

COMMERCIAL FISHING

Summary

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

More than 60 Queensland east coast fishery resources are fished; approximately 42 per cent have been assessed as sustainable and 32 per cent have not been assessed or are undefined.

Independent reviewers found management effectiveness for fishing (both recreational and commercial) in the Region was mostly effective to partially effective.

What the Outlook Report 2024 says about commercial fishing

In 2022, the commercial harvest (retained catch) of fisheries product in the Region was about 5000 tonnes, not including marine aquarium fish or coral.

Fisheries were impacted by the COVID-19 disruptions. For example, the East Coast Otter Trawl Fishery had a loss of \$39.2 million gross state product and 80 full time jobs. Effort within the Region's charter fishing industry decreased by 40 per cent and harvest by 50 per cent from 2019 to 2020.

Benefits of commercial fishing

In 2020–21, the Queensland commercial fishing industry supported an estimated 3,484 jobs, 1031 businesses and contributed \$279.3 million in gross production value to the economy. While estimates vary across studies, the average annual value of commercial fishing in the Region is approximately \$200 million.

Impacts of commercial fishing

Fishing removes biomass from the Region and, when harvest is not conducted in an ecologically sustainable way, it can affect the abundance of targeted species locally and at a population level. For example, saucer scallop stocks, Spanish mackerel, Australian snapper and pearl perch stocks remain depleted despite management interventions.

Declines in populations of culturally significant species can have flow-on implications for the Region's Indigenous heritage values.

Other impacts include discarded species, incidental catch of species of conservation concern, depredation of catch and physical damage to the seabed and reef habitats.

The number of commercial fishing offences has steadily declined from 230 in 2020–21 to 133 in 2022–23 since implementation of compulsory vessel tracking from 2020.

Management of commercial fishing

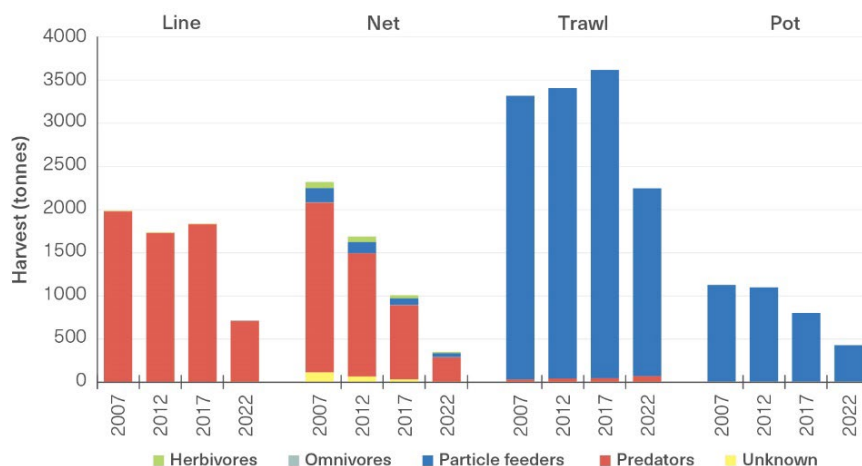
Fisheries management in the Marine Park is a shared responsibility between the Commonwealth and Queensland governments.

In its first 5 years, the *Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy*

2017–2027 delivered 29 out of 33 actions across 10 reform areas. Key achievements include harvest strategies in place, ecological risk assessments and stock assessments updated, vessel tracking installed on all commercial boats, regional-specific fishing rules for some fisheries and technologies used more effectively.

Sustainable catch limits have been set at around 60 per cent pre-fishing biomass by 2027 and there are clear triggers for management action. However, outcomes for fishing remain only partially effective

New legislation was enacted to phase out the use of gillnets by June 2027, make hammerhead sharks no-take species for commercial fishers in Queensland waters, and mandate independent data validation on commercial fishing vessels.



Ecological groups retained by major commercial fisheries in the Great Barrier Reef in 2007, 2012, 2017 and 2022