



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority

# GREAT BARRIER REEF Outlook Report 2019

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## COMMERCIAL FISHING

Commercial fishing is an important source of income for Queensland coastal communities and plays a vital role in Australia's seafood industry.

Ensuring fisheries are ecologically sustainable is important for maintaining a healthy and resilient Reef.

Illegal fishing continues to add pressure to an already deteriorating system, and concerns exist for some species harvested by commercial and recreational fishers.

As Reef waters heat due to climate change, fishers may need to target different species and there may be more disease prevalence in fish and crustaceans.

FACT SHEET

### What the Outlook Report 2019 says about commercial fishing

In 2017, the commercial harvest (retained catch) of fisheries product in the Region was about 7600 tonnes, not including marine aquarium fish or coral. Of this, around 96 per cent came from the four main fishing methods (trawl, net, line and pot), which target different ecological groups.

The largest change in the past 10 years has been in the net fishery sector, as a result of licence buybacks (see Figure). The 2017 harvest was 57 per cent (1331 tonnes) lower than the harvest in 2007.

### Benefits of fishing

Commercial fishers continue to have a high attachment to their industry, with most involved for more than 30 years. The gross value product forecast for Queensland-wide commercial fisheries for 2018–19 is \$181 million, three per cent greater than the previous five years.

### Impacts of commercial fishing

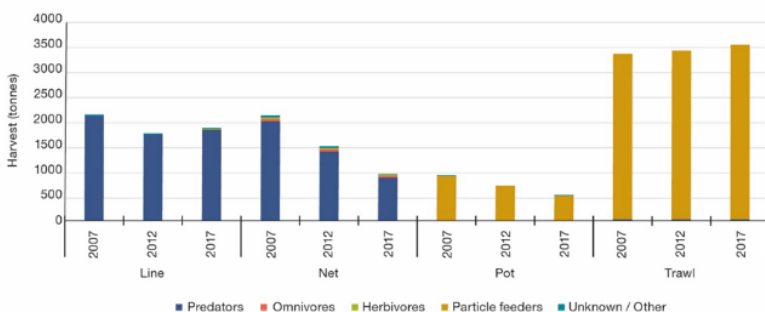
Fishing removes biomass from the Region. When fishing reduces the abundance of target species to below critical levels, sustainability issues arise. Incidental catch of species of conservation concern in fishing gear poses a *very high* risk. Illegal fishing is also a *very high* risk, reducing fish density and causing broader ecosystem impacts.

Some species are subject to considerable fishing effort and data limitations hamper some fishery assessments. Several species are overfished, including the saucer scallop (from trawling) and the Queensland component of the east coast stock of Australian snapper and pearl perch, which are both depleted.

### Management of commercial fishing

Ensuring ecological sustainability of fisheries is critical. Management arrangements for all commercial (and recreational) fisheries in the Region are currently under review as part of the implementation of the *Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017–2027*.

Concerns remain regarding some aspects of current fisheries management. For example, arrangements for the Coral Reef Finfish Fishery do not enable responses to changes in species status at a stock level or regional scale. There is no independent validation of fishers' logbook reporting, following cessation of the independent fishery observer program (for all fisheries) in 2013.



Ecological groups retained by major commercial fisheries in the Reef in 2007, 2012 and 2017. Source: DAF (Qld) 2019

Find out more – [www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au)