

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2006

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: AFMA01

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Southern Oceans

Hansard Page: 123 (31/10/06)

Senator Sterle asked:

Do we have a figure for the southern oceans?

Answer:

There were twenty-one (21) sightings of foreign fishing boats from southern oceans patrols between 1 January 2006 and 17 October 2006. None of these sightings were within the Australian zone.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2006

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: AFMA 02

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Setting of Total Allowable Catches

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Siewert asked:

Is it the case that on AFMA's guidelines when a species is reduced to less than 20% of its unfished biomass all quotas should be set to zero?

Answer:

The Australian Fisheries Management Authority policy (AFMA), which reflects the Ministerial Direction issued to it in December 2005, is that if fish stock's biomass is below 20% of the initial (unfished) biomass or an agreed reference level of biomass (where initial biomass may not be known) then target commercial fishing will cease. As one species may be caught in association with other species, a low bycatch total allowable catch (TACs) may be set for the stock that is below 20% of Biomass. The aim is to simultaneously minimise catch and minimise discarding of marketable fish. Where there is any TAC for a species it is allocated to holders of fishing concessions for those species.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2006

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: AFMA 03

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Fishing of Orange Roughy

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Siewert asked:

If so, can you explain why there is still orange roughy being fished?

Answer:

The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) has reduced total allowable catches (TACs) to very low levels in many fishing zones within the Australian fishing zone (AFZ). These reflect the policy of no target fishing when stocks are below 20 per cent of initial biomass, but allowing low levels of bycatch, or precautionary management if the size of the stock is unknown.

In the Cascade Plateau orange roughy zone the stock is currently at around 70 per cent of Biomass. A TAC of 500t has been set for this zone with 100t of this set aside for research.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2006

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: AFMA 04

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Fishing for School Shark and Eastern Gemfish

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Siewert asked:

Similarly, why is there still quota available for School Shark and Eastern Gemfish, both of them fished to well below 20% of their unfished biomass?

Answer:

For similar reasons provided in AFMA 03. Low bycatch total allowable catches (TACs) are set that reflect the levels of unavoidable capture when taking companion species.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2006

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: AFMA 05

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Fishing for SBT

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator Siewert asked:

SBT is down to only 10% of its pre-fishing biomass, but the quota remains unchanged since 1989. In view of the fact that the population has plummeted to its current low level why is the same quota still being allocated?

Answer:

The Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) spawning biomass is estimated to be between 10 and 13 per cent of its pre-fished level. The fishery is managed internationally through the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) to which Australia is a party. Following the identification of significant Japanese overcatch for at least the past decade, the CCSBT has reduced the global catch from around 25,000 tonnes per annum to 11,500 tonnes per annum. This significant reduction is aimed at stabilising the SBT stock while a new assessment of the fishery is undertaken. The existing assessment is flawed as it used Japanese catch per unit effort as a major input and so can no-longer be relied upon. The assessment is now to be redone by the Commission parties.