

## Short review on the traded volume of live food fish

*This article is published in the Live Reef Fish – Information Bulletin, Number 7 – May 2000*

Johannes & Riepen (1995, p.4) presented a conservative estimate of total volume of the LRFFT of 20,000-25,000 tonnes per year, and they estimated that about 60 per cent thereof is traded in Hong Kong (Johannes & Riepen, 1995, p. 16). A significant amount of the total volume is cultured, but it remains unclear to what extent the culture is based on the grow-out of wild-caught fish (Johannes & Riepen, 1995, p. 16). For example, the country that is known to produce most of the cultured groupers, Taiwan (Johannes & Riepen, 1995, p. 16) is also an important importer of wild-caught grouper fingerlings from the Philippines (Bentley 1999, pp. 29-30).

According to the survey of Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department (HK CSD) data by Lau & Perry-Jones (1999, pp. 8-12), the total amount of live marine fish (HK HS Codes 0301 99-12, -21, -22, -23, -29, -31, -39, -41, and -99) imported into Hong Kong amounts to 21,000 tonnes, whereof nearly 90 per cent was imported by air. This figure of 21,000 tonnes underestimates the total volume of the LRFFT, as locally licensed, live-reef-fish transport vessels, estimated to import about 10,000 tonnes per year (Johannes & Riepen, 1995, p. 51), are exempt from declaration of imports of live reef food fish (Lau & Perry-Jones, 1999, p. 4).

By interviewing 39 of the 114 companies that trade live fish in Hong Kong, imports of the 11 most common species were estimated at 24,000 tonnes per year (Lau & Perry-Jones, 1999, p. 7).

These species were: *Lutjanus argentimaculatus* (21%), *Epinephelus coioides* (20%), *Plectropomus leopardus* (18%), *P. nreolatus* (9.7%), *E. bleekeri* and *F. areolatus* (both species grouped in one category, (7.6%)), *E. fuscoguttatus* (7.2%), *F. polyphekadion* (5.0%), *E. akaara* (3.6%), *Cromileptes altivelis* (3.0%), *Cheilinus undulatus* (2.8%) and *F. lanceolatus* (1.9%). Hence, according to the survey among traders, the total volume of live food fish traded in Hong Kong must have amounted to 32,000 tonnes annually. This is close to the sum of the estimate for the volume of live reef fish (10,000 tonnes) imported by locally licensed vessels (Johannes & Riepen, 1995, p. 51), and the total imports (21,000 tonnes) as estimated by the HK CSD (Lau & Perry-Jones, 1999, pp. 8-12), even though the latter includes a large category (c. 14,000 tonnes) of 'other live marine fishes' (Lau & Perry-Jones, 1999, p. 6). Perhaps problems with species identification caused a considerable part of the trade volume that should have been categorised in one of the other statistical categories to be entered under 'other live marine fishes'.

According to Hong Kong importers, Indonesia supplies more than 50 per cent of the wild-caught live reef fish to Hong Kong and Singapore (Johannes & Riepen, 1995, pp. 10 & 35). This figure was close to the estimate of 60 per cent from Bentley (1999, p. 28), which was based on fisheries statistics from the main exporting countries (Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia).

In Lau & Parry-Jones (1999) Indonesia was listed as the only country that exported mouse grouper (*Cromileptes altivelis*) and giant grouper (*Epinephelus lanceolatus*), whereas it accounted for 35 per cent of coral trout and 20 per cent of all other groupers (Lau & Parry-Jones, 1999, pp. 8-10). However, as was mentioned earlier, these data pertain almost exclusively to imports by air.

According to the Indonesian Directorate General of Fisheries, annual exports of live food fish from Indonesia averaged 3,500 tonnes over 1995-1996 (Bentley, 1999, p. 29), whereas Erdmann & Pet (1996, p. 6) present an even lower estimate for total exports of live food fish from Indonesia of 2,200 tonnes annually.

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