

Recent trends in beche-de-mer exports from New Caledonia

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The most representative data on beche-de-mer fishery developments in New Caledonia continue to be the export tonnage and value figures provided by the Customs Service.

This information has its limits, however, because it relates to an exported commodity, whereas customs records almost always concern imports. The possible resulting inaccuracies are much more likely to affect values than tonnages exported. In addition, customs commodity classifications do not distinguish between exported sea cucumbers by species, although different species have very different commercial values. The only useable data, therefore, are the aggregate export figures for the last five years, which are shown in Table 1.

It emerges from these data that, whereas apparent mean values have remained stable in the last two years, exported tonnages dropped sharply in 1998 (-31% compared to 1997 and -51% compared to 1994).

Although, as stated above, it is hazardous to rely only on export data, this slump could indicate excessive pressure on the resource.

This is one of the reasons why the Northern Province authorities in New Caledonia have commissioned a resource study, which could begin in the weeks to come. There are plans to conduct a similar study on trochus.

Table 1. Beche-de-mer exports from New Caledonia

| | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Quantity (t) | 79.8 | 48.0 | 49.2 | 56.5 | 39.1 |
| Value (US\$)* | 1 131 910 | 1 004 340 | 784 430 | 1 181 920 | 791 500 |
| Ave. price (US\$/kg) | 14.1 | 20.9 | 15.9 | 20.9 | 20.2 |

* For US\$ 1.00 = 110 CFP

Some news on the Galapagos situation.

Sea cucumber fishery postponed

Puerto Baquerizo Moreno (Ivan Naula).

English translation from *El Universo*, 15 March 1999

The start of the fishery for sea cucumbers, scheduled for today, was postponed until 25 March by request of the presidents of the fishery cooperatives on the three islands, because they have not been able to purchase the fishing gear and other materials due to the bank holiday.

In a document, the directors of the cooperatives requested the postponement of the start of the sea cucumber fishery, because only today, with the re-opening of the banks, will they be able to make the

necessary transactions and withdrawals to buy the fishing gear.

Galapagos: The DAC could be involved: Sea cucumbers, a cargo was confiscated

English translation from *El Comercio*, 3 April 1999

The illegal fishing for sea cucumbers does not stop. On 31 March, 17 500 sea cucumbers were confiscated in the airport on Isabela Island (Galapagos). This was denounced by Yolanda Kakabadse, Minister of the Environment.

The incident could have greater implications, because it seems that personnel of the National