



PRESS RELEASE

CANADIAN DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES COULD DESTROY DOMESTIC SPOT PRAWN INDUSTRY AND LOCAL FISHING FAMILIES WITH UNREALISTIC NEW TUBBING REGULATIONS

DECEMBER 16 2021, Vancouver, BC – After months of waiting for consultation and engagement, the local prawn industry was presented a shocking decision by the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), which once again, threatens to throw British Columbia’s \$45-million commercial prawn industry into havoc, affecting the livelihoods of hundreds of families throughout the province.

Without consultation with local harvesters and stakeholders, the DFO has proposed a tub size limit of 250g (8oz). This 8 oz tub is one-third the size of the typical 24 oz (1lb) container used for tubbing tails. It is proposed that this will allow prawn tubbing to meet the requirement of having product “readily available” for inspection which includes measuring prawn tails (telson length) to ensure no undersized prawns are retained.

There are many obvious reasons why this decision is illogical:

- 1) Prawn size limits are not a conservation measure but were established to increase the product’s market value.
- 2) It is impossible to measure a telson through plastic and ice regardless of the container size.
 - For the past 50 years, prawns have been inspected and measured on sorting tables both on vessels and in processing plants or through thawing frozen tubs which takes less than 5 minutes.
 - There have been no size violations in the industry in the past two years with an overall average of two violations per year.
- 3) This regulation equates to a 100% increase in plastic which not only runs counter to plastic-reduction goals, but also significantly increases labour and costs for small scale independent harvesters, driving up the price of prawns for domestic markets.
- 4) Increased packaging also significantly increases the number of trips to and from shore, increasing fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.
- 5) The smaller tub size may impact product quality and increase loss since it will be difficult to freeze consistent numbers of prawns in the small containers, and difficult to fully submerge them in water, creating an increased risk of freezer burn.
- 6) The only alternative to tubbing is to dip prawns in chemical preservatives and freeze them individually as is done for export markets. This is not possible onboard small vessels and domestic markets will not accept these chemical-laden prawns. This disparity further damages the domestic prawn market, further benefiting large companies that export the prawns to foreign markets.



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There has been no consultation with active harvesters who will be out on the water this season, nor with harvester-associations including the Prawn Industry Caucus (PIC), United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union (UFAWU), and Native Fishing Association (NFA).

“Prawn harvesters have a long history of prioritizing the sustainability of the fishery and collaborating on developing regulations that ensure the health of ecosystems and the fishery. These proposed regulations do nothing to protect the fishery and will only further harm independent harvesters like my family and our fishing communities. If the proposed packaging decisions go through, the fishery will become non-viable to many of us small-scale harvesters who supply food locally. We will lose the benefits that they bring to our communities, as well as access for Canadians to this sustainable local food source,” says prawn harvester, Melissa Collier.

Members of the industry including Skipper Otto Community Supported Fishery are asking for the public’s support by sending a [letter to their local MP](#).

Additional Information:

- In 2018, harvesters brought in 1.6 million kilograms of spot prawns
- Wild BC spot prawns come from a sustainable fishery. The fishery is recognized by the David Suzuki Foundation/Seachoice program as a BEST CHOICE, OceanWise as GREEN and the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Seafood Watch as a BEST CHOICE.
- 205 vessels harvest off the coast of BC with the season generally opening in May and closing in mid to late June
- The spot prawn industry started in BC in 1914 and has consistently proven to be a well-managed, sustainable industry
- DFO’s objection to freezing spot prawns is in reference to a reinterpretation of the regulation requiring all harvested products be “readily available” for measurement. Spot prawns are routinely inspected by enforcement while live on sorting tables before being frozen. A tub of spot prawns can be defrosted in under five minutes if further inspection is requested.

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Images and Video Available at: [Sharepoint Folder](#)