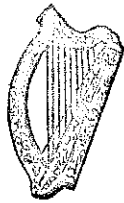


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AN ROINN TALMHAIOCHTA AGUS IASCAIGH

(Department of Agriculture and Fisheries)

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LOBSTER TRAP CENSUS 1968.

by

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LOBSTER TRAP CENSUS 1968

A census made in July and in September, 1968 of the number of traps used in the Irish lobster fishery has been used in this paper as the basis for an analysis of lobster catch. The catch figures supplied to the Fisheries Division by various collectors have been correlated with the gear used in the 12 maritime counties involved.

Six main types of trap were used in the 1968 lobster fishery. These were French crawfish barrels; Scottish lobster traps; Kilmore Quay (wire) traps; U.S. parlour traps; Norwegian (wire) traps and a small number of home designed traps which do not fit easily into any of the foregoing types. Scottish lobster traps varied from area to area both in design and in detail of construction, but their basic shape was the same throughout. In some areas, particularly in County Galway, the French crawfish barrel had been adapted to make it more suitable for lobster catching, by narrowing the entrance and "funnelling" it to a five inch 'eye'.

The distribution of various kinds of fishing gear in relation to the class of boat used is set out in Table 1. Four main classes of boat were in use, namely, punts with or without outboard motors, motor boats of up to 30' in length, motor boats from 31' to 45' in length, and motor boats over 45' in length. The total number of boats of all kinds fishing for lobsters in 1968 was 626 an increase of almost 4% on the 1967 figure of 603. There is usually a tendency for the number of boats engaged in lobster fishing to increase in summers which have long periods of good weather as was the case in 1968. The number of row boats engaged in lobster fishing has fallen considerably: the former row boats have now generally been fitted with outboard motors. A total of 297 punts, the vast majority with outboard motors were so engaged in 1968 on the whole coast which represents a reduction from former times. Many of the motor boats under 30' in length were specially built for lobster fishing and their number at 267 represents a very considerable increase on former figures. Gibson (1965 and 1967) noted that boats in this class appeared to be the most effective, and possibly the most economic for lobster fishing. Boats between 31' and 45' were not numerous in 1968, with only 44 being engaged, whilst the number of boats over 45', at 18 showed a slight reduction as compared with previous years. There is considerable evidence to suggest that boats in excess of 45' in length are better suited to fishing for crawfish.

The distribution of the different types of lobster gear in use in 1968 is shown in Table 2, by county irrespective of boat class. The total number of traps of all kinds was 33,490 or about 50 traps per boat. The

smallest number of traps (less than 1%) were fished out of Co. Wicklow ports and the largest number 28.5% were fished from Co. Galway ports. Over half (52.8%) of all the traps used were of the French crawfish barrel type, whilst nearly one quarter (24.5%) were of basic Scottish design. Thus these two types of trap comprised over 75% of the total of all gears used. The number of U.S. parlour traps (6.3%) showed a considerable increase on previous years; this trap was first used in quantity in 1966. The greatest numbers of French crawfish traps were found in counties Cork, Kerry, Galway and Mayo. Scottish traps were commonest in counties Louth, Dublin, Wicklow, Waterford, Sligo and Donegal.

With the exception of the French crawfish barrel all the other types of traps mentioned in Table 2 were specifically designed for lobster fishing. Prior to 1947, almost 90% of all traps used in Ireland consisted of three types, namely, the Scottish, Kilmore Quay and wicker (Cornish) traps, all of which were designed for the capture of lobster. By the late 50's over 65% of all traps were of the French crawfish barrel type but there is now a tendency to use fewer traps of this type.

The catch of lobsters for all types of traps per county, is indicated in Table 3 in terms of catch per trap. Lobsters vary in weight from area to area and normally East coast lobsters are the lightest and those from the south west the heaviest, the approximate range being from 1.2 to 1.5 lbs. The total catch of lobsters in 1968 was 508,766 which represents a considerable increase on the previous eight years. It was not, however, as high as in 1959 when 623,097 lobsters were caught. In both the years 1959 and 1968 there was a long period of fishing due to good calm weather.

The average national yield of lobsters per trap in 1968 was 15, and the average weight of the catch per trap was 19 lb. It is noteworthy that as a general rule where lobster traps exclusively were used for lobster fishing the yield of lobster was higher than in those counties where crawfish traps were in use. The maximum yield per trap - 37 lb. - was in Co. Clare where lobster traps comprised 90% of those in use. This is exceptionally high and is probably due to the fact that the coast of Clare is one of the least fished for lobster. Sligo had a similar high yield per trap, probably for the same reason.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. A total of 626 boats ranging in size from row boats to motor boats over 45' in length took part in the Irish lobster fishery in 1968.

2. The total catch of lobsters was 508,766 in 1968 which was considerably above the annual catch since the exceptionally big catch of 1959 when 623,097 lobsters were landed.
3. A total of 33,490 traps were used and of these 53% were designed for crawfish fishing and 47% for lobster fishing.
4. The national average yield of lobsters per trap was about 19 lb.

REFERENCES

- Gibson, F.A. 1965 Catch and effort in the lobster and crawfish fishery. Rep. Sea and Inland Fish. 1965.
- Gibson, F.A. 1967 Irish investigations on the lobster (Homarus vulgaris Edw.) Irish Fish Invest. Ser. B. (Marine). No. 1.

TABLE 1

Numbers and types of traps used by the various categories of fishing vessels by county in 1968

County	Trap Code	Punts with or without outboards		Motor Vessels						Totals of Traps
				30' in length and under		31'-45' in length		Over 45' in length		
		No.	Traps	No.	Traps	No.	Traps	No.	Traps	
LOUTH	S	2	155	3	325	-	-	-	-	480
DUBLIN	S H	21	477 173	6	155 -	-	-	-	-	632 173
WICKLOW	S H	6	102 20	-	-	-	-	-	-	102 20
WEXFORD	K F H	9	365 - -	21	2390 145 20	-	-	1	130 45 -	2885 190 20
WATERFORD	S K F US H	17	440 230 - 20 -	9	415 - 50 - -	3	- 240 - - -	3	277 - - - 40	1132 470 50 20 40
CORK	S K F US H	32	195 224 825 20 165	36	285 230 1410 150 120	14	- 100 815 20 -	2	40 - 150 60 -	520 554 3200 250 285
KERRY	F	20	650	12	665	12	760	9	1590	3665
CLARE	S K F US N	14	80 160 60 - 100	6	- 180 - 20 140	4	- 60 90 190 -	-	-	80 400 150 210 240
GALWAY	S F US N H	84	20 2390 - - 20	81	100 4320 500 40 250	8	- 515 875 60 -	3	- 290 150 - -	120 7515 1525 100 270
MAYO	S F US H	29	120 655 10 10	38	240 1590 50 -	1	- 150 30 -	-	-	360 2395 90 10
SLIGO	S K F	5	151 - -	14	941 10 10	-	-	-	-	1092 10 10
DONEGAL	S F US	58	1455 30 -	41	2000 500 20	2	220 - -	-	-	3675 530 20
TOTALS OF BOATS		297		267		44		18		

S = Scottish traps
K = Kilmore Quay traps
F = French Crawfish Barrels

US = American parlour traps
N = Norwegian traps
H = Home made traps

TABLE 2.

Numbers of the various types of traps in use by county in 1968

County	Numbers and types of traps						Totals by county	% of Totals
	Scottish Creel	Kilmore Quay	French Barrell	U.S. Parlour	Norwegian	Home Made		
LOUTH	480	-	-	-	-	-	480	1.4%
DUBLIN	632	-	-	-	-	173	805	2.4%
WICKLOW	102	-	-	-	-	20	122	0.4%
WEXFORD	-	2,885	190	-	-	20	3095	9.2%
WATERFORD	1142	470	50	20	-	40	1712	5.1%
CORK	520	554	3200	250	-	285	4809	14.4%
KERRY	-	-	3665	-	-	-	3665	10.9%
CLARE	80	400	150	210	240	-	1080	3.2%
GALWAY	120	-	7515	1525	100	270	9530	28.5%
MAYO	360	-	2395	90	-	10	2853	8.5%
SLIGO	1092	10	10	-	-	-	1112	3.3%
DONEGAL	3675	-	530	20	-	-	4225	12.6%
TOTALS BY TRAP TYPE	8203	4,319	17705	2115	340	818	33490	
% OF TOTALS	24.5%	12.9%	52.8%	6.3%	1.0%	2.4%		

TABLE 3.

Numbers of traps and lobster catch by county in 1968

County	Traps No.	Percentages of trap types		Total catch No.	Average catch per trap No.	Average Wt. per trap. lb.
		Lobster	Crawfish			
LOUTH	480	100%	-	3852	8	10
DUBLIN	805	100%	-	12212	15	18
WICKLOW	122	100%	-	2712	22	26
WEXFORD	3095	94%	6%	39697	13	20
WATERFORD	1712	96%	4%	28744	17	21
CORK	4809	30%	70%	59102	12	17
KERRY	3665	-	100%	37780	10	15
CLARE	1080	90%	10%	29691	28	37
GALWAY	9530	23%	77%	135406	14	18
MAYO	2855	1%	99%	32540	11	13
SLIGO	1112	99%	1%	30774	28	36
DONEGAL	4225	88%	12%	96256	23	30
TOTALS:	33490			508766		