

Identification of Factors Affecting the Survival of Lobster Exports Industry in Sri Lanka with Special Reference to Spiny Lobster

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At present there are five main species of Spiny Lobsters exported from Sri Lanka. There are controversial findings regarding lobster resource and it is required to know the current status of the lobster resource in Sri Lankan oceanic waters. Thereby the status of lobster fishery and exports industry as well as the factors affecting the survival of lobster exports industry in Sri Lanka are required to be identified. The present study was carried out to fulfill this requirement. Questionnaires and direct interview methods were used to obtain the relevant information from the exporters, lobster fishermen, lobster purchasing centers and collectors. Lobster export data and catch data were analyzed by using MS Excel. Information related to legal aspects and other stock assessment projects related to lobsters were obtained from Ministry of Fisheries and NARA. Currently, *Panulirus longipes* is the mostly exported lobster species and it accounts for 30.4% of total lobster exportation. *Panulirus ornatus* is nearly overexploited. *Panulirus polyphagus* has completely vanished from Sri Lanka. *Panulirus ornatus* fetch the highest price in the export market (US\$ 701Rs. 8200 per Kilogram). Highest lobster production and export quantity as well as the highest export value were earned in 2013. Availability of the lobsters in the ocean around Sri Lanka, laws and regulations, political influence, Scuba divers & other recreational divers, problems faced by the lobster fishermen, problems faced by the exporters, illegal activities done by fishermen, collectors and exporters are the factors affecting the survival of lobster exports industry in Sri Lanka which were identified from the present study. Some of these factors affect positively on the survival of lobster exports industry while other factors affect negatively on the survival of this industry. Relevant authorities should take steps to protect this lobster resource while providing opportunities to the fishermen, exporters and local consumers to use the resource in a sustainable manner.

Keywords: Lobster export industry, Lobster production, Stock assessment