

# Southern Bluefin Tuna jobs, value boost

**This Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) program helped an industry catch, transfer and farm Southern Bluefin Tuna offshore, revitalising the industry, and saving vital jobs for an iconic South Australian town.**

## ISSUE

In the late 1980s, Port Lincoln was a town on the brink of collapse. Exports to Japan of Southern Bluefin Tuna which sustained the town brought in between \$2 and \$4 a kilogram, and the industry's catch quota had been slashed from 13 000 to 5 265 tonnes. The town's unemployment rate was heading towards 30 per cent and the future was uncertain.

## SOLUTION

The FRDC and the Tuna Boat Owners of Australia looked for ways to increase the value and volume of Australia's supply of Southern Bluefin Tuna, while protecting the sustainability of the industry. What evolved was a way to catch, transfer and farm wild tuna in cages in the open sea. The system reduced constraints on scale, enhanced water quality, lowered costs of environmental monitoring, and reduced interaction with urban populations and disease risk.

## RESULTS

Almost 30 years later, Port Lincoln's wild-farmed tuna is one of Australia's wealthiest fisheries, attracting \$30–\$40/kilogram on the Japanese market. Flow-on effects include richer job opportunities, with town unemployment now well below 10 per cent. The benefit/cost ratio for the FRDC's investment was estimated by independent consultants, Agrans Research, to be at more than 44:1, with the technology sold internationally and adapted for use with other Australian fish species.

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**“Research and development, when done correctly, can underpin increased growth and value in fisheries resources. Communities will be better served if resources are managed with the benefit of evidence-based decisions.”**

FRDC, Managing Director,  
Patrick Hone

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## Employment

New skills and changed practices deliver jobs  
and boost regional capacity



Image credit: ASBTIA/David Ellis