

Status of Sea Cucumbers in Antigua and Barbuda

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for

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Sea Cucumber**

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Nature of the Fishery

- ❖ The sea cucumber fishery of Antigua and Barbuda is subsistent in nature.
- ❖ Sea cucumbers typically collected by hand from seagrass beds and muddy-sandy sediments associated with mangrove areas.
- ❖ The depth range collected from is mainly up to 3 metres.
- ❖ The subsistent fishery started in the early 2000s by Asians for personal consumption.



Main Species Collected

❖ *Holothuria mexicana*
(Donkey Dung) –
most common

❖ *Isostichopus
badionotus* (Three-
rowed sea cucumber)

❖ *Actinopyga
agassizii*
(Five-toothed sea
cucumber)



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Legislative Framework

- ❖ In 2004, the Fisheries Division has sought assistance from the FAO to update the Fisheries Act and regulations.
- ❖ Emphasis was placed on developing a management regime to address traditional fisheries resources as well as emerging fisheries (sea eggs, sea cucumbers, etc.).
- ❖ In Feb 2013, the *Fisheries Act 2006* and the *Fisheries Regulations 2013* came into force.
- ❖ Special permit is required to collect sea cucumber (*Sec. 48 of the Fisheries Regulations 2013*).
- ❖ Fishers, processors, traders, exporters and aquaculturist have to be registered and licensed (*Part VI of Fisheries Regulations 2013*).
- ❖ MPAs (reserves and management areas) have been used as a tool to protect certain critical habitats (mangroves, seagrass beds, reefs).

Current Status

Capture Fisheries

- ❖ Status unknown (3 main species are still fairly common); no population surveys or assessments have been conducted to-date.
- ❖ There have been anecdotal reports of illegal commercial harvest in the 1990s.
- ❖ One entity expressed interest in commercial export in 2012; proposal was not approved due to the absence of surveys and requested quantities were high.

Aquaculture

- ❖ To-date there is no aquaculture facilities in Antigua and Barbuda.
- ❖ However, there is a legislative framework for aquaculture development (*Sec. 6 and Part V of the Fisheries Act 2006*).
 - Precautionary approach
 - Licensing
 - Food, drugs and disinfectants

Way Forward

- ❖ Population surveys and stock assessments need to be conducted to guide management decisions; the **precautionary approach** and **conservation of ecosystems** are now legally enshrined in management regulations.
- ❖ Incorporate sea cucumber in catch and effort as well as biological data programmes.
- ❖ A management and development plan needs to be developed for capture fisheries and aquaculture.
- ❖ Fisheries Division's staff complement needs to be increased in the area of aquaculture and processing (value adding) to aid development.
- ❖ Broaden **Antigua and Barbuda POA-IUU** to address emerging fisheries.

Thank You!



❖ Additional info on the fisheries sector of Antigua and Barbuda can be obtained from the website:

www.fisheries.gov.ag