

Rockfish

SPECIES

Rockfish (*Sebastes* species and *Sebastolobus* species)

OTHER NAMES

Ocean Perch, Snappers, Canaries, Greenies, Rock salmon, Rockcod

ABOUT

Rockfish belong to the family *Sebastidae* of Order *Scorpaeniformes*, and are found in the north Pacific Ocean from south California all the way to Kyushu Island (Japan). Thirty-six known species of rockfish are found in British Columbia (BC) waters mainly inhabiting the continental shelf and the upper slope regions. Primarily a bottom residing fish, rockfish can be found in depths from 1-600 metres (3-2,000 feet) on the outer BC coast to 9 metres (30 feet) in the Georgia Strait.



Pacific Ocean Perch

Rockfish are distinguished by a stout, heavy build, large broad heads usually bearing spines and strong ridges, and heavily spined fins. The colour patterns vary from black and drab green through brilliant orange and crimson, and some possess wide red, yellow or black stripes. Rockfish are long-lived. Yelloweye rockfish (red snapper) live up to 117 years and quillback rockfish up to 80 years in BC coastal waters. Average harvest size of most commercially important rockfish species is from 35 to 50 cm (14 - 20 inches). The fish are caught using trawls and by hook and line gear year round.

STOCK STATUS

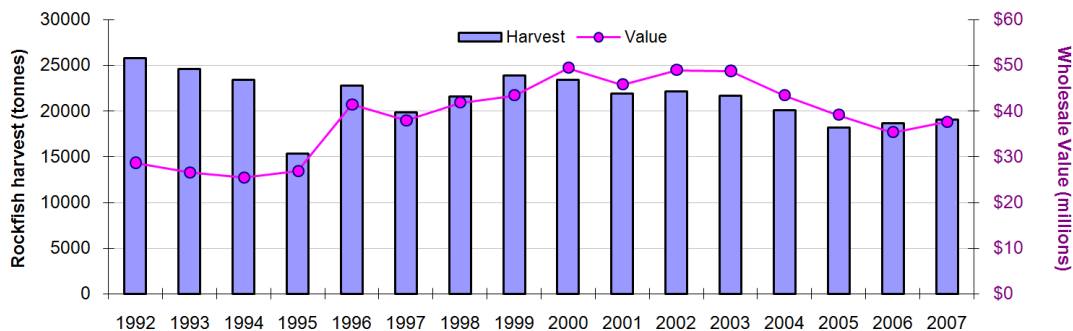
Overall, most rockfish stocks have declined and recovery is slow (*DFO - Fisheries Management*).

MANAGEMENT

BC's rockfish 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. Rockfish is managed under inside (Straits of Georgia and Juan de Fuca, and Johnstone Strait) and outside (outer coast) fisheries plans. One hundred and sixty four Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs) have been established to protect inshore rockfish and lingcod populations by eliminating mortality from directed and incidental fisheries (*Rockfish Conservation Areas; FO - Fisheries Management*).

PRODUCT VALUE

Approximately 19,100 tonnes sold at \$37.6 million in 2007 (*BC Seafood Industry Year in Review*).



e: estimate

LIFE HISTORY

Although little information is available about their movement patterns, most rockfish are considered a non-migratory species with localized movement only. Most rockfish are solitary and territorial.

Rockfish are long-lived and growth rate is slow. Reaching sexual maturity takes almost 18 years or more in Yelloweye rockfish. Rockfish have low rates of natural mortality and low rates of reproduction.

They eat a variety of foods including herring, sand lance, crabs, shrimp, and euphausiids. They are considered opportunistic feeders that will take whatever food is available at the time.

PRODUCTS

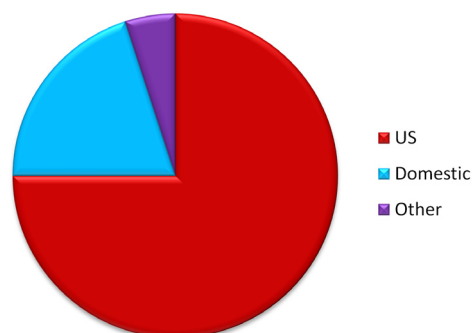
Rockfish is available as fresh fillets and live whole fish.

PRODUCT MARKET

Rockfish is available live in local markets. Fresh whole, fillets and frozen fillets are exported to the United States.

MARKET TREND

Although demand in the United States is high, it has been declining recently due to replacement whole fish species such as tilapia (aquaculture).

**LINKS**

DFO - Rockfish Conservation Areas: Protecting British Columbia's Rockfish (2006):
www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/recfish

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>