

Dungeness Crab

SPECIES

Dungeness Crab (*Cancer magister*)

OTHER NAMES

Market crab

ABOUT

Dungeness crab belongs to the *Cancriidae* family, and is common and widespread in sandy areas along the British Columbia (BC) coast from the intertidal to a depth of about 180 metres (600 feet). Its hard shell is light reddish brown on the back and sometimes has a purple splotch toward the front. The underside is white to light orange. Its claws are white-tipped, and the tip of the last tail segment flap is rounded. Male Dungeness crab can grow to a shell width of 23 cm (9 inches) and weigh up to 1.4 kg (3 lbs).



The meat has a sweet, mild and slightly nutty taste with tender body meat and slightly firmer leg meat. The minimum harvest size for trap-caught Dungeness crab is 16.5 cm (6 1/2 inches) across the maximum breadth of the shell.

STOCK STATUS

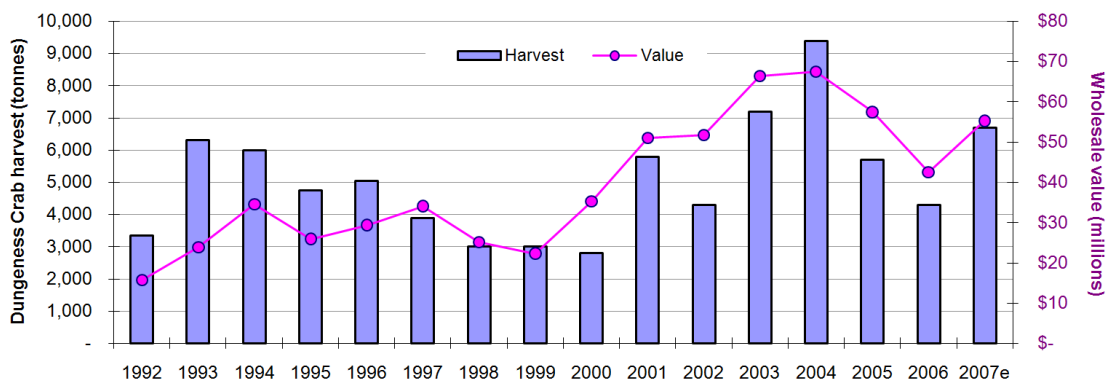
Overall Dungeness crab stocks appear healthy (*DFO - Fisheries Management*).

MANAGEMENT

BC's Dungeness crab fishery is managed federally by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). This is a fully competitive fishery with no quotas and no pre-season estimate of total allowable catch. The commercial fishery is managed by size limits, sex (non-retention of female crabs), trap limits, and seasonal closures in some areas (*DFO - Fisheries Management*).

PRODUCT VALUE

Harvests and wholesale values fluctuate: 9,400 tonnes at \$67.4 million in 2004; 4,200 tonnes at \$42.2 million in 2006; 6,700 tonnes at \$55.2 million in 2007 (*BC Seafood Industry Year in Review*).



e: estimate

LIFE HISTORY

Crabs reach maturity in about three years. Mature female crabs generally molt between May-August. Males molt at variable times during the year. Mating occurs immediately after the female has molted and before the new exoskeleton hardens. Breeding occurs in inshore waters and females may move to deeper water to hatch eggs. Young crabs are planktonic (free-swimming) in the water column for 4 – 8 weeks ensuring wide dispersion of recruitment governed by tides and wind. Juvenile crabs remain in lower intertidal or shallow sub-tidal waters.

Adult crabs may live to over 10 years and reach a maximum carapace width of 23 cm (9 inches) and maximum weight of 1.4 kg (3 lbs).

Dungeness crab feed on bivalves, crustaceans, marine worms, and fish. Predators include other crab species, halibut, dogfish, sculpin, octopus, rockfish, birds, and sea otters.

PRODUCTS

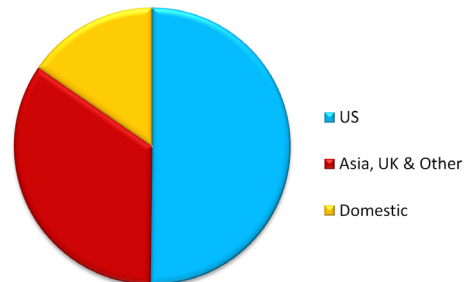
Dungeness crab is available whole (live, fresh-cooked or frozen), and as leg and body meat. The leg and body meat is available fresh-cooked, frozen or canned.

PRODUCT MARKET

Dungeness crabs are sold domestically and shipped live to world markets, with the United States and China being the major export markets.

MARKET TREND

Prices have declined slightly over the past 3-4 years.

**LINKS**

Area A Crab Association: www.areaacrab.org

DFO - Fisheries Management Plans: www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/ops/fm/fishmgmt_e.htm

BC Seafood Industry Year in Review: www.env.gov.bc.ca/omfd/reports/index.html

BCSeafood.ca: www.bcseafood.ca/index.php

Fish and Seafood Online: <http://www.ats-sea.agr.gc.ca/sea-mer/index-eng.htm>