Macduff sustainability profile

Supplied by Clearwater's UK Division, Macduff Shellfish

Species Name: Nephrops norvegicus

Harvest Area / Season: Langoustines are harvested year-round, with increased activity in the spring and summer. All of the supply is caught from FAO area 27 (Atlantic Northeast). International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) sub-areas from which Macduff procures the majority of its supply include North Sea (ICES Area IV) and West of Scotland (ICES Area VIa). Langoustines are harvested from both offshore waters as well as from inshore fisheries.



Fishing Method and Gear Type: The vast majority of langoustines are harvested by benthic trawls (85%), although a small portion (15%) is taken with pots, often referred to as creels. The creeler fleet is made up of a large number of small boats under 10 meters in length which typically operate inshore. The trawlers fish both inshore and offshore waters in mixed fisheries and harvest larger quantities per vessel. The extent of the fishing footprint is well known on these historic fishing grounds, and there are continuing efforts to understand the impacts and recovery times of different environments.

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Sustainable Removals: All United Kingdom langoustine harvesters must hold a fishing licence. The langoustine fisheries around the UK are subject to quota limits, or Total Allowable Catch (TAC), under the European Union (EU) Common Fisheries Policy. The TAC is distributed to EU Member States and subsequently among licensed harvesters around the UK through Fixed Quota Allocations. European quotas are based on scientific advice from the ICES and are negotiated each December between the European Commission and Member States.

Assessing Stock Health: Annual or biennial ICES stock assessments estimate exploitation rates and sustainable biomass (B_{MSV}) for all areas and rely on commercial catch records to provide information on amounts and size composition of the catch. Since Langoustines live in burrows, emerging only to feed and look for a mate, underwater video surveys are also carried out to provide supporting data of burrow density. Recent assessments indicate that the langoustine stocks are generally stable. TACs are adjusted yearly to reflect fluctuations in estimated stock levels. Scientific information on stock status from ICES forms the basis for annual quota setting and, as such, underpins the management of this fishery.

Conservation & Management Measures: Many different fisheries management tools are used in the langoustine fishery including quota limits, closed seasons, minimum mesh sizes for trawls to reduce the capture of non-target species, and a Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS). Langoustines smaller than the MCRS are not permitted to be sold for human consumption, removing any economic incentive to non-compliance.

The natural habits of langoustines also protect them from fishing effort. Individuals burrow into sandy and muddy seafloor sediment and females rarely come out when they are carrying eggs. Since trawls only capture animals that have emerged from their burrows, typically to feed at dusk and dawn, the species is naturally protected from fishing activity. This behaviour supports observations that catches are dominated by males and that females are left behind, allowing them to continue building the population.

Monitoring Catch: Langoustine catches are monitored through fishing logbooks, landing declarations, and sales notes. In addition, the fishery is subject to independent atsea observers, at-sea inspections and dockside monitoring. Satellite vessel monitoring systems are used to monitor vessel over 12 meters in length while harvesting at sea. As of January 1st 2016, all langoustine catches must be landed in order to reduce concerns associated with discard practices and encourage further selectivity for the target species in all fishing practices.

Managing Bycatch: To reduce bycatch national incentive schemes have been introduced to the fishery as well as various technical measures such as square-mesh panels and selection grids. By January 1st 2019 all bycatch species subject to quotas will need to be landed in line with the landing obligation. This should encourage further gear innovation to reduce the capture of non-target species.

Traceability: Langoustines are purchased directly from harvesters and are transported to processing facilities located in Scotland, owned and operated by Clearwater's Macduff Division. Our internal systems and documentation allow us to trace a product to the purchase and production date, as well as the port of landing.

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