

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

B/1171 The Honourable First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien (**Mr Varma**)

To ask Dr the Honourable Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries:-

Whether, in regard to tuna fish, he will state if he is aware that there is a drop in the catches thereof in the Indian Ocean and, if so, will he state (a) the reasons therefore and (b) how it affects Mauritius?

DRAFT REPLY

Mr. Speaker Sir,

According to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission(IOTC), tuna catches across the Indian Ocean have dropped by about 30% in 2007 and there are indications that recent catches are below averages.

With regard to part (a) of the question, according to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission(IOTC), the exact reason for this drop is not known. Experts are divided over whether this drop is due to climatic change or cyclical ocean conditions or overfishing.

As for to Part (b), according to data available on fish traffic in Port Louis, which mainly comprises of tuna, it increased from 96,790 tonnes in 2005 to 130,182 tonnes in 2006 but decreased to 116,983 tonnes in 2007. In 2006, some 82,000 tonnes of tuna fish were processed. Operators in the Seafood Hub have recently experienced some difficulties in sourcing originating tuna fish. In this context government initiated action since January 2008 in order to benefit from automatic derogation for the export of non-originating processed tuna to the EC market pending entry into force of the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement after signature and ratification.

In this context, the EU has thus recently allocated a quota of 3,000 tonnes of canned tuna and 600 tonnes of tuna loins for export under automatic derogation to Mauritius. This will enable operators to source non-originating materials for processing, thereby alleviating their difficulties in sourcing originating fish.

