

**THE MEXICAN LOBSTER FISHERY,
MARKET AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM**

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Dept. of External Affairs
Min. des Affaires extérieures

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NARRATIVE

Mexico ranks eighth among the world's lobster-producing nations. Species of the Palinuridae, Nephropidae and Scyllaridae families of spiny lobsters may be found in Mexican waters. Of the seven Palinuridae species present, only four make up the principal lobster fishery: Panulirus interruptus (red lobster); Panulirus gracilis (green lobster); Panulirus inflatus (blue lobster) and Panulirus argus (Caribbean lobster).

Most of the lobsters are taken along the Peninsula of Baja California (from Ensenada to Bahía de Magdalena, Isla La Partida and Isla Espíritu Santo), and the Peninsula of Yucatán (Punta Holchit and the coastline of Quintana Roo). Potential exists to develop the lobster fishery along the coasts of Oaxaca and Chiapas. However, many studies are required to determine the exact potential of the resource and the number of fishermen that can be allowed to exploit it in that region.

The lobster fishery in Mexico is reserved to co-operatives. There are 90 fisheries co-operatives with a total membership of approximately 10,500 fishermen. However, not all of them are directly involved in catching lobsters; many of them are engaged in fishing for other marine species.

In order to manage and preserve this resource, the Secretariat of Fisheries via its National Fisheries Institute, has taken two regulatory measures (besides limiting the number of fishermen): a period each year when the catching of lobster is prohibited, and a minimum size that can legally be taken depending on the characteristics of each of the species being exploited. These measures are to allow more larva to be released by the female lobsters at spawning time, to give the resource a period of rest and to enable it to develop in size. The objective is to allow female lobsters to reach maturity and breed at least once in their lifetime, to have replacements for the females which are caught.

The prohibition periods and the minimum sizes allowed for each specie are:

<u>Lobster Species</u>	<u>Prohibition Period</u>	<u>Minimum Size</u>
Red	16 March - 30 Sept.	82.5 cephalothorax
Green & blue	1st. June - 15 Sept.	82.5 cephalothorax
Caribbean	1st. March - 30 June	14.5 abdominal

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