MAINE LOBSTER: How to Protect the Name of a Famous Catch?

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June 2014
Maine Lobstermen’s Association advocates for a sustainable lobster resource and the fishermen and communities that depend on it.

- MLA is a fishing industry association established in 1954
- Advocate for interests of commercial lobstermen on a variety of regulatory and economic issues
- Educate lobster industry through monthly newsletter, e-weekly and social media
Maine Lobster Fishery at a Glance

- 6,000 commercial licenses issued (2012)
  - 70% are active (4,280)
  - 60% landed > 1,000 lbs (3,650)
  - 30% are latent (1,750)
- Max limit of 800 traps (or less)
  - ~3 million trap tags issued
  - ~2.4 million trap tags > 1,000 lbs (80%)

Source: Maine DMR
Maine Lobster Fishery at a Glance

- Record 127 million lbs landed (2012)
- Landings 126 million lbs in 2013
- Record value of $364.5 million in 2013
- 80% lobsters graded as sweet “shedder”

Source: Maine DMR
2013
125.9 million pounds
$365 million paid to boats

Historic Average
25 million lbs
Maine Lobster Fishery at a Glance

- Fishery is open year-round
- ~80% of lobstermen fish in coastal waters (within 3 miles)
- Peak landings July – Nov
• Maine lobster fishery is open year-round
• Landings are highly seasonal
• ~80% of Maine’s catch is landed in 5 months
What *is* a Maine lobster?

- Lobster harvested in Maine, right?
- FDA regulates seafood names
- “Maine lobster” used to be an acceptable common name for all *Homarus americanus*
- Lots of confusion
- No enforcement; MA, CN and others market as “Maine lobster”
- The Seafood List - FDA's Guide to Acceptable Market Names for Seafood Sold in Interstate Commerce
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Acceptable Market Name(s)</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Langostino or Langostino Lobster</td>
<td>Squat Lobster</td>
<td>Cervimunida johni</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lobster</td>
<td>American Lobster</td>
<td>Homarus americanus</td>
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<td>Lobster</td>
<td>European Lobster</td>
<td>Homarus gammarus</td>
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<td>Lobster, Slipper</td>
<td>Japanese Fan Lobster</td>
<td>Ibacus ciliatus</td>
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<td>Lobster, Rock</td>
<td>Southern Rock Lobster</td>
<td>Jasus omaria</td>
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<td>Cape Spiny Lobster</td>
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<td>Eastern Spiny Lobster</td>
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<td>Lobsterette</td>
<td>Caribbean Lobsterette</td>
<td>Metanephrops binghami</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lobsterette or Baby Lobster or Scampi or Deep Sea Lobster or Bay Prawn</td>
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<td>Squat Lobster</td>
<td>Munida gregaria</td>
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<td>Florida Lobsterette</td>
<td>Nephrops aculeata</td>
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<td>Common Spiny Lobster</td>
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<td>Caribbean Spiny Lobster</td>
<td>Panulirus argus</td>
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Why does it matter if a lobster is harvested from Maine?

- Maine, NH, MA, RI all catch *Homarus americanus*
- Canada catches *Homarus americanus*
- Maine harvesters care about its origin!
Maine’s Lobster Conservation Measures

**V-notch Protection**

**Zero Tolerance**

**Escape Vents**

**Berried Females**

**Oversize Protection >5”**

**3 ¼” min carapace**

**Trap Only Fishery**

**Trap Limits (800 max)**

No Sundays June-Aug; Daytime only June-Oct
Lobstermen return to the sea alive
50% to 80% of what they catch in traps

Source: Maine DMR 2012

sublegal
oversize
V-notch
Eggers (& notch)
Maine Lobster Industry programs

**Zone councils**
- Co-management
- Majority of gear fished in zone
  - Only 49% of gear can fished in adjacent areas
- Limited entry and trap limits

**Owner Operator**
- No corporate ownership
- License and tags assigned to an individual and vessel
- No sale or transfer
- Revenue stays local which supports rural communities

**Apprentice Program**
- 2 year training program
- Work with licensed Captain
Maine... rural coastal economy

- Rural state with population of 1.3 million
- 3,500 mile coastline
- Small remote communities
- Located on peninsulas
- 15 year round island communities
- Poor economic performance
- Lobster industry is a billion $ industry

- Maine lands 85% of US supply of Homarus americanus
- US exported 107 million lbs
  - 68 million lbs exported to CN
  - 39 million lbs exported overseas
- US consumed 42 million lbs (28%)
- CN imported 68 million lbs (45%)
Building Value for Maine Lobster

Maine Lobster Promotion Council

- Established in 1991
- License fees from harvesters and lobster buyers
- Budget ~$350k
- Replaced with MLMC in 2013

Harvesters lobbied for increasing investment in building demand for Maine lobster to bring more value to the boats!

Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative

- Established in 2013
- License fees from harvesters, processors, dealers
- Budget $2.2 million in year 3
- Sunset after 5 years
Protecting Maine lobster

- MLPC established Certified Maine Lobster program
- “Certification mark” registered with US Patent and Trademark Office
- Identification program allowing retail and trade customers, as well as consumers, to know their lobster came from Maine.
Imposter Lobster

• Allows other lobster to take advantage of value of “Maine Lobster”
• Undermines the brand, diminishes value
• Country of Origin Labeling (COOL)
  – Adds to confusion about origin of product
• Traceability can help
  – Proof of origin and chain of custody
  – Maine Lobster is MSC certified
Origin Products need protection