

Prince Edward Island

PEIwatch

Though small by world standards, PEI is a high-quality centre of excellence in fish culture technology

by Maureen Larkin

Maureen Larkin works with the Cooper Institute at Prince Edward Island. She has long been associated with ICSF's Women in Fisheries programme.

In 1999, the fisheries and aquaculture industries accounted for a landed value of over Can\$133 million, from a landing of approximately 132 million pounds (60,000 tonnes) of fish and sea plants (preliminary figures). In addition, the industry creates in the vicinity of 9,200 jobs in terms of seasonal and year around employment. Fishing out of the 50 ports all around the Island, there are 1,385 core fishers and 4,000 commercial fishers classified as 'non-core', mainly representing the crew members who also require a commercial fishers licence to fish. There are 750 people involved in aquaculture and harvesting operations, and another 3,000 are employed in the processing sector. The total contribution to the Island economy is estimated to be over Can\$260 million.

Lobster remains the backbone of the island fishery, accounting for close to 70 per cent of the total value. Other important species include mussels, oysters, herring, mackerel, snow crab, rock crab, scallops, finfish, quahogs, and sea plants.

Over the past two decades, the mussel industry has grown from an experimental fishery to a production of just over 30 million pounds (13,600 tonnes) in 1999. The oyster industry is also experiencing an increase, and landings of the famous Malpeque oysters reached 5 million pounds in 1999. The ground fishery is making a slight comeback, mainly as a result of a limited open cod fishery in 1999, the first since the fishing moratorium in 1992.

Although small by world standards, PEI has become a high-quality centre of excellence in fish culture technology, with expertise in production, equipment fabrication, fish health diagnostic services, fish health research, vaccines and aquaculture training.