



Foreign Agricultural Service

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## **Hong Kong**

### **Agricultural Situation**

#### **Fishing Ban of the South China Sea Lifted**

**1999**

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#### **Report Highlights:**

The two-month fishing ban seemed to be very successful in allowing dwindling stocks in the South China Sea to replenish. The Chinese government intends to impose the fishing ban for at least two months each year. The Hong Kong government is considering to develop ocean fishing or distant fishing since resources in the South China Sea are limited. Perhaps, the annual fish ban may provide an opportunity for U.S. exporters to further explore the huge seafood market in Hong Kong.

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Includes PSD changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Hong Kong [HK1], HK

The Chinese government imposed a two-month fishing ban in the South China Sea effective June 1, 1999 (HK9052 & 9067) and the ban was lifted on July 31. The two-month ban seemed to be very successful in allowing dwindling stocks in the South China Sea to replenish. During the two days after the resumption of fishing, the catch by fishermen increased from 60 to 100 percent over average catches before the ban was imposed.

The fish wholesale markets under the management of the Hong Kong Agriculture and Fisheries Department had a total turnover of 142MT on August 2, 1999, representing a rise of 23 percent compared to the same period in the preceding year. The average wholesale price of fish dropped about 20 percent. However, consumers have not benefited as much from the price cut, due to high margins maintained by wholesalers and retailers.

In the past two months, fishing in the South China Sea has been banned for trawlers only, but fishing by liners was not prohibited. Therefore, the resumption of trawler fishing has raised the supplies of Lizard Fish, Bigeye, Rabbit Fish, Croaker, etc. As indicated by the table on the following page, wholesale prices of most species dropped, but wholesale volumes increased on August 3 when the ban was lifted. The fish ban not only replenished the fishing stocks but also allowed fish to grow larger. Therefore, fish like Pomfrets and Yellow Croakers had a higher price even after the ban was lifted, given larger fish sizes.

The Chinese government intends to impose the fishing ban for at least two months each year. In other words, fishermen would not likely receive any income from fishing again for two months next year. The Hong Kong government is considering to develop ocean fishing or distant fishing since resources in the South China Sea are limited. To this end, it will conduct a consultancy report on the possibility of developing an ocean fishing industry in Hong Kong. Perhaps, the annual fishing ban may provide an opportunity for U.S. exporters to further explore the huge seafood market in Hong Kong, however, as noted in HK9067, local fish supplies are usually lower cost and and lower quality species.

The table on the next page shows daily fish prices for two time periods in a representative wholesale market in Hong Kong, one for June 3 when fishing was banned and another for August 3 when the ban was already lifted.

Marine Fish Daily Price and Sales Volume Report  
(US\$1.00 = HK\$7.78)

Name	Price for June 3 (HK\$) (weight in Kg)	Price for August 3 (HK\$) (weight in Kg)
Golden Thread	13.05 ((749)	20.89 (5,350)
Melon Coat	13.33 (24)	8.51 (1,430)
Melon Seed		8.84 (610)
Scads	9.14 (118)	6.27 (5,385)
Lizard Fishes	4.93 (1,259)	4.28 (3,314)
Conger-pike eels	5.27 (204)	5.10 (230)
Bigeyes	14.87 (227)	8.99 (3,791)
Mackerels		16.66 (3,801)
Hair-Tails	23.33 (9)	9.94 (339)
Horse Heads	13.23 (329)	22.03 (3,048)
Croakers	22.22 (9)	10.21 (2,154)
Groupers		41.25 (135)
Breams	24.88 (211)	19.64 (774)
Pomfrets	11.01 (122)	28.90 (250)
Yellow Croakers	12.89 (293)	36.05 (945)
Sharks	7.54 (38)	3.30 (43)
Squid	13.11 (31)	13.24 (1,172)
Total	10.77 (6,514)	15.45 (41,690)