



16 August 2022

Dear Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Licence Holder,

Catch allowance for the sunset licence sector of Torres Strait Finfish Fishery for the 2022-23 season, and amendment to the *permanent closure area*.

I am writing to advise you of the catch allowance for the sunset licence sector of the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery (TSFF) for the 2022-23 season (1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023).

At its meeting on 11 February 2022, the Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) agreed that the TSFF Spanish mackerel Total Allowable Catch (TAC) will be 75 tonnes and the coral trout TAC will be 135 tonnes for the 2022-23 fishing season.

The PZJA decision was in line with advice from the TSFF Resource Assessment Group and TSFF Working Group. AFMA advised all licence holders of the agreed TACs in writing on 21 February 2022. An additional copy of this letter is enclosed for your reference (**Attachment A**).

Access to the TSFF is reserved for Traditional Inhabitants (the TIB sector) and fishers that lease sunset licences (the sunset sector) from the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA). Sunset licences may be held by non-traditional inhabitants and allow for a certain amount of catch to be taken. Each year since 2008-09 the TSRA, on behalf of traditional inhabitants, has leased these sunset licences (temporary transfers), with specified Spanish mackerel and coral trout catch amounts. Since 2017-18 TSRA have also leased catch allowances for other reef-line finfish species. Sunset licences are granted and varied by AFMA, as the PZJA licensing delegate.

For the 2022-23 fishing season, AFMA as the PZJA licencing delegate, has approved the TSRA application for three sunset licences to be temporarily transferred (leased) with a total catch allowance across all licences of:

- a. 57 tonnes of Spanish mackerel,
- b. 35 tonnes of coral trout and
- c. 3.5 tonnes of other reef-line finfish species

Table 1 below provides a summary by species, of the TAC and the catch allowance for the sunset and TIB sectors.

Table 1. 2022-23 fishing season TACs and catch allowance (tonnes) by sector.

Species	Agreed TAC	Sunset sector catch share	TIB sector catch share
Spanish mackerel	75	57	18
Coral trout	135	35	100
Other reef-line species*	n/a	3.5	No limit

*Note the other reef-line species basket is capped at 30 tonnes per season and applies only to Sunset Licence holders.

AFMA will provide catch watch reports throughout the season to advise licence holders on reported catches against the TACs which are published here: <https://www.pzja.gov.au/fishery-catch-watch-reports>. If required, additional measures will be developed to ensure catches do not exceed the agreed TACs.

Please note that all catch taken in the TSFF must be weighed and recorded by a licenced fish receiver at the first point of landing. A list of licenced fish receivers who can receive your catch is available on the public register of concession holders available here: <http://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries-services/concession-holders-conditions/>. The public register also contains details of all commercially licenced fishers in Torres Strait including sunset licence holders.

As a reminder to all licence holders, in calculating total catch taken against licenced catch allowances and the total weight of finfish species harvested in the fishery, AFMA uses the conversion factors in Table 2 (below) to convert catch reported in a form other than whole weight (e.g. fillets, gilled and gutted, trunked) back to whole weight.

Table 2. Torres Strait Finfish Fishery conversion ratios used to convert processed catch back to whole weight.

Form	Mackerel	Coral trout	Other finfish species
Filleted	1.608 : 1	2 : 1	2.5 : 1
Gilled and gutted	1.048 : 1	1.1 : 1	1.1 : 1
Trunked	1.176 : 1	-	-

I am also writing to advise you that at its meeting on 16 March 2022, the PZJA agreed to amend the Torres Strait Fisheries (Finfish) Management Instrument 2020 (the Management Instrument), which is a legislative instrument under section 16 of the Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984 (the Act).

This amendment redefined the *permanent closure area* as identified in section 15 of the Management Instrument, pursuant to paragraph 16(1)(a) of the Act, to prohibit the taking of finfish by line fishing methods in that area of the finfish fishery commencing south of Latitude 09°34' 31" S and west of Longitude 142°31'49" E.

In effect, this opened a new area of the Finfish (Reef Line) Fishery north of the southernmost point of Buru Island. The intent of this amendment is to provide an economic opportunity to fishers in Gudamaluilgal (top-western) communities. The opening was supported by FFRAG advice which stated that the risk to sustainability is low.

Sunset licences will contain a condition that stipulates that fishers must adhere to the superseded *permanent closure area* which prohibits Reef Line fishing west of Longitude 142°31'49" E.

If you would like further information about the sunset sector catch allowance or any other matter relating to the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery, please do not hesitate to contact the AFMA Torres Strait Office on (07) 4069 1990.

Yours sincerely,



Emma Freeman
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Australian Fisheries Management Authority

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Australian Government
Australian Fisheries Management Authority

21 February 2022

Dear Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Licence Holder,

Fishery licence catch limits for 2022-23 season

I am writing to advise you of the agreed Total Allowable Catch (TAC) limits for commercial fishing in the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery (the Fishery) for the 2022-23 season.

At its 11 February 2022 meeting the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) agreed that the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Spanish mackerel TAC will be 75 tonnes and the coral trout TAC will remain unchanged at 135 tonnes for the 2022-23 fishing season, which commences on 1 July 2022.

In making its decision the PZJA considered advice from both the Finfish Fishery Resource Assessment Group (FFRAG) and Finfish Fishery Working Group (FFWG). Meeting records of the FFRAG and FFWG are available on [the PZJA website \(www.pzja.gov.au\)](http://www.pzja.gov.au).

Spanish mackerel is a species for which catch-sharing arrangements are agreed with Papua New Guinea (PNG) under the Torres Strait Treaty. On 14 February 2022 AFMA and the PNG National Fisheries Authority met and agreed that no catch sharing arrangements for Spanish mackerel (or for the prawn or pearl shell fisheries) would be made for the 2022-23 fishing season.

Access to the Fishery is reserved for Traditional Inhabitants who hold a Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) licence and fishers that lease annual sunset licences (the sunset sector) from the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA). Sunset licences may be held by non-traditional inhabitants and allow for a certain amount of catch to be taken. TSRA lease sunset licences and catch allowances on behalf of Traditional Inhabitants. The leasing process for 2022-23 is expected to be completed before the start of the 2022-23 fishing season. AFMA will further advise licence holders on the outcomes of this leasing process including the number of sunset licences issued and total catch leased to these licences.

AFMA will provide catch watch reports throughout the season to advise licence holders on reported catches against the TACs.

Please note that all catch taken in the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery must be weighed and recorded by a licenced fish receiver at the first point of landing. A list of licenced fish receivers who can receive your catch is available on the public register of concession holders available from the PZJA website (<https://www.pzja.gov.au/notices-and-announcements/notices-and-announcements/torres-strait-licence-register-now-available>). The public register also contains details of all commercially licenced fishers in Torres Strait including sunset licence holders.

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If you would like further information about the recommended commercial catch limits or any other matter relating to the Finfish Fishery please do not hesitate to contact the AFMA Office on Thursday Island on (07) 4069 1990.

Yours sincerely,



Georgia Langdon
Acting Manager
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