

Passion and livelihood

Every single person that we interviewed – regardless of age, gender, position within the industry, or number of years in the industry – shared their passion for how much they loved what they did within the lobster industry and that it wasn't a job, it was a livelihood. They talked about the sense of identity, sense of place, sense of belonging, and the connection to community and history, tradition and culture that the lobster industry provides in Eastern Shelburne County and in Nova Scotia.

"It's been a good life and if I was going to do it over again I wouldn't do anything different." - Fisherman

The sustainability of our community

Key findings that related to the sustainability of our communities were:

- Social supports and connections (both formal and informal) and social capital are vital
- The lobster industry contributes to the economic and social sustainability of the community

"That is all we have now is the lobster industry and with that lobster industry it is what is keeping our town alive." - Lobster buyer

Challenges

Many challenges were discussed, with most falling into two major categories of: 1. Regulations, government control, big business, and quotas, and 2. Mistrust and disorganization.

"The biggest issue in the lobster industry is mistrust. That's our biggest internal factor. Nobody trusts anybody." - Industry professional

Changes in the industry

Many changes have taken place over the years and are summarized by the following: Increase catch, technology and equipment, costs and price and age of harvesters

"35 years ago I could get a lobster trap for \$2 and I could get a boat ready for the water for \$15,000 and I got \$11 per pound. Now they're \$5 and a lobster boat will cost you a half a million and a lobster trap will cost you \$100." - Fisherman

Opportunities and the future of the industry

The two major themes of opportunities were: 1. Marketing and promotion, and 2. Education and awareness.

"It's time for us to jump out there and tell the world we've got one of the best products on the planet. This is wild caught food from clear Atlantic water. We need to get that message out to the world. If we do that, and we can increase the demand, hopefully we can start to prop up our communities." - Industry professional

Price and two-tiered pricing system

All participants discussed the fluctuations in price of lobster and many discussed the potential of a two-tiered pricing system.

"I think the price is the number one issue. And I think that all comes back to quality. And there has to be a two price system. Get a two price system, and we will... You know, it will do a lot of things because the junk will not go on the market. So therefore it's going to put less lobsters on the market, which will demand a better price." - Lobster buyer

Export and selling locally

Although there is opportunity to sell more lobster locally, all participants discussed the significance of the export market now and into the future.

"For us, it's a lifestyle. But on the global marketplace that we're playing on, this is big business. This is a billion dollars a year for the Province of Nova Scotia, the fishing industry. The lobster industry alone in Atlantic Canada is worth over a billion dollars in exported value." - Industry professional

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Community University Research Alliance
Activating Change Together for Community Food Security

OUR LOBSTER, OUR COMMUNITIES



A participatory research report summary November 2014

Project Background

This summary describes key findings from a Participatory Video research project that was undertaken from 2012-2014 to learn about the lobster industry as a key component of community food security in rural, coastal communities in Nova Scotia. The project was part of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council funded Community University Research Alliance (2010-2015), Activating Change Together for Community Food Security (ACT for CFS), being led by FoodARC and the Nova Scotia Food Security Network. Fifteen in-depth video interviews were completed with stakeholder involved in the lobster industry in Eastern Shelburne County. Participants included current and past harvesters, buyers, distributors, and processors, government officials, association members, and other lobster industry stakeholders, together representing over 400 years of collective experience. Through this participatory project we set out specifically to learn more about the industry in regards to price, distribution, regulations and selling locally.

From these interviews an informative, engaging film was created called: "Our Lobster, Our Communities". One of the ways we hope to build collective action and make change is to host film screenings and community conversations throughout Nova Scotia. Further to this video a comprehensive summary research report was written. Both the video and report can be found at www.foodarc.ca/ourlobster-ourcommunities

Key messages from the research

- The lobster industry is the lifeblood of our rural coastal communities and is helping to keep these communities alive.
- The lobster industry's exported value is significant to the economy of our communities and our province.
- There is opportunity to market Nova Scotian lobsters better and try to maximize the value it receives locally.
- There is a high level of disorganization and mistrust within the industry and we must work together collectively to do something about it.
- The catch over the last season has been phenomenal and we need to ensure its sustainability.
- Quotas should not be instated.

Next steps for the project

One of the ways we hope to build collective action and make change is to host film screenings and community conversations throughout Nova Scotia. It is our hope that the video and report will reach many people across Nova Scotia and help to bring people together to have meaningful, engaging discussion that will lead to collective action around the lobster industry. We believe that the lobster industry is of the utmost of importance to our rural communities and we, the people, should be involved in planning its future. If you are interested in hearing more, having the video screened in your community, or want to join the discussion for collective action please contact Sheila Bird at x2013gts@stfx.ca or Patty Williams, Principal Investigator at foodsecurity@msvu.ca.

Want to view the video, be part of the conversation?

Visit www.foodarc.ca/ourlobster-ourcommunities where you will find the video, research report, and discussion.