, especially in premium sashimi and longline markets. As a result, even modest catch volumes of these species translate into disproportionately high economic value. For example, years with relatively stable skipjack catches but increased bigeye or yellowfin (such as 2012–2015, 2019 and 2023) show much sharper spikes in total value than in total tonnage.

These value peaks reflect periods of high market prices and strong demand for higher-value species, amplifying total revenue more dramatically than the catch. A supporting table (Table 5) is provided to present the specific catch and value data by species for Kiribati's EEZ from 2015 to 2024.

Tuna Catch in metric tonnes (000) in Kiribati national waters										
Species	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Albacore	3	4	0	0	1	3	1	2	2	5
Bigeye	35	25	19	21	19	21	18	18	23	11
Skipjack	518	311	270	320	589	271	276	179	444	230
Yellowfin	93	73	98	60	80	60	61	39	122	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>260</b>

Tuna Catch in US\$ (millions) in Kiribati national waters										
Species	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Albacore	8	13	1	0	5	9	2	6	5	12
Bigeye	135	100	43	39	41	45	31	56	77	36
Skipjack	622	442	480	525	825	368	381	294	787	350
Yellowfin	165	144	206	119	159	112	114	92	275	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>929</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>683</b>	<b>1,030</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>1,143</b>	<b>444</b>

Table 5. Tuna catch and value by Species in Kiribati national waters

Source: FFA and SPC(2025)

## 3.2 Vessel Activity and Access Arrangements

### 3.2.1 Catch by Fleet and Number of Vessels operating in Kiribati EEZ

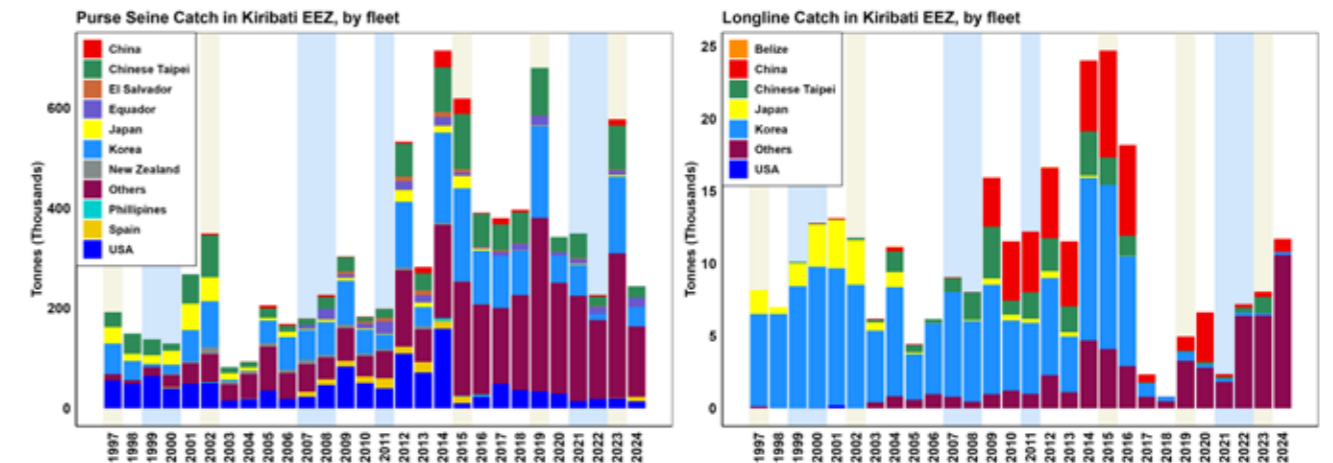


Figure 10. Catch by fleet in Kiribati national waters

Source: FFA and SPC(2025)

The purse-seine catch in the Kiribati EEZ (Figure 10- left panel) is dominated by a few major fleets, with Korea, the USA, Chinese Taipei, and the FFA-flagged "Others" vessels standing out as the most significant contributors over the 1997–2024 period. Korea and the USA have maintained strong and consistent catch levels across the entire time series, repeatedly peaking during high-availability years such as El Niño periods. Chinese Taipei is also one of the most prominent fleets, showing sustained activity and notable peaks, particularly in the 2000s and mid-2010s, underscoring its long-established role in Kiribati's purse-seine fishery. From around 2010 onward, the FFA-flagged "Others" fleet expands rapidly or exceeds the catch of major distant-water fleets, reflecting the growing regionalisation of fishing effort under arrangements like the FSMA and increasing participation of locally-owned or chartered vessels in the purse-seine fishery. Other fleets such as Japan, Ecuador, El Salvador, Spain, and the Philippines appear intermittently with comparatively smaller contributions. Overall, the plot highlights a fishery strongly shaped by the combined dominance of Korea, USA, Chinese Taipei, and the expanding FFA fleet, which together account for the majority of purse-seine catch within the Kiribati EEZ.

The longline catch in the Kiribati EEZ (Figure 10-right panel) is characterised by a clear dominance of a few major fleets, with Korea, China, Chinese Taipei, and the FFA-flagged "Others" fleet emerging as the most significant contributors across the 1997–2024 period. Korea remains the leading longline fleet throughout the time series, displaying strong and consistent catch levels and peaking sharply in high-activity years such as 2014 - 2016. However, this period is followed by a pronounced decline in longline catches, most notably for China, Korea and Chinese Taipei fleets, with catches falling sharply from around 2017 onward. This downturn was largely to do with the policy shift when Kiribati trialled a catch-based management approach and later joined the Longline Vessel Day Scheme in 2019.

China becomes increasingly prominent from around 2010 onwards, rapidly expanding its presence and, in several years, competing closely with Korea for the highest annual catch. Chinese Taipei also maintains a steady and notable contribution, reflecting its long-standing involvement in the longline fishery, though at more moderate levels compared with Korea and China. From about 2018 onward, the FFA-flagged "Others" fleet (maroon) grows significantly in importance, at times surpassing Japan, Chinese Taipei, and the USA, signalling a strengthening role of locally-owned or chartered vessels in the longline sector. Japan, the USA, and other fleets appear intermittently with smaller contributions. Overall, the plot highlights a fishery shaped primarily by the dominance of Korea and China, complemented by the steady presence of Chinese Taipei and the expanding footprint of FFA vessels in recent years.

Kiribati licenses a substantial number of purse-seine and longline vessels each year, with purse-seine fleets consistently accounting for the largest share ranging from 118 to over 200 vessels while longline Licenses have also grown steadily, reaching 84 vessels in 2024 (Table 6). This licensing pattern reinforces the broader trend observed in the catch data across both purse-seine and longline fisheries, activity in the Kiribati EEZ is dominated by major fleets such as Korea, Taiwan, the USA, China, and the expanding group of FFA-flagged vessels. Their strong and sustained presence is especially important for Kiribati because these fleets pay significant access fees under the Vessel Day Scheme. As the largest contributors to catch, these fleets are also the largest sources of government revenue, meaning that changes in their activity whether through increases by China and Korea in the longline sector or the growing participation of FFA vessels have direct implications for Kiribati’s national revenue, economic stability, and long-term fisheries development.

Annual number of vessels licensed by Kiribati (2020-2024)						
Year	Bunker	Carrier	Longline	Others	Purse Seine	Total
2020	14	78	39	0	218	349
2021	14	75	39	0	213	341
2022	11	62	44	0	131	248
2023	14	74	71	0	118	277
2024	15	74	84	1	201	375

Table 6. Annual number of vessels licensed by Kiribati (2020-2024)

Source: WCPFC-SC21-AR/CMM-11(Rev.02) 2025

### 3.2.2 Pre- Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) vs Post-VDS Comparisons

The Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) has become the cornerstone of tuna fisheries management and revenue generation for PNA member countries, including Kiribati. Established to conserve tuna resources, increase the scarcity and value of fishing access, and enhance domestic economic benefits, the VDS regulates fishing activity by setting an annual Total Allowable Effort (TAE). This TAE is allocated to members based on zonal biomass and historical fishing patterns, resulting in each country receiving a Purse Seine Annual Effort (PAE). Fishing fleets purchase these days to operate within national EEZs, with compliance monitored through the satellite-based Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and 100% observer coverage. Members manage their PAEs via FIMS, while industry uses iFIMS, and a trading mechanism allows countries to exchange days to adapt to shifts in fishing behaviour.

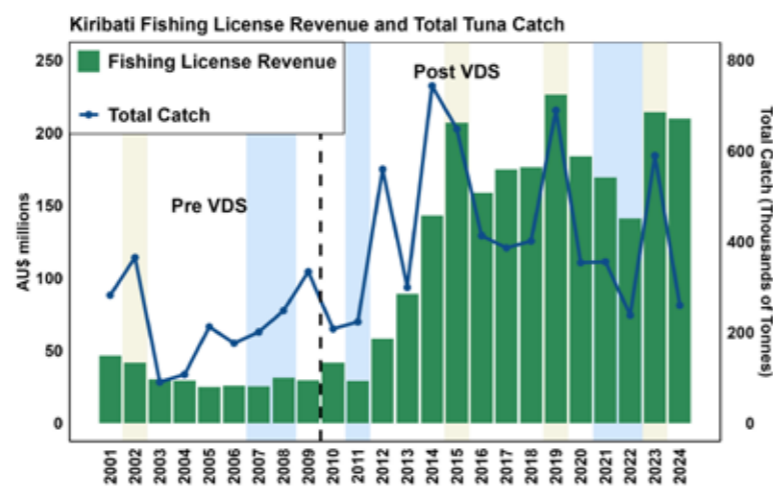


Figure 11. Fishing license revenue and Total Tuna Catch

Source: MFOR and SPC

Since its introduction, the VDS has transformed the revenue landscape for PNA members, with collective earnings rising from US\$160 million in 2010 to US\$502 million in 2024<sup>2</sup>. Although the minimum benchmark fee remains at US\$8,000 per day, many fleets now pay well above this level to secure access to the highly productive waters of the PNA. The PNA-wide TAE of 44,033 was adopted by the WCPFC in 2017 and remains in effect to date. Kiribati initially opted out of the Longline VDS when it was first introduced for managing longline fisheries particularly in response to concerns over Bigeye tuna stock status and instead trialled a catch-based management approach. However, recognising the significant investment and robust monitoring required for such a system, Kiribati joined the PNA Longline VDS in 2019, suspending the catch-based system until it can be fully developed.

Figure 11 clearly demonstrates the significant impact of the Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) on Kiribati’s fishing license revenue. In the pre-VDS period (2001–2011), revenue remained relatively low and stable, generally below AU\$50 million per year despite fluctuations in total catch. The PNA VDS was first introduced in 2007, but Kiribati, along with other PNA members, gradually implemented the scheme over time. Revenue from fishing began to increase from 2011, although the early years of implementation were also a transition period from annual licensing to the VDS system. Following the broader adoption of the VDS, revenue increased sharply and consistently, rising to more than AU\$150–200 million annually even in years when catch volumes did not increase proportionately. This divergence between catch and revenue in the post-VDS era demonstrates the strength of the VDS as a management and economic mechanism shifting Kiribati’s earnings from a reliance on catch levels to the monetisation of fishing access through higher and more predictable vessel day prices. The sustained revenue gains under the VDS have significantly enhanced national income stability and strengthened Kiribati’s ability to capture greater economic benefits from its tuna resources.

## 3.3 Market Conditions

### 3.3.1 Tuna Market Prices

Thai frozen skipjack import price is used as the main indicator of market conditions and trends for the purse seine fishery as almost 90% of WCPO catch goes to Thailand for processing into loins and/or canned products. Although Yellowfin represents a smaller share of the total catch, it makes a significant contribution to the overall value of the fishery due to its higher unit price.

The Thai frozen skipjack import price continues to follow a highly variable trend shaped by global economic shocks, fuel price movements, and climate-related supply conditions (Figure 12). Prices fell during the 2008-2009 Global Financial Crisis, reflecting weakened global demand and reduced cannery throughput, before rebounding strongly in the early 2010s as supply tightened<sup>3</sup>. In more recent years, the volatility has been amplified by the surge in global fuel and freight costs



Figure 12. Thai frozen skipjack import price

Source: <http://www.customs.go.th/>

<sup>2</sup> FFA Tuna Fishery Report Card 2025

<sup>3</sup> The Fish Site (2009). Tuna Report Thailand – June 09. Available at: <https://thefishsite.com/articles/tuna-report-thailand-june-09>.

arising from the Russia-Ukraine war, which significantly increased operating and transport expenses for fishing fleets, placing upward pressure on skipjack prices through 2022-2023<sup>4</sup>.

Concurrently, ENSO-driven changes in catch availability continue to create supply fluctuations across the Western and Central Pacific. El Niño phases typically enhance purse-seine activity in Kiribati and the east Pacific Ocean while during La Niña periods drive fishing effort westward toward Papua New Guinea<sup>5</sup>.

Short-term market movements in 2023 and 2024 clearly demonstrate the volatility in Thailand skipjack import prices. In 2023, prices opened relatively low at US\$1,300/mt in January, before climbing sharply through the first half of the year, peaking at US\$2,007/mt in July. Prices then eased slightly but remained elevated, fluctuating between US\$1,876-1,939/mt from August to November, before ending the year at US\$1,800/mt in December. In contrast, 2024, prices fell steadily from US\$1,616/mt in January to a low of US\$1,383/mt in June, reflecting weaker market conditions. A moderate rebound followed in the third quarter, with prices rising to US\$1,736/mt in September, before softening again in the final quarter and closing the year at US\$1,532/mt in December. These movements highlight a clear shift from the strong price environment of 2023 to a more weakened and unstable market in 2024.

The most recent 2025 data shows a more moderate and stabilising trend compared to the highs and lows of 2023-2024. Skipjack prices began the year at US\$1,559/mt in January, rising steadily to US\$1,718/mt in May and peaking at US\$1,723/mt in June. This mid-year peak was followed with prices easing to US\$1,674/mt in July, US\$1,620/mt in August, and US\$1,596/mt in September. The pattern suggests a market experiencing short-term recovery after the 2024 decline, but still displaying sensitivity to fuel costs, catch conditions, and broader market conditions.

Overall, the recent trends underscore how skipjack prices remain highly responsive to macroeconomic shocks, fuel and freight cost pressures, ENSO-driven supply variability, and fluctuations in global canned-tuna demand.

### 3.3.2 Fuel Prices

The long-term trend in Singapore Marine Diesel Oil (MDO) prices shown in Figure 13 highlights how volatile global fuel markets have been over the past two decades. Prices climbed steadily from the early 2000s before reaching major peaks in 2008 and again in 2022, both associated with sharp global supply disruptions. The Singapore MDO price serves as a key benchmark for fuel costs incurred by purse-seine and longline vessel operators in the region, providing valuable insight into fuel cost trends and their impact on fishing operations.



Figure 13. Thai frozen skipjack import price  
Source: Ship & Bunker (2025). Singapore bunker prices

In 2020, MDO prices experienced a substantial decline, averaging US\$394/mt, driven by the collapse in global demand during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prices rebounded sharply in 2021 to US\$586/mt, before surging again in 2022 following the Russia-Ukraine conflict. This conflict triggered an 80% year-on-year increase, pushing average MDO prices to US\$1,038/mt,

which was around 30% above the long-term average (2005-2024). Although prices eased in 2023 and 2024, they remained elevated compared to pre-2022 levels, averaging US\$811/mt and US\$727/mt, respectively.

The most recent 2025 data indicates a gradual easing but still relatively elevated fuel-price environment compared to pre-pandemic levels, with monthly MDO prices showing moderate fluctuations.

Overall, 2025 prices have remained in the US\$604-721/mt range, settling below the highs seen in 2022-2023 but still well above historical lows. This suggests some stabilisation in global fuel markets but continued pressure on operating costs for purse-seine and longline fleets.

## 3.4 Environmental and Climate Factors

As of mid-November 2025, the equatorial Pacific is in a La Niña state, with sea surface temperatures in the Niño 3.4 region hovering near the La Niña threshold and continuing a gradual cooling trend. The IRI ENSO plume forecast places the probability of La Niña at 67% for November-January, easing to 53% for December-February 2025/26 (Figure 14). From January-March onward, conditions begin shifting toward ENSO-neutral, which becomes the dominant outlook. Neutral probabilities rise to 63% at the start of the year and remain the leading state through the forecast period ending in July-September 2026. El Niño probabilities stay very low—below 10% through March-May 2026, but gradually increase thereafter, reaching 16% in April-June, 27% in May-July, 32% in June-August, and 35% by July-September 2026.

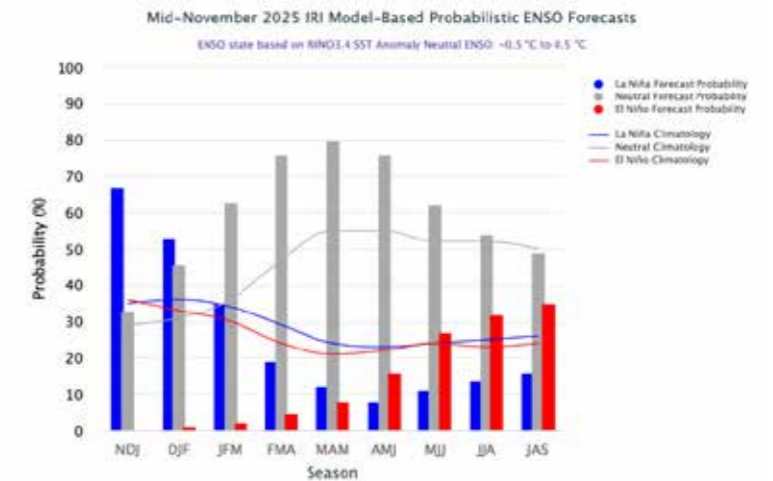


Figure 14. ENSO Forecasts  
Source: Columbia Climate School IRI for Climate and Society (2025)

The current ENSO outlook indicates that La Niña conditions are likely to continue into early 2026, before gradually transitioning toward ENSO-neutral as the year progresses. Historically, La Niña tends to shift tuna biomass westward, often reducing fishing activity in Kiribati's central and eastern EEZ zones. This can lead to lower fishing effort and potentially weaker license revenue during La Niña phases.

However, the forecast indicates a move toward neutral conditions from early 2026, followed by a gradual increase in El Niño probabilities later in the year. Based on historical patterns, El Niño events generally benefit Kiribati, as warming in the central-eastern Pacific draws skipjack and other tuna species into Kiribati waters. This typically results in higher fleet presence, increased fishing days purchased, and stronger license revenue.

If the forecasted transition unfolds as expected, Kiribati may experience modest revenue pressure during the remaining La Niña months, followed by improved fishing activity and revenue prospects as conditions shift toward ENSO-neutral and potentially toward an El Niño-favourable pattern later in 2026.

4 World Bank (2022). Commodity Markets Outlook – Special Focus on the Impact of the War in Ukraine;

5 Pacific Community (SPC) & FFA (2025). Overview of Tuna Fisheries in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, Including Economic Conditions – 2024. WCPFC-SC21-2025/GN-WP-01 rev1, 29 July 2025

## 4. Revenue Projections

Kiribati's revenue projections are anchored on IMF economic forecasts, which guide the underlying assumptions for annual budget estimates. The IMF's 2023 World Economic Outlook notes that global conditions remain uncertain, with growth expected to slow from 3.4% in 2022 to 2.8% in 2023, before slightly improving to 3.0% in 2024.

For Kiribati, fisheries revenue is expected to rebound strongly in 2023 and 2024 following the relatively weak outturn in 2022. This improvement reflects the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions and the onset of El Niño conditions which typically support higher fishing activity. However, fisheries revenue remains inherently volatile and difficult to forecast.

The 2024 projection adopts a conservative base case aligned with long-term trends. While there is potential upside given the strong collections recorded up to May 2023, some of this may be due to delayed payments from 2023. The 2025 fisheries revenue is based on the past three years actual average (2020 to 2023), reflecting the end of covid-19 restrictions and the beginning of the El Niño conditions, which are expected to keep revenues above average in 2023 and 2024. For 2026, the projection builds on the 2024 outcome, applying a 2% increase to reflect the anticipated El Niño related improvements in fishing activity and revenue.

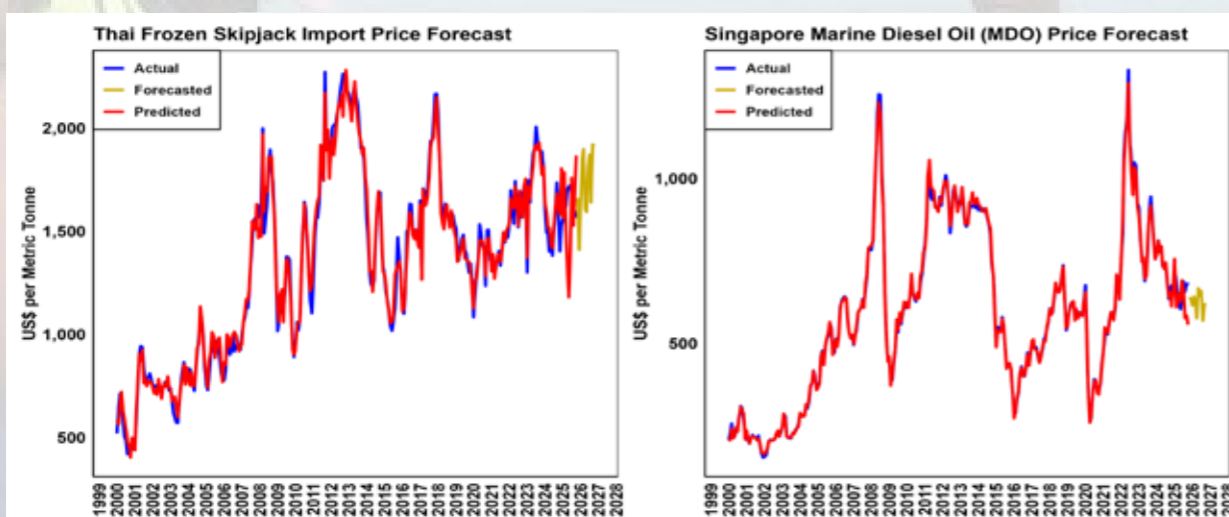


Figure 15. Thai Frozen Skipjack Import Price Forecast(Left Panel). Singapore Marine Diesel Oil Price Forecast (Right Panel).

These revenue projections are supported by price forecasts<sup>6</sup> for Thai frozen skipjack and Singapore Marine Diesel Oil (MDO) (Figure 15), which indicate a moderately favourable outlook for Kiribati's fishing revenue over the coming years. Skipjack prices are projected to remain steady to slightly increase through 2026, supporting stronger Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) demand as higher fish prices improve fleet profitability and encourage greater willingness to purchase fishing days. Fuel prices, while easing significantly from the extreme peaks of 2022-2023, are projected<sup>7</sup> to stabilise at more moderate levels through 2025-2026. This downward adjustment in operating costs reduces pressure on purse-seine and longline fleets, helping to lower uncertainty around fuel expenditure and supporting more consistent deployment across the region, which in turn underpins continued demand for fishing access in Kiribati waters.

6 LightGBM is a machine-learning method that builds many small decision trees to identify patterns in data and make predictions. It is designed to be fast, efficient, and accurate, especially when working with large datasets or complex relationships. It is commonly used for forecasting because it can learn from many variables at once and capture nonlinear trends that traditional models may miss.

7 LightGBM model (see previous footnote).

The ENSO outlook adds an important climate dimension to this economic picture. The latest IRI model-based forecasts (Figure 14) indicate that La Niña conditions are likely to develop in late 2025, which typically shifts skipjack biomass westward and may reduce fishing intensity in the Kiribati EEZ compared to strong El Niño years. However, ENSO-neutral conditions are expected to return during 2026, followed by increasing probabilities of El Niño redevelopment later in 2026, which would once again favour stronger fishing activity in Kiribati as biomass shifts back toward the central and eastern Pacific. This evolving ENSO pattern suggests that fishing effort in Kiribati waters may soften slightly in the short term under La Niña but strengthen again as neutral and potential El Niño conditions re-emerge.

Against this backdrop, it is important to acknowledge that volatility remains a significant challenge for accurate revenue forecasting. Global tuna-price fluctuations, climate-driven stock movements, policy changes, and external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic all contribute to year-to-year unpredictability. In addition, shifts in stock status and fluctuating numbers of licensed vessels influence the level of government revenue collected. Although revenue projections for 2023 to 2026 appeared relatively stable and somewhat optimistic on average, performance may still fall short or exceed expectations. This underscores the underlying uncertainty driven by highly variable global and environmental conditions.

Overall, while skipjack prices and fuel-cost stability support a generally positive revenue outlook, the ENSO pattern for 2025-2026 is mixed rather than fully favourable, with La Niña likely to temper fishing effort initially before a more favourable shift later in 2026 as El Niño probabilities rise. This underscores the need for cautious interpretation of revenue forecasts and adaptive management as climatic and market conditions continue to evolve.

## 5. Tuna Stock Assessment<sup>8</sup>

The WCPO is one of two ocean regions globally where all four major stocks are in the green (the eastern Pacific Ocean stocks were declared all green for the first time in 2024), being neither overfished nor experiencing overfishing. However, this is not reason for complacency with the biomass of most stocks continuing to decline, and a need to address weaknesses and gaps in the management measures currently in place.

The latest stock assessments for yellowfin and bigeye tuna in the WCPO were conducted in 2023. The yellowfin assessment simplified the regional structure to five regions from the nine-region structure used in the previous assessment. The analysis presented the results as a structural uncertainty grid comprising 54 models runs that were equally weighted by SC19 when developing management advice. Based on the uncertainty grid adopted by SC19, the spawning biomass of yellowfin tuna in the WCPO was determined to be above the biomass LRP and recent fishing mortality below FMSY, hence the stock is neither overfished or experiencing overfishing. Under the status quo of maintaining average fishing levels from 2019 to 2021, there is no risk of breaching the LRP. Similar to yellowfin, the management advice from the bigeye tuna assessment was formulated from the results of an uncertainty grid of 54 models that addressed several key model uncertainties in addition to estimation uncertainty. Based on the uncertainty grid, the WCPO bigeye tuna spawning biomass is estimated to be above the biomass LRP and recent fishing mortality is below FMSY for all models, hence it was concluded that the stock is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. Under the status quo fishing conditions where effort and catch levels are maintained at the average 2019-2021 levels, the stock is projected to have zero probability of dropping below LRP.

The latest stock assessment skipjack tuna stock was undertaken in 2022. Stock status was estimated to be similar to that from the previous assessment, with spawning biomass well above the defined overfished level and fishing mortality lower than the overfishing reference point. An interim MP was adopted during WCPFC19 as part of the process of establishing a complete harvest strategy for this stock. The TRP associated with this MP (as calculated from the 2022 assessment) is displayed as the vertical line in the Majuro plot ( $SB/SB_f=0 = 0.5$ ) and the harvest control rule with the MP was designed to maintain the stock around this level, which is estimated to support recent fishing conditions and prevent future declines in stock status. A new skipjack assessment is being conducted in 2025 and will be presented at SC21 in Tonga in August.

A new South Pacific albacore assessment was undertaken in 2024, and it included the entire South Pacific region (south of the equator) incorporating both the WCPFC-CA and the IATTC-CA revealed an ongoing depletion of spawning biomass throughout the model period from (1954-2022). The assessment was based on an ensemble approach in which 100 models incorporated uncertainty in natural mortality, stock-recruitment steepness and estimation error. The reduction in the size of this stock over time has resulted in declining catch rates, and a deterioration in the economic performance of the southern longline fishery which primarily targets it. Consequently, in the recent 20th session in 2023, the Commission established an interim target reference point (iTRP) for South Pacific albacore, set at 4% below the estimated average spawning potential depletion from 2017 to 2019 aiming to rebuild the stock and to support the economic viability of fleets and to achieve a long-term TRP. As such, it is vital that management measures are put in place that restrict catch and allow for sustained economically viable catch rates, including for FFA Members' domestic longline fleets.



<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Footnote 2.

## 6. International and Regional Agreements

Membership and participation in major international, regional, and subregional fisheries organizations are crucial for Kiribati, given its reliance on highly migratory species like tuna for sustenance, livelihoods, and economic growth.

Kiribati is currently a member of five key fisheries forums: the WCPFC, IATTC, FFA, SPC, and PNA. These memberships are essential not only for the ongoing management of key tuna and billfish stocks, which are vital for the country's social and economic well-being, but also for providing a platform to voice, consider, and address national concerns through a consensus process. Although each organization has distinct functions, they all work towards the long-term sustainability of marine resources through binding conservation management measures enforced by Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) regulatory frameworks and tools.

The FFA promotes regional cooperation and solidarity, offering legal, technical, and economic support to help develop fisheries policies for its members, build national capacity, and assist with MCS for the sustainable management of tuna in the Pacific. The SPC serves as the regional center for fisheries research, stock assessment, and data management related to tuna and billfish fisheries, providing scientific advice to the FFA, PNA, and WCPFC.

The WCPFC is one of the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) responsible for the management and conservation of tuna stocks within the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCP-CA), including the management of high seas. In contrast, the IATTC focuses on the conservation and management of tuna stocks and other non-tuna species in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO).

Kiribati is also an active member of the subregional body, PNA, which comprises eight Pacific nations that rely heavily on tuna resources. Collectively, these countries control a significant 25% to 30% of the world's tuna supply and approximately 60% of the tuna supply within the WCP-CA. The PNA members include the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu, while Tokelau participates in the PNA Palau Arrangement.

The PNA has been recognized for its successful implementation of the Vessel Day Scheme (VDS), which has generated increased revenue for its members, including Kiribati. Since 2014, the return value of the VDS has risen from US\$344 million to US\$502 million in 2024<sup>9</sup>, although the average economic value has remained stable at around US\$500 million since 2017. The PNA's fisheries conservation and management strategies are considered world-class and have received acknowledgment at the WCPFC level. These strategies include high seas closures, controls on Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs), 100% observer coverage in the purse seine fishery, and the VDS.

Regarding the Longline VDS, Kiribati was initially the only PNA member not to sign up when the scheme was first introduced for managing longline fisheries, particularly for the struggling Bigeye tuna stock. Instead, Kiribati opted to trial a catch-based management system. Recognizing that such a system requires robust monitoring and investment at the national level, Kiribati decided to join the PNA Longline VDS in 2019, suspending the catch-based management approach until the system is fully developed.

### 6.1 Phoenix Islands Protected Area

The Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA) was originally established to safeguard both terrestrial and marine resources within the Phoenix Islands. The closure of the PIPA area accounts for an 11% reduction in commercial fishing activity within Kiribati's EEZ. As the largest designated Marine Protected Area in the world, PIPA aims to conserve fish stocks and maintain biodiversity, earning its designation as a World Heritage Site in 2010 and being recognized as a "superlative natural phenomenon of global importance."

This closure has reduced the available fishing area, making Kiribati's waters less appealing to traditional fishing partners. However, the Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources (MFOR) has continued to pursue revenue growth through new licensing policy, transshipment fees and penalties. In March 2023, the Government issued a notice to reopen PIPA for commercial fishing. By enhancing monitoring and compliance efforts to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, in collaboration with the Kiribati Police Maritime Unit (PMU), MFOR collected an average of AU\$1.1 million in penalty fees from 2020 to 2025.

9 *Ibid.*, Footnote 2.

## 7. Future Directions

Under the Government's Kiribati 20-Year Vision, which prioritises the fisheries and tourism sectors, the Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources (MFOR) is set to develop a transshipment hub in Tarawa and Kiritimati. This hub will support fishing vessels operating in Kiribati and adjacent waters, while also enhancing tuna processing capabilities, yielding benefits for both Kiribati and fishing operators.

Fiji Airways and Air Nauru provide air route and transportation services to and from Kiribati weekly. Both airlines have two flights each week in and out of the country and facilitate export quantities. While the Kiribati Fish Limited (KFL) sent most of its fisheries products overseas on refrigerated container ships, some are exported by Air Nauru but in small quantity. Between 2020 and 2025, 3,488mt export volume exported abroad by KFL.

Monitoring and surveillance of fishing vessel movements are ongoing. The observer program continues to play a crucial role, with observers placed on vessels operating in Kiribati waters. Kiribati continue to comply with observer placement requirement and currently has no major non-compliance at WCPFC.

The Government of Kiribati aims to explore greater benefits from value-added tuna products and expand employment opportunities in the fishing industry, including roles in overseas processing plants through new regional schemes like the East New Britain Initiative (ENBI). Additionally, fishing vessels and their support vessels, such as mother carriers and tankers, are required to employ a minimum number of crew members during their license period.

Maximising revenue from tuna fisheries remains the core responsibility of the MFOR and hinges on Government forward looking, strategic engagement with development partners and the industry and long-term sustainability of the resource through sound conservation and management measures.





**Ministry of Fisheries  
& Ocean Resources**