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## 3. Methodology

There is a paucity of social information about the commercial fishing industry and its employees in Queensland, and specifically the harvest industry. Therefore, primary data needed to be collected through surveys to develop basic social, demographic and descriptive profiles of fishing businesses and employees.

### Questionnaire Design

The questionnaires used in this study were based on questionnaires used to assess changes in forest resource management in Victoria and Queensland (Fenton, 1998, 1999). Although questionnaires used in previous studies had been designed for self-completion, the questionnaire used in the current study was designed to be completed through telephone interviews. The questionnaire was administered to licenced harvest fishers in Queensland and sought information about the fishing business, and social and demographic characteristics of the business operator and their family.

#### Harvest Business Questionnaire

There were approximately fifty questions in the questionnaire. In the first section, harvesters were asked about their fishing business and fishing practices. This included questions on the location of their homeport, years of business operation, number of boats, size of boats, type of fishing activity, seasonal variations in fishing, number of employees, the value and location of sales and the town locations for business expenditure.

The second section of the questionnaire included questions about the location of resource use and the use of coastal ports when accessing different areas of resource use. When asking questions about the location of resource use, interviewers used detailed coastal maps to help identify areas of resource use, with resource use often being identified in relation to specific reefal areas or in relation to specific towns along the Queensland coast.

In the third section of the questionnaire, all harvesters were asked for information about their town of residence, years of residence, hours worked in the industry, usual months in which they worked in the fishing industry and the location of towns from which they purchased household goods and services. This section also included questions which provided information on the social and demographic profiles of employees and their families, including the age, gender, marital status, housing tenure and educational levels of family members.

Specific and detailed questions relating to the financial characteristics of the harvest business were not included in the current survey, because the Queensland Department of Primary Industries had conducted an economic survey of fishing businesses within Queensland during a comparable time period.

#### Questionnaire Pre-testing

Before conducting the interviews, the questionnaires were pre-tested with members of the harvest industry. A small number of harvest fishers were asked if they could assess the questionnaire in terms of the appropriateness of the questions and the terminology used in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was also reviewed by staff at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

Perhaps the most difficult question required harvesters to recall the location of their fishing activities over the previous 12 months. This information had to be recorded at sufficient detail through a telephone interview so that it could be transferred with reasonable accuracy to a 15-minute grid overlay. The pre-test indicated this was possible and that accuracy could be improved by ensuring that all interviewers had detailed coastal maps available to them when asking questions about the location of resource use.

### Survey Sampling and Administration

The objective of the sampling procedures was to obtain a full census of all commercial fishing businesses in Queensland as identified in the database of licenced master fishers. The Queensland Fisheries Service provided a database of 194 names, addresses and telephone numbers of harvest fishers. Due to the 'dynamic' nature of contact databases, it was not possible to contact all fishers because many contact details, including addresses and telephone numbers, were either out of date or incorrect.

During the evenings, weekends and occasionally weekdays of August 1999 to April 2000, trained interviewers contacted fishers and made appointments for interviews at convenient times. The response for each fisher was recorded as either: surveyed, refused, unable to be contacted, or insufficient contact information. Considerable effort was made to locate each fisher identified on the database. The questionnaire took approximately 30-45 minutes to complete, depending on the extent to which individual fishers wished to discuss specific issues.

Fishers were informed of the research prior to being interviewed. All fishers received a letter by mail informing them of the study and inviting them to participate. The research was also advertised in the QCFO newsletter prior to commencing the interviews.

## Questionnaire Response Rates

The characteristics of the fishing industry make it difficult to contact owner-operators, because many fishers live on boats, are away for extended periods, or when in port have no fixed address.

Table 3.1 shows the response rate and response characteristics for the survey of harvest businesses in Queensland. Interviews were undertaken and questionnaires completed from 101 harvest fishers. This represented a response rate of 96% of those who were able to be contacted. Table 3.1 also shows that 28.9% of fishers identified on the database were unable to be contacted for a number of reasons, including incorrect phone numbers, or that there was no answer when they were called for the interview.

Of the 194 licence holders, 44 (22.5%) were considered latent, i.e. reported that they were no longer in business or that they had retired. For the purpose of further analysis within this report, it is assumed that there were therefore 163 active harvest licences in Queensland.

Table 3.1. Response Rates: Harvest Businesses

Response	Frequency	Percent
<b>Completed Questionnaires</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>52.1</b>
Incorrect phone number	44	22.7
No answer to telephone	12	6.2
<b>Total Unable to Contact</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>28.9</b>
No longer in business or retired	31	16.0
<b>Total Latent</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>16.0</b>
Refusal	6	3.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Response Rate <sup>1</sup>		95.7
Industry Representation <sup>2</sup>		68.0

Note: <sup>1</sup>The response rate is the number of completed questionnaires to the total number of businesses excluding those unable to be contacted or those not in or new to the industry.

<sup>2</sup>Industry representation is the number of completed questionnaires to the total number of businesses excluding those deceased and those no longer in business or retired.

Fenton, D.M. (1999). *Forest industry activity and linkages for the West CRA region. Report prepared for the Social Assessment Unit, AFPA, Canberra.*

Fenton, D.M. (1998). *Resource, Forest Industry and Employee Catchment Analysis for the South East Queensland RFA Region. Report prepared for the Department of Primary Industries and Energy (Canberra).*