HOW DO PROFESSIONAL FISHERS CATCH WILD FISH?
They use:
- estuary meshing of fish and prawns
- line fishing (catch includes Snapper and Kingfish)
- trapping of Mud crabs, Lobster and fish
- trawling or purse-seining (catch includes Flathead and Sardines and prawns)
- ocean (including beach) hauling (catch includes Mullet and Salmon)
- diving for Abalone and Sea Urchins.

For more information visit: masterfishermen.oceanwatch.org.au

MULTIPLE MARKETS
For sashimi-grade tuna, fishers carefully handle their catch to maintain quality and freshness; they land them on a mattress to minimise bruising and then use a technique known as ikejime to kill them instantly. This is a humane way of killing the fish which also has benefits for seafood quality. If the fish don’t struggle, they don’t release stress hormones and their body temperature stays low. Much of the top-grade Tuna from the Sydney region is exported overseas.

“The best product goes to Japan, because they recognise the high quality tuna our fishers produce.”
Tricia Beattie – Professional Fishermen’s Association

ITALIAN COMMUNITY ROOTS
Italian fishermen arrived in Wollongong in the early 1900s, with a number of Italian fishing families moving south to Ulladulla during the 1930s. Generations of other fishers from Sicily and Calabria followed after World War II. They helped to establish Ulladulla as the then largest professional fishing port in NSW. They also introduced new traditions and cultural practices to the region.

“Perhaps if you told them to write their name, they probably didn’t know how to write their name, but they were special and good fishers... They moved to Ulladulla, and went from strength to strength then. And then there were more Italian families from other parts that came... And then in 1956, when we came here, they opened the co-op.”
Mario Puglisi – Co-op director and fisherman (Ulladulla)

LONGLINE FISHING IN THE ILLAWARRA SHOALHAVEN
Longline fishing in NSW is largely managed by the Commonwealth Government. It is controlled through a quota on the number of fish that can be caught each year. Vessel movements are also monitored.

YELLOW-FIN TUNA (Thunnus alalunga) is the most common species of tuna in Australia. It can be up to 280 cm long and weigh 200 kg.

AUSTRALIAN BONITO (Arda australis) can be up to a metre long and weigh 11kg.

LONGLINING TUNA
Most tuna are caught in Commonwealth waters by drifting longlines. The fisher attaches baited hooks to the longline by short lines called ‘snoods’ that hang off the mainline, which may be kilometres long and carry thousands of hooks. The longline has no anchor and drifts near the ocean’s surface with a radio beacon attached so the fisher can locate it later. Fishers use a range of strategies to avoid catching bycatch such as sharks, turtles and seabirds. These include specially designed hooks, setting lines at a deeper depths and using bird scarers.
THE VALUE OF COASTAL FISHERIES THE NSW SOUTH COAST

The South Coast extends from Kioloa south to the Victorian border. The main fishing ports include Batemans Bay, Narooma, Bermagui and Eden. The area supports a diverse range of fisheries including ocean trap and line, Lobster, ocean haul, a seasonal longline tuna fishery and a general estuary fishery.

ABOUT THE PROJECT
A team of independent social scientists and economists spent two years gathering this research data in their “Valuing Coastal Fisheries Project”, funded by the Commonwealth’s Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC). The researchers investigated the NSW professional fishing industry by

- interviewing professional fishers, fishing families, community members, recreational fishers, local council staff and councillors, tourism organisations, seafood retailers, wholesalers and restaurant owners
- conducting a random phone questionnaire of 1400 people living in NSW coastal communities
- conducting random and targeted phone questionnaires with fish co-ops, fish retailers and wholesalers
- conducting an internet survey of hospitality and tourism operators.

FRESH, LOCAL SEAFOOD

- 97% of South Coast residents agree that it is important we produce our own seafood in NSW
- 93% want to know where their seafood comes from
- 100% of South Coast residents surveyed believe buying local seafood is better for their local community.

COMMUNITY LIFE
Professional fishers play an active role in community life. They frequently join in water search and rescue missions, including daring rescues of sailors in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race. The Bermagui co-op and fish merchants such as Southlands in Eden provide sponsorship and donations to local sporting and community groups. Local seafood is central to Christmas/New Year celebrations.

CULTURAL HERITAGE
Many towns dotted along the South Coast evolved from professional fishing communities and still identify with their fishing heritage. The working harbours of Bermagui and Eden remain important civic focal points and tourist attractions. 79% of residents are concerned that the industry’s decline could lead to a loss of community identity.

A STRONG ECONOMY
The professional fishing industry contributes more than $28 million in revenue annually and over 355 full-time jobs to the South Coast economy. 86% of residents believe the industry is important for their area and 88% feel it is also good for tourism, with locally-caught fish a favourite among tourists and locals.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS
Learning to be a fisher is a complex and lifelong process. Fishers learn by trial and error or through knowledge handed down through the generations. The Sapphire Coast Marine Discovery Centre in Eden was established so scientists could tap into the knowledge held by fishers in the local area.

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT
The industry is highly regulated, and professional fishers must comply with a range of restrictions on when, where and how they can fish and the size of their catch. All fisheries must pass environmental impact assessments. Fishers themselves play an active role monitoring environmental conditions in their local area, and are often the first to sound the alarm about environmental damage or pollution events. Many fishers are also actively involved in looking after the marine environment, by picking up rubbish and taking part in habitat restoration projects.

RECREATION
The South Coast is a major supplier of bait for NSW recreational fishers, especially Pilchards. 78% of recreational fishers from the area prefer locally sourced bait. Jetties managed and maintained by the professional wild catch industry provide popular infrastructure for recreational fishers and boaters.