



Commercial line fisheries

Line fishing is one of Queensland's main forms of commercial fishing, producing approximately 2200t of product, valued at about \$34.5 million a year.

There are 5 line fisheries operating in tidal waters from the Queensland border with the Northern Territory to the border with New South Wales:

- the coral reef fin fish fishery
- the rocky reef fin fish fishery
- the pelagic fishery (including Spanish mackerel, which extends throughout Queensland's offshore waters, including the Gulf of Carpentaria)
- the Gulf of Carpentaria fin fish fishery
- the deepwater multiple-hook fishery.

All 5 fisheries use fishing lines, with a restriction on the number of lines and hooks that commercial fishers can use.

Some of the catch is sold locally as frozen or fresh fillets, steaks or whole fish, while some is marketed as live fish for export.

This guide gives an overview of Queensland's commercial line fisheries, including management areas, target species, gear used, licensing and regulations.

Line fisheries licensing and management areas

If you participate in commercial line fishing, it's important that you are aware of licensing arrangements and management areas.

Licensing

The following licensing arrangements apply to Queensland's commercial line fisheries:

- The fisher must have a commercial fisher licence [<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/fisheries/licences/fisher-licence>].
- The boat must be licensed under a commercial fishing boat licence (CFBL) [<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/fisheries/licences/boat-licence>].
- The boat licence must be officially endorsed for the particular fishery (i.e. marked with the symbol that identifies the fishery).
- Some species (coral reef fin fish and Spanish mackerel) operate under quota management [<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/fisheries/monitoring-reporting/requirements>], therefore quota is also required to take those species.

No new licences, symbols or quota are issued for existing fisheries. To enter a line fishery, you must first obtain the correct licence (CFBL) and fishery symbols [<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/fisheries/licences/fisheries-symbols>] from an existing licence holder. Licences and quota can be transferred from person to person, and fishery symbols can be transferred from one licence to another licence.

Management areas

The line fisheries operate in specified tidal waters out to the Queensland offshore constitutional settlement boundary, extending east from the Queensland-Northern Territory border to include a large part of the Gulf of Carpentaria, north around the tip of Cape York Peninsula, and then south along the east coast of Queensland to the Queensland-New South Wales border.

The commercial line fisheries operate in 4 main areas:

- the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park
- south of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park to the New South Wales border
- the Gulf of Carpentaria
- in waters deeper than 200m outside the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Of these areas, the Great Barrier Reef, with its many reefs and vast areas of shallow water, is by far the most heavily fished by commercial line fishers. It accounts for about 85% of total harvest in the commercial line fishery. The Gulf of Carpentaria accounts for about 8% and the area south of the Great Barrier Reef accounts for about 7%.

Also consider...

- Find out about commercial fishing fees and application forms [[./?a=61456](#)].
- Read the Fisheries Regulation 2008 [<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sl-2008-0083>] for more information about licensing and management areas of Queensland's commercial line fisheries.

Line fisheries target species and fishing gear

Commercial line fishers generally target a diverse range of fin fish species, and use gear such as bottom handlines and trolling gear.

Target species

In the commercial fishery, 3 species dominate the total catch:

- coral trout [<http://www.daf.qld.gov.au/fisheries/species-identification/reef-fish/coral-trout>], at about 35% of total line catch
- Spanish mackerel [<http://www.daf.qld.gov.au/fisheries/species-identification/inshore-estuarine-species/mackerel-and-tuna/spanish-mackerel>], at about 20%
- red throat emperor [<http://www.daf.qld.gov.au/fisheries/species-identification/reef-fish/emperors/redthroat-emperor-sweetlip-emperor>], at about 15%.

The other significant species (or species groups) are:

- coral reef fin fish including cods, emperors and tropical snappers
- snapper [<http://www.daf.qld.gov.au/fisheries/species-identification/inshore-estuarine-species/seabream/snapper>] (*Pagrus auratus*)
- trevally [<http://www.daf.qld.gov.au/fisheries/species-identification/inshore-estuarine-species/trevally-queenfish-kingfish>]
- spotted mackerel [<http://www.daf.qld.gov.au/fisheries/species-identification/inshore-estuarine-species/mackerel-and-tuna/spotted-mackerel>].

Fishing gear

The main types of gear used in line fisheries are bottom handlines and trolling gear, with drop (or trot) line limited to the deepwater multiple-hook fishery (operating outside the 200m bathymetric line).

Bottom handlines

Bottom handlines are used for demersal fish (those that spend most of the time near the bottom - for example, coral trout). Handlines are single lines with baited hooks or gangs of hooks lowered from a stationary boat into the water by a rod or by hand. This is a common fishing method in most of the line fisheries, with the notable exception of the pelagic fishery.

Trolling

Trolling rigs are used for pelagic fish (those that swim in open water, such as Spanish and spotted mackerel). Trolling involves towing lures or baited hooks on lines behind a boat.

Droplines

Droplines are vertically set lines, with baited hooks, that are dropped from stationary boats into deepwater areas such as water adjacent to offshore drop-offs and submarine canyons. Droplining is usually conducted in water more than 200m deep to target deepwater species such as rosy jobfish [<http://www.daf.qld.gov.au/fisheries/species-identification/reef-fish/tropical-snappers-and-seaperches/rosy-snapper-jobfish>] and goldband snapper [<http://www.daf.qld.gov.au/fisheries/species-identification/reef-fish/tropical-snappers-and-seaperches/goldband-snapper>].

Government controls and legislation for line fisheries

As a commercial line fisher you need to be aware of the relevant legislation and regulations. Line fishing regulations are found in the Fisheries Regulation 2008 and include:

- closures during the spawning season for certain species (see coral reef fin fish example below)
- a ban on taking certain species
- restrictions on commercial boat size
- restrictions on the number of hooks and lines
- minimum and maximum legal sizes for fish
- a commercial catch quota management scheme for coral reef fin fish and Spanish mackerel
- possession limits for recreational fishers
- zoning, with area closures or restrictions (under state and commonwealth marine parks legislation).

Closed season guidelines – coral reef fin fish

Below are legal guidelines that relate to coral reef fin fish spawning closures.

- Notice must be given by midnight, prior to the start of the closure.
- Your vessel must be in port for the purposes of unloading by 6am on the first day of the closure.
- You can depart port for the fishing grounds during the closure but must not take or be in possession of coral reef fin fish during the closure period. This allows you to steam to

fishing grounds so you can commence fishing as soon as the closure has ended.

Monitoring and reporting

Commercial fishers have a legal obligation to report information about their fishing activities in a compulsory daily logbook [<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/fisheries/monitoring-reporting/requirements/logbooks>]. All line fishers must contribute data about their day's catch, the location fished, the gear used and any interactions with species of conservation interest. Fisheries Queensland uses this data to assess and monitor the status of individual species and fisheries [<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/fisheries/monitoring-reporting/monitoring>] in Queensland.

Under Queensland fisheries legislation, people who commercially fish or buy coral reef fin fish or Spanish mackerel are required to meet additional catch reporting requirements [<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/fisheries/monitoring-reporting/requirements/catch-reporting>].

Legislation

Queensland's line fisheries operate in accordance with the *Fisheries Act 1994* [<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1994-037>].

Other relevant legislation includes:

- Fisheries Regulation 2008 [<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sl-2008-0083>]
- *Marine Parks Act 2004* [<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2004-031>]
- *Nature Conservation Act 1992* [<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1992-020>]
- *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* (Cwlth) [<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2016C00342>]
- *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) [<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2016C00431>].

Contact: General enquiries 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

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