

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Question Taken on Notice

Question Number: 7.1

Output Number: Opening Statement

Date: 20/06/2023

From: Mr Yingiya Mark Guyula MLA

To: Hon Paul Kirby MLA

Portfolio: Agribusiness and Fisheries

Agency: Industry, Tourism and Trade

Subject: Commercial fishing operations monitored and catch-limit quota of fish

QUESTION:

How many commercial fishing operations in the Northern Territory are currently monitored? What is the total allowable catch-limit quota of fish for commercial licence? Could you provide a breakdown for barramundi, Spanish mackerel, snapper varieties, coral trout and mud crab?

ANSWER:

Commercial fishing operations currently monitored

All commercial fisheries in the NT are monitored

The Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) is a satellite based tool used to monitor fishing activity. There is 110 commercial fishing operations that have operational VMS units monitored in the NT.

Electronic monitoring (use of cameras to observe catch) is mandatory for all Demersal Fishery trawl vessels and on long-line vessels operating in the Offshore Net and Line Fishery.

Table 1: Number of vessels monitored through VMS.

Fishery	Vessels
Coastal Line Fishery	11
Offshore Net and Line Fishery	6
Demersal Fishery	6
Barramundi Fishery	35
Mud Crab Fishery	40
Aquarium Fishery	3
Trepang Fishery	1
Development Fishery	1
Timor Reef Fishery	7
Total	110

Total allowable catch

There are different fisheries management controls that limit the catch of commercial licences. Input controls limit how you can fish, i.e. closed areas, restriction on fishing gear, seasonal closure. Output controls limit the fish you can take, i.e. size limits, catch limits, possession limits.

A Total Allowable Catch (TAC) is an output control used in many fisheries.

Table 2: List of fisheries with a total allowable commercial catch (TACC) in the NT

Fishery	Species	TACC (tonnes)
Demersal Fishery	Goldband Snapper	400
	Red Snapper	2,500
	Grouped Fish (includes other snapper and coral trout)	915
Timor Reef Fishery	Goldband Snapper	900
	Red Snapper	1,300
	Grouped Fish (includes other snapper and coral trout)	415
Coastal Line Fishery (Western Zone)	Golden Snapper	4.5
	Black Jewfish	145
Spanish Mackerel Fishery	Spanish Mackerel	342

In the Barramundi Fishery there is no total allowable catch. Harvest of Barramundi is controlled by input controls that include limited entry (only 14 licences exist), gear restrictions, with a maximum of 10 net units per licence that are not transferrable and a total of 107 net units in the fishery. In addition, there is an annual seasonal closure between 1 October and 31 January, and extensive spatial closures with the majority of creeks and rivers in the NT closed to commercial fishing. Barramundi is a no-take species for other commercial fisheries.

The Harvest of Mud Crabs is also controlled using input restrictions on fishing gear and licences. There are currently 49 licences in the fishery, each entitled to 2 units of entitlement (60 pots) which can be transferred among licences in any given fishing year. The total number of pots in the fishery is 2,940. Mud Crabs are a no-take species for other commercial fisheries.

Coral trout is not a target species of any commercial fishery. Commercial operators must record all retained fish in daily logbooks and sales records. NT Fisheries monitors catch levels of this species in accordance with national reporting standards.