



Sandfish | *Holothuria scabra*

A Snapshot of the **Trepang Fishery**

Area

The fishery's operational boundaries are from high water mark seaward to 3nm from the low water mark. The area outside this line is currently closed to fishing as a precautionary measure.

Licences

There are six licences in the fishery, all fully transferable.

Gear

All trepang are harvested by hand collection. The majority of the trepang are taken by dive operations.

Catch

Historically the catch has been primarily Sandfish and more recently White teat fish. The current licence holder has worked hard and invested heavily in developing acceptable products from the other key species in the fishery. Six different species have now been successfully exported.

Product Form

The majority of the product is sold in a dried form, which requires considerable preparation before it reaches the end user. The drying process is carried out in a purpose built factory near Melbourne, however progress is being made on establishing a factory in Darwin. The industry has also invested in producing a "ready to use" product which is now being exported.

Markets

Northern Territory trepang is sold Australia wide and internationally.

Season

There is no closed season for the trepang fishery. However the seasonal variation in water clarity and temperature means that harvesting takes place for approximately 8 months each year.

Management

The fishery is managed under Northern Territory legislation by the Northern Territory Government. It has been certified as ecologically sustainable by the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage.

General

The current annual harvest is between 150-200 tonnes wet weight of trepang, which equates to 23 to 30 tonnes of dried product with a market value of \$3 to \$4 million. Hatchery technology for the production of juvenile trepang both for pond culture and stock enhancement is being developed to boost levels in the Northern Territory.

Investment in vessels and infrastructure in the Northern Territory fishery is currently in excess of \$10 million. The value that the operations of these vessels generate in terms of employment, equipment supply and support from local service industries is conservatively worth an additional \$8 to \$10 million.

Future plans include trial ranching of trepang and options for the involvement of indigenous communities in this area are being explored by the licence holder.

Supported by:



Northern Territory Government