

Overview (2020–21 financial year)

Despite the ongoing challenges of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), the wild catch seafood industry continued to show resilience and supply consumers with highly sought-after seafood, especially locally and interstate. As the supply chain adapted to COVID-19 impacts, fishing businesses pivoted to take advantage of strong local demand and re-establish important export markets.

We are pleased to further modernise fisheries management to improve fishing efficiency and support a thriving industry – as well as contributing to the overall objective of ensuring the sustainability of Queensland’s fisheries and fish for future generations. The second round of reforms were announced on 30 September 2020 and commenced on 1 September 2021, giving commercial fishers time to recover and transition following the impacts of COVID-19. The changes include:

- 13 new harvest strategy fisheries management frameworks
- several red tape reduction and streamlining measures designed to support the economic recovery of the commercial fishing industry following the impacts of COVID-19
- changes necessary to protect and maintain export approvals
- establishing new management regions for the crab, trawl and east coast inshore fisheries, and creating new quota units so the catch of priority species can be better managed
- a single commercial fishing licensing framework, which commenced on 1 January 2021 to simplify and provide consistency across all commercial fisheries
- administrative amendments to recreational and charter sector regulations to provide consistency across all fishing sectors.

In addition to the reform work, Fisheries Queensland launched the new Qld Fishing 2.0 recreational fishing app, deployed a network of fish aggregating devices, held an expression-of-interest process to appoint members to 10 working groups and finalised 13 harvest strategies. We also continued our stock assessment program to set sustainable catch limits, support harvest strategy implementation and inform the overall sustainable management of our fisheries.

We continue to make good progress and remain well-placed for delivery of all 33 actions by 2027. Importantly, the Queensland Government has committed an additional \$28.175 million over three years to support continued delivery of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy, which will support sustainable fisheries for all Queenslanders. This includes a successful commercial fishing industry and a vibrant and growing recreational sector.

➔ Progress

<p>Improved monitoring and research Achieved ✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional 3 years of length and age data finalised for 6 reef species • Shark catch composition monitoring completed • 5 species monitored via 2 fishery-independent surveys • Commercial/charter economic and social indicators data published via online interactive dashboard • The 2019–20 statewide recreational fishing survey completed and results published online • Further research commenced on the economic contribution of recreational fishing 	<p>Resource allocation On track ➔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently approved harvest strategies for mud and sand crab, east coast trawl and east coast inshore net fisheries formalise catch shares for a number of important species • Since the reallocation policy was implemented in 2018, no formal requests for reallocation have been received for consideration
<p>Setting sustainable catch limits Achieved ✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New stock assessments published for 10 species (14 stocks) • Stock assessments also underway for 4 new species • Repeat assessments conducted for 5 species • Since July 2017, stock assessments completed, or underway, for 28 species and 44 fish stocks • Ongoing management of scallop stocks to support rebuilding • Commenced allocation of individual transferable quota (ITQ) for 5 new ITQ-managed species, allocation of new individual transferable effort (ITE) for Moreton Bay trawl region and reallocation of existing ITE into the four new east coast trawl regions to support operationalisation of fisheries reforms and new harvest strategies on 1 September 2021 	<p>Harvest strategies Achieved ✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 draft harvest strategies, a draft harvest strategy policy and a draft protected species management strategy were released for public consultation between September 2020 and January 2021, and approved in June 2021 <p>Fishing rules and access Achieved ✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second round of fisheries reforms announced on 30 September 2020 • 2020–21 Queensland Community Grants provided funding to 23 grant projects, including community fishing and education days, tagging and monitoring programs, habitat and fish passage improvement, citizen science and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness
<p>Stakeholder engagement Work continuing ☉</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members appointed (or reappointed) to 10 fishery working groups and Sustainable Fisheries Expert Panel • New Qld Fishing 2.0 recreational fishing app launched in October 2020 to help fishers better understand and comply with fishing rules • BDO EconSearch contracted to survey charter fishing businesses and report on 2019–20 economic and social indicators for commercial and charter fisheries • Commenced drafting commercial and recreational fisher engagement strategy for implementation in 2021–22 	<p>Responsive decision-making Achieved ✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New harvest strategies – commercial catch limits set for blue swimmer crabs, mud crabs and east coast inshore fisheries, and effort caps set across 5 regional trawl harvest strategies • Catch limits for 2021–22 reef line and spanner crab fishing seasons reviewed based on existing harvest strategies <p>Compliance Achieved ✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All actions delivered • Intelligence-based compliance focus, specifically targeting non-compliance • Cross-decking with key partner agencies to create efficiencies in the fisheries compliance program
<p>Environmental risk assessments On track ➔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the 19 fisheries identified as requiring an ecological risk assessment (ERA), 10 have completed Level 1 ERAs, 4 are in progress and 5 have not commenced • Of the 10 completed level 1 ERAs, 5 were progressed to level 2 ERA – 3 fisheries (East Coast inshore fin fish, Gulf of Carpentaria inshore fin fish and crab) have completed level 2 ERAs (7 reports published) and 2 fisheries (rocky reef, reef line) have completed ERAs pending approval 	<p>Resourcing Achieved ✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State budget allocated additional funding to deliver sustainable fisheries in Cape York, the vessel tracking post-implementation review, Commonwealth Wildlife Trade Operation export approval requirements, business-critical ICT changes for commercial fishing industry, and increased stakeholder engagement with the commercial fishing industry

The next 12–24 months

Over the next 12 months, the focus will be on the delivery of new management arrangements, delivering the new commercial fishing app, implementing management to rebuild east coast Spanish mackerel and developing a harvest strategy, and finalising the post-implementation review of vessel tracking.

In 2020, the Queensland Government also committed to establishing a special working group for Cape York to identify new economic pathways through charter fisheries and tourism operations that will be established.

Over the next 24 months, the focus will move to reviewing and developing harvest strategies for the Rocky Reef and Gulf of Carpentaria fisheries and addressing independent data validation commitments under the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy (which are also a Wildlife Trade Operation accreditation condition for many of our fisheries).

We will continue to focus on improving engagement, communication and education with fishers about fishing rules and building effective long-term relationships with stakeholders.

➔ 2020/21 targets

Sustainable catch limits for all fisheries (maximum sustainable yield around 40–50% biomass)

On track ➔

- 15 ITQ-managed, 1 ITE-managed and 8 competitive commercial catch limits now in place
- Catch limits for coral trout and red throat emperor revised in line with harvest strategy
- New catch limits for the 5 new ITQ-managed and 8 new, 2 revised and 2 existing competitive commercial catch limited species set to enable these species to be managed under the new 13 new harvest strategies

Harvest strategies for all fisheries

On track ➔

- A total of 15 harvest strategies approved with four fisheries outstanding (east coast Spanish mackerel, Rocky Reef, Gulf of Carpentaria and beam trawl)

Export approvals

Work continuing Ⓞ

- The East Coast Inshore Fin Fish Fishery (ECIFFF) export approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) (EPBC Act) was revoked on 30 September 2020 by the Federal Minister for the Environment
- On 21 May 2021, the Ocean Beach Fishery (formerly a part of the ECIFFF) was re-accredited for export. The remaining components of ECIFFF are no longer able to export product taken in this fishery
- 18 Queensland fisheries are currently accredited for export under the EPBC Act
- Of the 18 fisheries accredited, 6 export approvals were renewed and applications for the sea cucumber, coral and east coast trawl fisheries are under assessment

Stakeholder satisfaction with engagement

Work continuing Ⓞ

- 2019 survey indicated overall satisfaction rate of 50% – satisfaction increased for recreational fishers, government agencies and non-fishers, while satisfaction declined for commercial, charter and Indigenous fishers (commercial fishers continuing to have a low level of satisfaction with engagement)
- Recreational fishing app, Qld Fishing 2.0, released, with a new commercial fishing app well advanced in development
- Commenced drafting a communication and engagement strategy, with resourcing to be dedicated to this in 2021–22

Satisfaction of recreational fishers

Achieved ✓

- 2019–20 statewide recreational fishing survey found that 70% of recreational fishers were satisfied with their recreational fishing experience
- In 2020–21, 64% of recreational fishers were satisfied with their engagement with Fisheries Queensland – an increase from previous survey in 2017

Better data and improved stock assessment and analysis for key fisheries to underpin evidence-based management

Achieved ✓

- 2020 Status of Australian Fish Stocks report published – the new format allows results to be updated when new stock assessments or other information becomes available
- Additional biological data for over 50 species and age samples collected for 7 new fish species
- Shark species composition for retained and discarded shark catch in some net fisheries
- First comprehensive economic and social data for commercial and charter fisheries
- Statewide recreational fishing survey analysed to provide catch and effort estimates
- Vessel tracking data for fishing effort and logbook validation for major commercial fisheries

➔ 2027 targets

Sustainable catch limits for all fisheries (maximum sustainable yield around 60% biomass)

Work continuing Ⓞ

- As per sustainable catch limit 2020 target above
- Coral trout assessed at 59% of unfished levels, close to achieving the 2027 targets
- Eastern king prawn assessed at 62% of unfished levels and effort caps in place to maintain the target of 60% biomass

No Queensland fisheries overfished

Work continuing Ⓞ

- 5 stocks considered to have sustainability concerns:
 - 3 stocks considered depleted – snapper, saucer scallops and pearl perch
 - 2 stocks considered to be depleting – king threadfin and Spanish mackerel (Gulf of Carpentaria)
- 2 species recovered and considered sustainable – mangrove jack and barramundi (Gulf of Carpentaria)

Increased certainty for commercial operators

On track ➔

- Economic and social data for commercial and charter fisheries – published online via an interactive dashboard
- Completion of ITQ and ITE allocations, along with new and revised commercial catch limits, will not only support operationalisation of the fisheries reforms and new harvest strategies, but will provide certainty to commercial fishers about the harvest expected from their operations

Improved trends of compliance rates

On track ➔

- 89% – lower rate due to shift to intelligence-based compliance that targets non-compliant operators rather than random inspections and impacts arising from COVID-19

Responsive and consultative approach to fisheries management

On track ➔

- Satisfaction with engagement survey completed, members appointed/reappointed to 10 fishery working groups and Sustainable Fisheries Expert Panel, and 13 harvest strategies approved