

The fin fish catch in the Great Barrier Reef Region was in 1979-80 estimated to be in the vicinity of 10,000 tonnes, made up of 7,000 tonnes caught by recreational and non-master fishermen (6,500 tonnes from speedboats and about 500 tonnes from charter boats), and 3,000 tonnes caught by licensed Master Fishermen (Hundloe, 1985). Most of this volume of product is made up of reef fish. Consumer demand for reef fish results in a great, but unknown percentage of reef fish which are caught by "amateurs" entering the commercial marketplace. This is achieved, legally, under Queensland legislation which allows amateurs to sell fish under a purchased permit or through non-legal cash sales, barter or exchange. The size of the black market is unknown, but is believed to be considerable.

The distribution of the catch between recreational fishermen is uneven. The top 10% of fishermen take 30-40% of the catch; most fishermen catch less than 2 fish per person per trip. Precise numbers vary between areas, but the figures translate into 13 fish per person per day for the top 10% of Cairns speedboat fishermen and 33 fish per person per day for the top 10% of Capricornia charterboat fishermen (Craik, 1981; unpublished data).

With no significant restrictions on their operations, the recreational catch will continue to increase. If present catch rates are maintained, the catch will have almost doubled to 12,000 tonnes by 1990.