



Spanish mackerel | *Scomberomorus commerson*

A Snapshot of the Spanish Mackerel Fishery

Area

From the high water mark at the coast to the boundary of the Australian Fishing Zone (AFZ) 200nm (370km) from the coast.

Licences

There are 18 licences in the Spanish mackerel fishery with most having no restriction on temporary transferability.

Gear

Spanish mackerel are only permitted to be taken by troll line, with no limit on the number of lines permitted in the water. Licences may have up to two tenders working with a mother vessel and each licence also has a bait net entitlement.

Catch

The catch is primarily Spanish mackerel.

Product form

Frozen fillets, whole fresh fish on ice and fresh and frozen trunks.

Markets

Traditionally the market has been for frozen fillets and trunks in Australia, particularly Sydney and Brisbane. However in recent times new markets, both in Australia and overseas, have developed for fresh fish on ice.

Season

There is no closed season for Spanish mackerel, although the best catches occur from the beginning of May through to November.

Management

This fishery is managed by the Northern Territory under a formal management plan.

General

This fishery is entirely boat based, usually with a mother vessel and two tenders operating. Fishing generally takes place around reefs where the mackerel congregate during the dry season. Fishermen often have to travel considerable distances around the NT coast to the mackerel aggregations.

To reduce the number of licences in this fishery there has been a long running two for one licence reduction scheme, which has seen the number of licences drastically reduced since 1992. Under the scheme, to obtain an unrestricted licence, two restricted licences must first be purchased.

A typical Spanish mackerel operation, with mothership, two dories and a fully transferable licence has an investment in the order of \$600,000, with some considerably more.

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