

MONTSERRAT NATIONAL REPORT

Fishing Fleet

The Montserrat Fishing Fleet consists of thirty-one (31) boats with twenty-four (24) in active service as follows:

Ocean Pelagic Fishing	3
Coastal Pelagic	2
Demersal	21

Of these, fifteen (15) are made from fiberglass while the others are made from wood and may be coated with fibreglass. Of these eight (8) have cabins. The engine horse power ranges from 25 – 250 hp.

These vessels will fish from 5 hours up to 2 days depending on where they decide to fish and the weather condition. Some of these vessels will fish off the west coast while others may go as far as 10-15 miles away from land. Vessels range in size of which 5 are less than 5 meters in length while all others are between 5 and – 10m.

The coastal vessels target species like Balahoo, Gar or Jacks (big eye scad). Of the 3 species the Gar is the most dominant followed by the Balahoo which is not seen as much as in previous years. The Big Eye Scad is caught occasionally but is a preference by many over the Balahoo or the Gar. The price for the Balahoo is \$8.00 per pound and Gar \$6-8.00 (depending on size) while Jacks is sold at \$ 10.00 per pound.

The Ocean Pelagics are sold between \$12.00 – 14.00 per pound, while the Demersals are sold at \$10.00 per pound and the Lion Fish is sold between \$5-7 per lb. It is interesting to note that with the arrival of the Lion Fish we have seen a significant improvement in our catches. In 2011 we had landings of 72,409 lbs; 2012 – 81,125lbs; an increase of 8,716 lbs. For the period January to March 2013 we have recorded 29,316 lbs.

These increases are due to fewer days lost due to rough seas in 2012 and perhaps the effects of a slow economy which usually results in more persons getting into fishing. It must be noted that these figures represent approximately 90% of total landings. While we do not have actual poundage for the amount of lion fish landed it is quite clear that a number of persons enjoy eating this fish. This is due to public education and a public demonstration on how to handle and clean the fish, followed by allowing the public to get a taste the prepared fish.

Several fishers have reported catching up to 25 lbs in a single day and as many as 30 lion fish caught in their traps. The Demersal continues to be the dominant species and has seen very little

variation in catches during the winter months of 2012 and 2013. The Ocean Pelagics has shown a steady decline over the past two (2) years.

Data Entry

To date our Data Collectors have completed data entry from 1994 to 2012 into the Carifis Programme. However, there are problems with the Database as our computer is out of service for the last two (2) months.

Every effort is being made to collect data on the lion fish and to have it accounted for in our database system, however, presently there is no provision for it to be entered into the current system.

In February 2013 a meeting of all British Overseas Territories in the Caribbean was held in Anguilla, funded by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). The purpose of this meeting was to address the issue of lion fish in the OTs in the Caribbean, with the JNCC reporting back to the British Government what action is required. It is not the intention of JNCC to compete or to duplicate with other organizations involved in working on the lion fish within the OTs.

The following actions were identified and prioritized, which is expected to commence in a few months.

- Research previously or are currently conducted in OTs
- Monitoring actions/programmes in OTs
- Control measures (frequency, duration)
- Documentation/pamphlets/data produced and available

Research Tool

- Are there sources and sink population of lion fish?
- Where do lion fish spawn? What factors affect spawning?
- Genetic research for assessing dispersal.
- Lava connectivity models for reef fishers providing insight into lion fish laval disposal potentially valuable for predicting the spread of lion fish.
- Used oceanographic models to hindcast dispersal path ways for lion fish larvae
- Effectiveness of MPAS
- Impact of lionfish on commercial fisheries
- Evaluation of relationship of lion fish abundance and coral reef decline

Legislation/Policy

The Fisheries Regulations are expected to be approved during the first half of 2013 which would ensure that all fishing vessels are registered and thus fulfilling several requirements of the Fisheries Act.

It must also be noted that a harmonized Fisheries Legislation is presently with the Attorney General's Office where it is expected to be finalised before it goes to the Legislature for consideration, thus fulfilling part of its mandate to CRFM

Development Activities

The Government is in the process of building a new Port in the Carr's Bay area, this had implications for the fishers who occupy locker rooms in the area. Two sheds in the area were demolished and replaced with a limited number of lockers which is inadequate; as a result several fishermen are forced to find alternate space to store their equipment/gears. Once this new Port Facility is completed it is expected that some facilities would be available to fishers, including an area for repair of vessels and gears, safe harbour and storage facilities.

Active consideration has been given to the possibility of introducing aquaculture on a medium scale to boost local production. However, there are some issues that must be taken into consideration, including availability of suitable land and water during extended dry season. A team from Guadeloupe was on island to explore the possibility.

Ocean Governance

A series of meetings has been held at the National level to advance ocean governance. These meetings started the process to ensure that the whole concept of ocean Governance is addressed at the highest level. One area of great importance to the fishers is the Maritime Boundary Delimitation.

Fisheries Management

The Fisheries Officer is currently away on study leave. On his return it is expected that he will be better equipped to deal with the issues that will face the fisheries Sector as well as those affecting the Marine Environment.

It must also be noted that during the course of 2013 one member of staff will be retiring thus the need for a replacement will be required. The two data collectors need to be exposed to other areas and assume more responsibilities in order for the unit to move forward and for their own development.

The unit continues to monitor the Turtle Population on island from June to September when turtle eggs are placed in the hatchery and monitored.

The Ministry now has in place a Database Officer who will oversee all data in the Ministry of Agriculture.

Surveillance

During the past year, maritime surveillance was affected by the absence of the Marine Unit Patrol Vessel on various occasions. This has served as a deterrent to illegal fishing in some areas especially in the south of the island.