



**Australian Government**

**Australian Fisheries Management Authority**

28 August 2024

Dear Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery licence holder,

**Re: Industry views on allowing an amount of the black teatfish total allowable catch (TAC), if not caught, to be carried over to the next fishing season**

I am writing on behalf of the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) Hand Collectables Resource Assessment Group (HCRAG) and Hand Collectables Working Group (HCWG) seeking your views on potential black teatfish total allowable catch (TAC) - if not caught - carryover to the next fishing season.

**What is the issue?**

Black teatfish is listed in Appendix II of the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (CITES) and is subject to strict conditions imposed through the Wildlife Trade Operations (WTO) approval for the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery (BDM Fishery). Over catch of the TAC or not meeting WTO permit conditions may have significant impact on ability to export the species and future black teatfish season openings.

Strict management arrangements are being implemented for black teatfish openings to avoid an over catch of the TAC. This has meant that over the last four fishing seasons, a proportion of the TAC has remained uncaught at the end of each season. At the BDM Workshop held on 21-22 March 2023, industry participants raised concerns about the loss of economic opportunity.

At the HCRAG and HCWG meetings held from 17-19 October 2023, both groups supported the development of a TAC under catch carryover provision for black teatfish which would allow for up to 10% of the current fishing season's black teatfish TAC, if not caught, to be carried over from the current season to the subsequent season. Any future under catch carryover amount would not be able to be carried over for more than one season. At the 14 August 2024, HCRAG meeting AFMA was allocated an action item to facilitate public consultation on the proposed provision.

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## What is the proposed under catch carryover provision?

If progressed this is a significant change to how the TAC is managed for black teatfish. Your views are sought on the proposed wording in *italics* below. The provision would be given effect by amending the [BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy](#).

*For black teatfish, if the current fishing season TAC is not fully caught, an amount equal to the amount of under catch not exceeding 10% of the current season TAC may carry over from the current fishing season to the next fishing season. Any under catch amount cannot be carried over for more than one fishing season.*

*For example, if the current fishing season's TAC is under caught by 5%, then only the amount equating to that 5% can be carried over from the current fishing season to the next fishing season.*

*The fishing season for the BDM Fishery runs from 1 January to 31 December each year.*

## How do I have my say?

I strongly encourage you as a licence holder in the BDM Fishery to contact Natalie Couchman on (07) 4069 1990 or by email at [FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au](mailto:FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au) to have your say on this issue.

**Your views are sought by COB Friday 13 September 2024.**

## What happens next?

Your views will be considered at the next meetings of the HCRAAG and HCWG to be held between 17-19 September 2024 which will inform recommendations to the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) on this issue.

If you require any further information regarding this matter, please contact Natalie Couchman at AFMA.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SH' or similar initials, written in a cursive style.

Steven Harris  
Senior Manager, Northern Fisheries,  
Australian Fisheries Management Authority.