

Lingcod

SPECIES

Lingcod (*Ophiodon elongatus*)



OTHER NAMES

Blue cod, Leopard cod

ABOUT

Lingcod belong to the greenling family *Hexagrammidae*, and are not related to other cod species. The species is found along the west coast of North America. Lingcod are bottom dwellers occupying rocky areas at depths of 10-100 metres (33-330 feet).

Lingcod are a largely non-migratory species, with colonization and recruitment occurring in localized areas only. Minimum harvest size is 65 cm (25.6 inches) for lingcod. Hook/line fishing for lingcod occurs in near-shore areas of the British Columbia (BC) coast during summer and fall. Winter closures are in place to protect spawning lingcod.

The meat is mild in taste, and is tender but firm with large soft and moist flakes.

STOCK STATUS

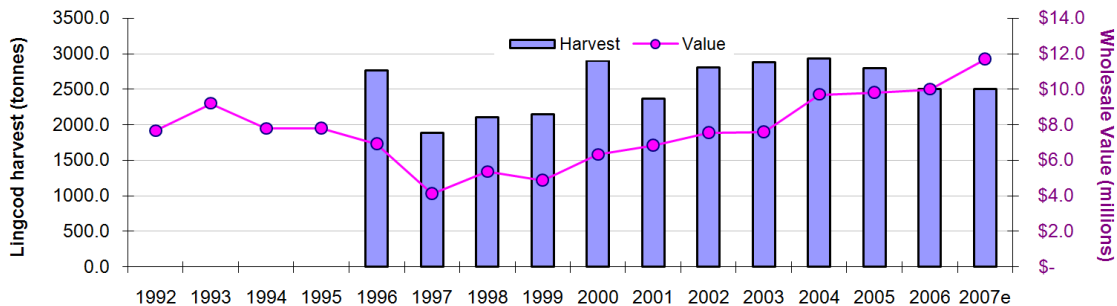
Lingcod is generally abundant off the coast of British Columbia (BC) but lingcod populations are of concern in the Strait of Georgia (*DFO - Fisheries Management*).

MANAGEMENT

BC's lingcod fishery is managed federally by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) under the new Integrated Groundfish program (*See: Integrated Groundfish Information Sheet*) that was put in place April 2006. The objective of the integrated groundfish program is to improve stock management through bycatch monitoring, reduced discarding, and requiring harvesters to be accountable for all catch. One hundred and sixty four Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs) have been established to protect inshore rockfish and lingcod by eliminating mortality from directed and incidental fisheries (*DFO - Fisheries Management*).

PRODUCT VALUE

Approximately 2,900 tonnes of lingcod sold for \$6.3 million in 2000. In 2007, 2,500 tonnes of lingcod sold at \$11.7 million (*BC Seafood Industry Year in Review*).



e: estimate

LIFE HISTORY

Starting in October, lingcod migrate to nearshore spawning grounds. The males migrate first, and establish nest sites in strong current areas in rock crevices or on ledges. Spawning takes place between December and March, and females leave the nest site immediately after depositing the eggs. Males actively defend the nest from predators until the eggs hatch in early March through late April. The larvae are pelagic until late May or early June when they settle to the bottom as juveniles. Initially they inhabit eelgrass beds, and later move to flat sandy areas that are not typical habitat of older lingcod. They eventually settle in habitats of similar relief and substrate as older lingcod, but remain at shallower depths for several years.

Females mature between 3-5 years of age at 61-75 cm (24-30 inches) in length whereas males mature at 2 years of age at 45 cm (18 inches) in length. Adult males can be distinguished externally from females by the presence of a small, conical papilla behind the anal vent. For the first 2 years, males and females grow at similar rates, with both reaching an average length of 45 cm. After age 2, females grow faster than males, with the growth of males tapering off at about age 8, and females continuing to grow until about age 12-14. Male lingcod live up to a maximum of 14 years and grow up to 90 cm (35 inches) in length. Females live up to 20 years and may reach a maximum size of 120 cm (47 inches).

Lingcod are voracious predators, feeding on invertebrates and many species of fish, including herring and Pacific hake. Predators include sea lions, killer whales and harbour seals. Adult lingcod have few predators.

PRODUCTS

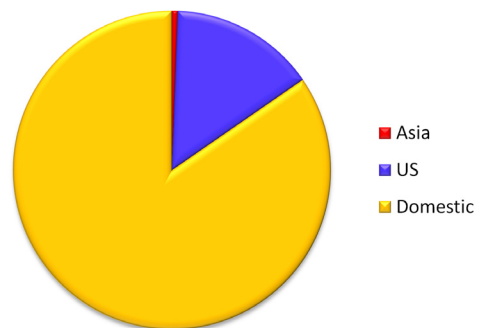
Lingcod is available as fresh and frozen filets.

PRODUCT MARKET

Lingcod markets are domestic and in the United States.

MARKET TREND

While prices are steady, exports have declined in recent years.

**LINKS**

DFO - Fisheries Management Plans: www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/ops/fm/fishmgmt_e.htm

BC Seafood Industry Year in Review: www.env.gov.bc.ca/omfd/reports/index.html

BCSeafood.ca: www.bcseafood.ca/index.php

Fish and Seafood Online: <http://www.ats-sea.agr.gc.ca/sea-mer/index-eng.htm>