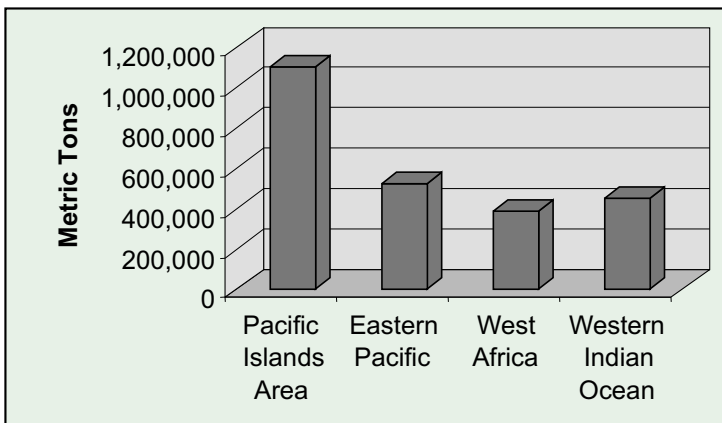


Global Significance of Tuna

Worldwide the catch of tuna (albacore, bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin) has averaged about 3.6 million metric tons (MT) a year in recent years (J. Joseph 2000). In the Pacific Islands area, an average of 1 million MT was landed each year between 1997 and 1999. Hence, almost one-third of all the tuna landed in the world comes from the Pacific Islands region. This region supplies 60 percent of all canned tuna and about 30 percent of the tuna for the Japanese sashimi market.

There are four major tuna fishing areas in the world: the Pacific Islands, the eastern Pacific (average annual tuna catch of about 525,000 MT), west Africa (385,000 MT), and the western Indian Ocean (450,000 MT). The Pacific Islands fishery clearly dwarfs the other three in volume (Figure 2) and even more so in value because a large component of the Pacific Islands catch is for the high-value sashimi market. Quite simply, the Pacific Islands region is the most important tuna fishing area in the world.

Figure 2: Average Yearly Tuna Catch in the Major Tuna Fishing Areas, Later 1990s



Sources: Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission; SPC