

# canadian lobster



**Species Name:** *Homarus americanus*

**Offshore Canadian lobster has been Marine Stewardship Council Certified since June 2010**

**Harvest Area / Season:** Canadian Offshore lobsters are harvested within the FAO Area 21 (Atlantic Northwest) in NAFO sub-areas 4X and 5Z. The offshore fishery area takes place 50 miles from the southwest coast of Nova Scotia in Lobster Fishing Area (LFA) 41. The fishery in LFA 41 is conducted year-round starting January 1.

**Sustainable Removals:** Fisheries in Canada are managed under the Precautionary Approach, meaning removals must be set at levels that ensure the stock maintains high productivity and that overfishing does not occur. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) sets the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for LFA 41, which has been set at 720 metric tonnes annually since 1985. Clearwater holds all 8 licences in the fishery and is allocated 100% of the quota. Scientific research indicates that the relative exploitation rate in the fishery is low (about 15%) and declining in recent years.

**Assessing Stock Health:** The scientific data used to manage the fishery is collected from both fishery-independent and fishery dependent sources. A combination of Canadian and US trawl survey data provide information about stock abundance, sex ratios and size composition and is supplemented by on-board sampling by independent observers. The median size of lobsters in the offshore catch is higher than the size at which 50% of the females mature and thus a high proportion of the females have the opportunity to breed 2-3 times.

**Participating in Research:** Clearwater's vessel regularly carries industry-funded, independent biologists who collect scientific data to be used in the assessment of the resource. Management of the fishery is consultative and co-operative between industry and DFO, and a comprehensive and rigorous scientific research program supports fisheries management. Clearwater employs a team of biologists who apply biological science and technology to perfect our handling and storage systems in order to maintain lobster quality and health.

**Conservation & Management Measures:** In addition to quota controls, fishing in LFA 41 is subject to a series of other management measures. Lobsters under the minimum legal size (82.5 mm carapace length) and egg-bearing females are returned. Escape vents in the traps minimize bycatch and allow juvenile lobsters



to escape. Biodegradable panels mitigate the impact of ghost fishing if gear is lost. Market demand for a wide range of lobster sizes encourages selection of animals from various size classes, reducing the pressure on any single size group. Clearwater has also implemented a voluntary maximum size limit. A closure on Browns Bank to all lobster fishing has been in place since 1979 as a measure to protect lobster brood stock.

**Managing Bycatch:** Baited trap fishing selects for lobsters and other crustaceans so finfish bycatch is minimal. There is a regulated Jonah crab bycatch fishery associated with the LFA 41 lobster fishery but currently Jonah crabs are not retained. When retained, minimum legal size and mandatory return of female crabs ensure protection of the species and there is a quota limit of 540 t. All other non-lobster bycatch is returned at sea. Survivability of undersized lobster and other crustacean bycatch returned to sea is very high.

Independent research has indicated the risk of whale entanglements from offshore lobster fishing gear is very low. To further reduce the risk to marine mammals and turtles, Clearwater has implemented standard operating procedures for gear deployment and retrieval and marks all traps and buoys for easy identification. Our ongoing gear research program is testing additional modifications to further reduce bycatch below already low levels.

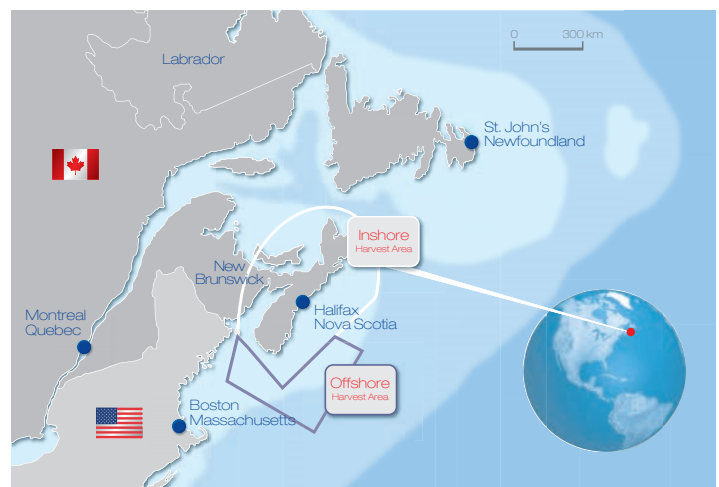
**Monitoring Catch:** The LFA 41 fishing fleet is subject to 100% vessel satellite tracking, 100% dockside monitoring and regular at-sea observer coverage. Daily logbook recording is mandatory. There is excellent monitoring of catches, bycatch and landings.

**Fishing Method and Gear Type:** Lobsters are caught with baited traps. Traps are set on the ocean bottom with openings to allow lobsters in and escape vents to allow undersized lobsters out. The bottom impact associated with trap fishing is minor, with only the area directly under the trap being influenced, and scientific studies have shown that species moved by the trap return to the area after the trap is removed.

A coral protection area was established which restricts fishing by all gear types in deep water of the Northeast Channel to protect an identified concentration of deep sea corals. Coral interaction is not an issue in the lobster fishery as the fishery takes place in waters shallower than the coral distributions.

**Traceability:** Internal monitoring systems on our state of the art vessel and at our land-based facilities allow Clearwater to trace our product to the production day and fishing area where it was caught. The catch is entered into our traceability system and can be tracked throughout the entire Clearwater supply chain.

**Inshore Lobster Fishery:** In addition to the supply from our own offshore vessel, Clearwater also purchases lobster from inshore fishermen in the Canadian Maritimes. The inshore fishery takes place within 50 miles of shore. Management measures include limited fishing seasons, restricted entry to the fishery, a limited number of traps per fishermen, minimum legal size of retention, mandatory trap escape vents for juveniles and protection for egg-bearing females.



Inshore fishermen are required to complete logbooks. Catch for the inshore fishery is recorded through a dockside reporting system when lobsters are sold to dealers and distributors. The inshore lobster fishery in Atlantic Canada lands approximately 50,000 t annually.

Lobsters sourced from the inshore fishery can be traced through Clearwater facilities in Lockeport, Arichat, and Bedford Nova Scotia. Clearwater lobster buyers record the fisherman or group of fishermen and the LFA from which lobsters are sourced. A 'buy' may include landings from 1 to 25 boats that all fish from a specific community within a single LFA.

The inshore lobster fishery in Atlantic Canada is currently in full assessment under MSC Certification.



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