

VANUATU

FISHERIES

REGULATIONS

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F O R E W O R D



This booklet was designed to inform artisanal and subsistence fishermen about important national laws and regulations pertaining to fishing in Vanuatu's domestic waters. It does not include the laws applying to the aquarium trade and to offshore or foreign fishing.

This document is not a legal text. References to the legal texts are given with each law cited in this booklet. The full text of the laws and rules is available for review at the Department of Fisheries office. This information is current at the date of printing (May 2011) and subject to change. If questions arise concerning this document, please contact:

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Note: The term Director used in this document means Director of the Department of Fisheries; Minister means the Minister responsible for fisheries.



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REGULATED
SPECIES



Trochus

Trochus
Trochus niloticus



- A person must not take, harm, have in his or her possession, sell or purchase a trochus shell (*Trochus niloticus*) that is less than 9 centimeters or more than 13 centimeters in length.
- A person must not export trochus except with an export permit issued by the Director.
- The maximum quantity of trochus that can be harvested within Vanuatu in a year is 550 tonnes.

Offence and penalty

- in the case of an individual – VT 200,000 max.; or
- in the case of a company or association or body of persons corporate or incorporate – VT 1,000,000 max.

Ref. Fisheries Regulations, Order No. 28 of 2009

Trochus are marine snails. They live in shallow waters and move very slowly, meaning they can easily be collected and therefore can be easily overfished. This is why in Vanuatu this important commercial species has been protected by different regulations for many years.

It is only when they attain a size of 9 cm (measured across the base of the shell, see diagram) that all trochus are mature (able to reproduce); at this size they are approximately three years old. To give trochus a chance to reproduce at least once, Vanuatu fishing regulations protect all trochus smaller than 9 cm in diameter.

A trochus that has reached a size of more than 13 cm is still a very productive breeder, but its shell is often damaged by boring worms and is unsuitable for processing. Therefore, Vanuatu laws also protect trochus larger than 13 cm in diameter.

Reproduction occurs when males release their sperm and females release their eggs at the same time in the surrounding seawater. A female trochus can produce up to 1 million eggs in one spawning. Eggs drift for three to ten days while going through the different stages of larval development. Of the hundreds of thousands of eggs produced by the female, less than 100 survive and find shelter on the reef.

Trochus graze on the surface of rocks and reefs to feed on algae, mostly green and brown varieties.

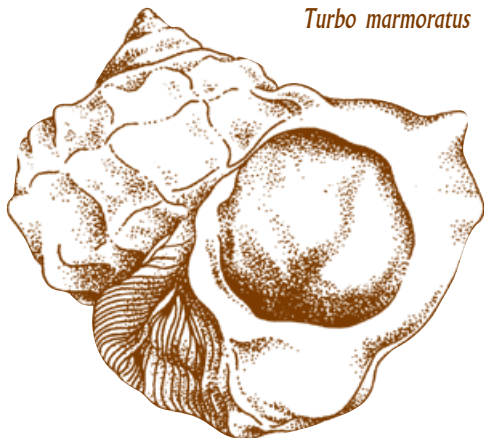
Trochus is mainly harvested for its valuable shell (mother-of-pearl), which is used by the fashion industry in Europe and Asia to make buttons for top-quality shirts. Trochus meat is also a protein source in Vanuatu.

Because trochus shells can be stored for extended periods of time, they constitute one of the rare cash income opportunities for fishing communities living in places where transport is scarce. If young trochus are left to reproduce, this fragile resource will have a chance to survive for future generations, continuing to bring cash income to remote fishing communities.

To further control the trochus fishery, Vanuatu fisheries regulations oblige all people who wish to export trochus shells to obtain written permission from the Director. In recent years, the export of raw trochus shells has not been authorised by the Director, in an effort to help Vanuatu's mother-of-pearl shell button-making industry.

Green snail

Green snail
Turbo marmoratus



- A person must not take, harm, have in his or her possession, sell or purchase any green snail (*Turbo marmoratus*) during the period starting on 1 October 2005 and ending on 1 October 2020.

Offence and penalty

- in the case of an individual – VT 200,000 max.; or
- in the case of a company or association or body of persons corporate or incorporate – VT 1,000,000 max.

Ref. Fisheries Regulations, Order No. 28 of 2009

Green snail is a turban shell that can be found on reefs in less than 20 meters depth.

Green snails grow very slowly. Studies have shown that green snails are mature (able to reproduce) when they are four years old. At this age, their shell length is 13–15 cm.

Reproduction occurs when males release their sperm and females release their eggs at the same time in the surrounding seawater. One female green snail can produce several million eggs during one spawning. After the eggs are released, they drift in the open ocean while going through different stages of larval development. Only a tiny number of the hundreds of thousands of eggs released survive and are carried back to a suitable reef.

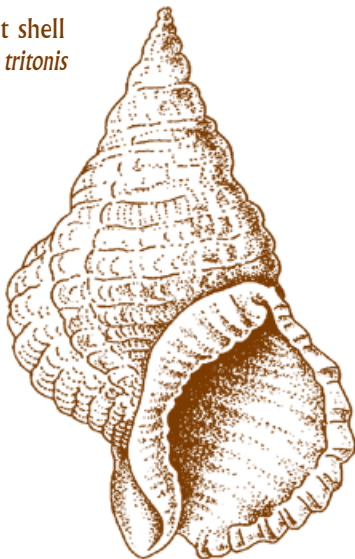
Green snails feed mostly at night, by grazing on rocks and reefs for algae, especially green and red varieties.

During surveys made on Vanuatu reefs in 2004 and 2005, only a handful of adult green snails were found. It was a clear sign of overfishing. It was therefore decided to ban all fishing for green snail for a period of 15 years, which will end on 1 October 2020, to give enough time to the few remaining green snails to reproduce successfully and replenish the depleted reefs.



Trumpet shell

Trumpet shell
Charonia tritonis



- A person must not take, harm, have in his or her possession, sell or purchase any trumpet shell (*Charonia tritonis*) from 1 January 2009 to 1 January 2019.

Offence and penalty

- in the case of an individual – **VT 200,000** max.; or
- in the case of a company or association or body of persons corporate or incorporate – **VT 1,000,000** max.

Ref. Fisheries Regulations, Order No. 28 of 2009

The trumpet shell is the largest marine snail in Vanuatu's waters. It is a carnivorous shellfish. It is very useful to the reef as it is one of the rare predators of the crown-of-thorns starfish (*Acanthaster planci*), which feeds on live coral and can destroy large areas of reef. It has been observed that in areas where the trumpet shell population is healthy, there are no outbreaks of crown-of-thorns starfish.

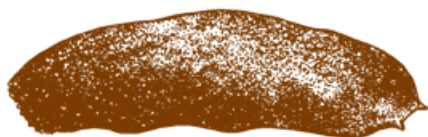
It is collected for its beautiful shell, which is used as a traditional musical instrument or sold to tourists.

During surveys made on Vanuatu reefs during 2007 and 2008 trumpet shells were completely absent in some areas and were present only in very small numbers in other areas. A decision was made to ban collection of trumpet shell for a period of 10 years to give this valuable species enough time to reproduce and rebuild a healthy population.

The ban was put in place in January 2009 and will end in January 2019.



Sea cucumbers (beche-de mer)



- A person must not take, harm, have in his or her possession, sell or purchase any beche-de-mer from the period beginning 1 January 2008 to 1 January 2013.
- This closing period may be extended by the Director depending on the status of stock.

Offence and penalty

- in the case of an individual – VT 200,000 max.; or
- in the case of a company or association or body of persons corporate or incorporate – VT 1,000,000 max.

Ref. Fisheries Regulations, Order No. 28 of 2009

In Vanuatu, sea cucumbers are mostly found on sandy or muddy bottoms.

Reproduction occurs when males release their sperm and females release their eggs at the same time in the surrounding seawater. It takes many sea cucumbers gathering in the same place for the reproduction to be successful. In Vanuatu, sea cucumber reproduction occurs during the warmer summer months, particularly February.

Sea cucumbers are important to the lagoon environment because they scavenge on the reef and turn over the sand on the lagoon floor, preventing the build-up of decaying organic matter, and assisting in the release of nutrients that would otherwise be locked up under layers of sediment. The overexploitation of sea cucumbers could have severe consequences for entire reef ecosystems.

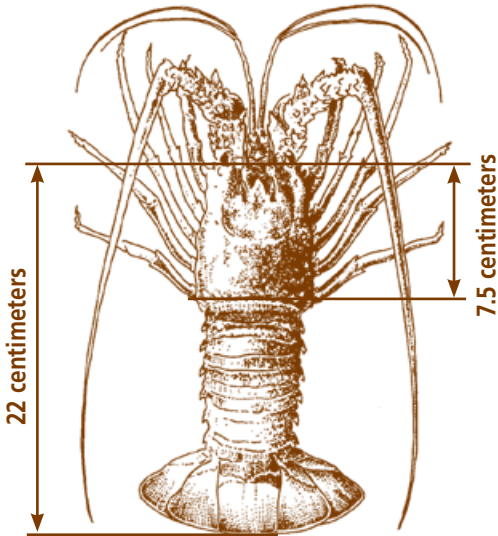
During surveys made in Vanuatu coastal waters in 2007 and 2008, the number of sea cucumbers that could be found was dramatically low. This was a clear sign of overfishing. When there are not enough adult sea cucumbers of the same species in one area, reproduction may become impossible. If reproduction is not successful the species may totally disappear from Vanuatu, as has happened in other parts of the world.

It was therefore decided to ban all fishing for sea cucumbers for a period of five years, ending 1 January 2013, with hope that this would provide enough time for the few remaining sea cucumbers to reproduce successfully. The Department of Fisheries will continue to survey the sea cucumber populations during the ban and will decide in 2013 if the fishery can be re-opened or if the ban must be extended.



Rock lobsters

Rock lobsters
Panulirus spp.



Rock lobsters are crustaceans. They live in narrow reef crevices. They feed mostly during the night on animal and plant debris, helping to keep the reef clean.

Rock lobsters reproduce year round, but mostly during the warm season (October to February). After mating with a male, a female rock lobster carries the eggs for three to four weeks before releasing them in the open ocean. The eggs drift for 4–12 months while going through the different stages of development. Only a tiny number of the thousands of eggs released survive and are carried back to a reef.

To help lobsters reproduce successfully, Vanuatu fisheries regulations protect all females carrying eggs and all rock lobsters that are less than 22 cm in total length or 7.5 cm in carapace length (see diagram) and too young to reproduce.

Rock lobsters should not be speared because the meat of a speared crustacean turns bad very quickly and becomes dangerous to consume.

- A person must not take, harm, have in his or her possession, sell or purchase:
 - (a) any rock lobster (*Panulirus* spp.) carrying eggs; or
 - (b) any rock lobster:
 - (i) which is less than 22 centimeters in length when laid flat and measured from immediately behind the rostral horns to the rear edge of the telson; or
 - (ii) whose carapace is less than 7.5 centimeters when measured along the mid-line from immediately behind the rostral horns to the rear edge.
- A person must not harm, capture or attempt to kill any rock lobster by using spears or any sharp objects.
- A person must not remove the eggs from a rock lobster or have in his or her possession, sell or purchase a rock lobster from which the eggs have been removed.
- A person must not export any crustacean (including rock lobsters) without the authorisation of the Director.

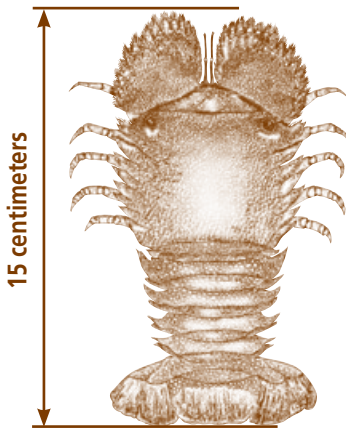
Offence and penalty

- in the case of an individual – **VT 200,000** max.; or
- in the case of a company or association or body of persons corporate or incorporate – **VT 1,000,000** max.

Ref. Fisheries Regulations, Order No. 28 of 2009

Slipper lobster

Slipper lobsters
Parribacus caledonicus



Slipper lobsters are crustaceans. They live in shallow waters on reefs, often on the exposed side and close to surge channels. They feed on animal and plant debris at night and hide in crevices and marine caves in the daytime.

Little is known about the biology of the slipper lobster. Like other lobsters, the female slipper lobster, after mating with a male, carries the eggs for several weeks before releasing them in the open ocean. The eggs drift for several months while going through the different stages of development. Only a tiny number of the thousands of eggs released survive and are carried back to a reef.

To help slipper lobsters reproduce successfully, Vanuatu fisheries regulations protect all females carrying eggs and all slipper lobsters that are less than 15 cm in length (see diagram) and too young to reproduce.

Slipper lobsters should not be speared because the meat of a speared crustacean turns bad very quickly and becomes dangerous to consume.

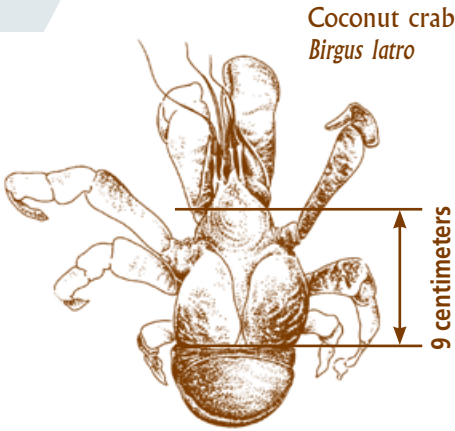
- A person must not, take, harm, have in his or her possession, sell or purchase:
 - (a) any slipper lobster (*Parribacus caledonicus*) carrying eggs; or
 - (b) any slipper lobster which is less than 15 centimeters in length when laid flat and measured from the front edge of the carapace to the rear edge of the telson.
- A person must not harm, capture or attempt to kill any slipper lobster by using spears or any sharp objects.
- A person must not remove the eggs from a slipper lobster or have in his or her possession, sell or purchase a slipper lobster from which the eggs have been removed.
- A person must not export any crustacean (including slipper lobsters) without the authorisation of the Director.

Offence and penalty

- (a) in the case of an individual – **VT 200,000** max.; or
- (b) in the case of a company or association or body of persons corporate or incorporate – **VT 1,000,000** max.

Ref. Fisheries Regulations, Order No. 28 of 2009

Coconut crab



The coconut crab is the largest of the land crabs; it can grow to a weight of four kilograms. Adult coconut crabs live almost exclusively on land; however, like most species of crabs, their larval life is spent in the sea.

In Vanuatu, coconut crab reproduction mainly occurs between October and March. Females carry approximately 100,000 eggs for three weeks, a time during which they must leave their normal habitat to go back towards the shore where they look for a place with high humidity, access to fresh and salt water, an abundance of holes and crevices, and protection from sun and wind. The eggs are released in the sea, where they drift for several weeks before a very small number of newly formed crabs crawl back to the shore.

Coconut crabs are omnivorous (they eat plants and animals), feeding mainly on the fruits of pandanus, breadfruit and coconut trees. They have also been observed feeding on dead rats, birds and crabs.

Coconut crabs grow very slowly and have a much greater longevity than most other crustaceans – up to 60 years. This is why they need to be protected. To give the remaining coconut crab population of Vanuatu the best chances to reproduce successfully, Vanuatu fisheries regulations aim to protect females carrying eggs and individuals with a carapace narrower than 9 cm (see diagram), which may be too young to have already reproduced. In Torba and Sanma Provinces, and in Maewo and Erromango islands, closed seasons and quotas have been put in place to make sure the fishery is sustainable.

- A person must not, take, harm, have in his or her possession, sell or purchase:
 - (a) any coconut crab (*Birgus latro*) carrying eggs; or
 - (b) any coconut crab which is less than 9 centimeters in length when measured along the carapace from immediately behind the rostral horn to the rear edge of the carapace in the mid-line.
- A person must not remove the eggs from a coconut crab or have in his or her possession, sell or purchase any coconut crab from which the eggs have been removed.
- In the following provinces and islands, a person must not kill, injure, or take coconut crabs during closed seasons and after the quota specified for each year has been reached:

	Closed season	Quota per year
Torba Province	30 Aug. – 1 Nov. each year	5,000
Sanma Province	1 May 2004 – 31 March 2012	2,000
Maewo Island	1 Nov. – 30 April each year	1,500
Erromango Island	1 Sep. – 31 March each year	2,000

- The Minister may, after consultation with the Director and each Provincial Council, by notice in writing published in the Gazette, subdivide the quota further in respect of islands in each region.

Offence and penalty

- (a) in the case of an individual – **VT 200,000** max.; or
- (b) in the case of a company or association or body of persons corporate or incorporate – **VT 1,000,000** max.

Ref. Fisheries Regulations, Order No. 28 of 2009

Marine turtles



Hawksbill turtle
Eretmochelys imbricata



Green turtle
Chelonia mydas



Leatherback turtle
Dermochelys coriacea

- A person must not:
 - (a) take, kill, have in his or her possession, export, sell or purchase any marine turtle.
 - (b) interfere with or disturb in any way a turtle nest or any turtle that is in the process of preparing to nest or laying eggs; or
 - (c) take, have in his or her possession, consume, export, sell or purchase any turtle egg.

Offence and penalty

- in the case of an individual – VT 200,000 max.; or
- in the case of a company or association or body of persons corporate or incorporate – VT 1,000,000 max.

Ref. Fisheries Regulations, Order No. 28 of 2009

The two most commonly found turtles in Vanuatu are the hawksbill and the green turtle.

The hawksbill turtle is relatively small, weighing around 60 kg. Its shell is about 90 cm long and has plates (called scutes) that overlap each other. The hawksbill has a pointed hooked beak and feeds mainly on soft coral, sponges, crustaceans and cephalopods.

The green turtle is bigger, weighing around 145 kg. The green turtle's shell is about 110 cm long and has well-separated scutes. Young green turtles feed on algae and sea grass; adults mostly feed on small crabs and shellfish.

On very rare occasions, a leatherback turtle can be seen in Vanuatu's waters. The leatherback turtle is the biggest of all sea turtles, measuring 170 cm and weighing 450 kg on average. It has no visible shell like other turtles; its back looks like leather with black and white spots and seven longitudinal ridges. Leatherback turtles are the most endangered of all sea turtles.

Fishermen and research scientists around the world have noticed a dramatic decrease in numbers of sea turtles, which are considered to be in danger of extinction worldwide. In Vanuatu, turtles are now fully protected.

It takes 20 to 50 years for turtles to mature (be able to reproduce). In Vanuatu, female turtles lay eggs from September to January. The female turtle goes ashore at night to lay her eggs in the sand. The eggs remain there for 7 to 12 weeks before hatching. Young turtles coming out of a nest face many natural dangers: birds and crabs eat them when they are still on the beach, and sharks and fish prey on them once they reach the ocean. Out of 100 eggs laid by a female turtle, only one or two will become adult turtles. It is very important that Vanuatu people respect the regulations and do not disturb turtle nests or take turtle eggs.

Sea turtles come back to the place where they were born to lay their eggs. Therefore, turtles born in Vanuatu will come back to Vanuatu even after very long journeys to distant waters.

Marine ornamental products



Marine ornamental products include dozens of reef fish species but also anemones, jellyfish, sponges, crustaceans, molluscs, live corals, 'live rocks' (small pieces of rocks covered with different kinds of marine life, such as coral, sponges, algae, tiny animals, etc.) and all other marine organisms that are collected for the aquarium industry. They are usually the first species encountered by divers in shallow waters, and as such, they are very important to the tourist industry of Vanuatu.

If carefully managed and controlled, an industry based on the collection of aquarium species for export can be sustainable. To control the exploitation of marine ornamentals, Vanuatu fisheries regulations oblige all persons wanting to export marine ornamentals to request written permission from the Director. And, like any other commercial activity in Vanuatu's nearshore waters, all collection of marine ornamental products must be done with the full agreement of the customary landowners.

Marine ornamental products include fish, invertebrates, live rock, live coral, giant clam and any other organisms or products used for the purposes of marine aquarium trade.

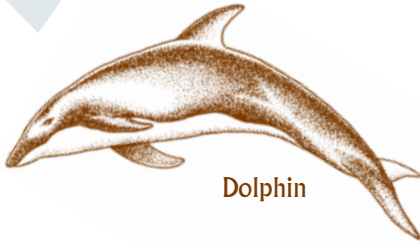
- A person must not export any marine ornamental products except with an export permit issued by the Director, and in accordance with such conditions as the Director may specify.
- The annual total allowable catch for the flame angel (*Centropyge loriculus*) that can be exported from Efate and the surrounding islands is 12,250 pieces.

Offence and penalty

- in the case of an individual – **VT 200,000** max.; or
- in the case of a company or association or body of persons corporate or incorporate – **VT 1,000,000** max.

Ref. Fisheries Regulations, Order No. 28 of 2009

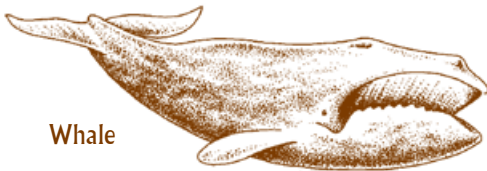
Marine mammals



Dolphin



Dugong



Whale

Marine mammals, like all other mammals, breathe air, are warm blooded and give birth to live young, which feed on their mother's milk. Dolphins, whales and dugongs are marine mammals. Dolphins are a common sight in Vanuatu waters; whales visit Vanuatu waters mostly in the winter months, from July to October; dugongs used to be plentiful but have become rare around many islands because of overfishing and other unknown reasons.

The sight of a live marine mammal in the wild is exciting for tourists. Taking tourists out to sea to show them live whales, dolphins or dugongs is an economic activity that has a great potential in Vanuatu.

The Vanuatu Whale Sanctuary comprises all Vanuatu waters.

The purpose of the Vanuatu Whale Sanctuary is to give formal recognition of the high level of protection already afforded to marine mammals in Vanuatu waters in accordance with international law.

In the Vanuatu Whale Sanctuary, a person must not:

- kill, harm, harass, take or move any marine mammal;
- possess, hold in captivity or restrict the movement of any marine mammal;
- possess a part of a marine mammal, or a product produced from a marine mammal;
- export from or import into Vanuatu or facilitate the exportation from or the importation into Vanuatu of any marine mammal, marine mammal part or marine mammal product.

Offence and penalty

- **VT 50,000,000** max. or a term of imprisonment not exceeding 2 years or both.

Ref. Fisheries Act 55 of 2005

GEAR RESTRICTIONS



Diving equipment

- A person must not use for the purpose of fishing:
 - (a) a self-contained breathing apparatus (scuba); or
 - (b) any diving equipment that utilises compressed gas or surface supplied air (hookah).
- For a specific fishery (such as the aquarium fishery) the Director may authorise, in writing, a person to use a scuba or hookah if he is satisfied that the person is a certified diver who possesses a scuba or hookah diving certificate.
- A person authorised to use a scuba or hookah must keep a dive log and must submit the dive log to the Director every month for inspection.

Offence and penalty

- in the case of an individual – **VT 500,000** max.; or
- in the case of a company or association or body of persons corporate or incorporate – **VT 1,000,000** max.

Ref. Fisheries Regulations, Order No. 28 of 2009

By putting a ban on scuba and hookah we create a natural reserve area in deeper waters where marine life – especially the larger reef fish that can produce more eggs – is protected.

Explosives, poison or other noxious substances

- A person must not:
 - (a) permit to be used, use or attempt to use any explosive, poison or other noxious substance for the purpose of killing, stunning, disabling or catching fish, or in any way rendering fish more easily caught; or
 - (b) carry or have in his or her possession or control any explosive, poison or other noxious substance in circumstances indicating an intention to kill, stun, disable or catch fish, or in any way render fish more easily caught.

Offence and penalty

- **VT 10,000,000 max.** or a term of imprisonment not exceeding two months or both.

Ref. Fisheries Act No. 55 of 2005

When explosives, poisons or chemicals are used to catch fish, all the surrounding life – including smaller fish, reef invertebrates and, most importantly, the corals themselves – is destroyed. It may take many years for this marine life to recover and create the right conditions for the big fish to come back. Think of it this way: when you want a coconut, do you chop down the coconut tree to get it?

FADs (fish aggregating devices)

- No person shall set and anchor a fish aggregating device (FAD) in Vanuatu's waters without the authorisation of the Director.
- Authorisation to place a FAD does not confer any exclusive right to fish in the vicinity of the FAD.
- The master of any vessel placing a FAD must notify the Director within 24 hours of the nature and exact location of the device.
- Every FAD must bear a radar reflector and a light in order to be clearly visible at night from a distance of 1 nautical mile.
- A person must not remove or destroy a FAD without the authorisation of the Director.

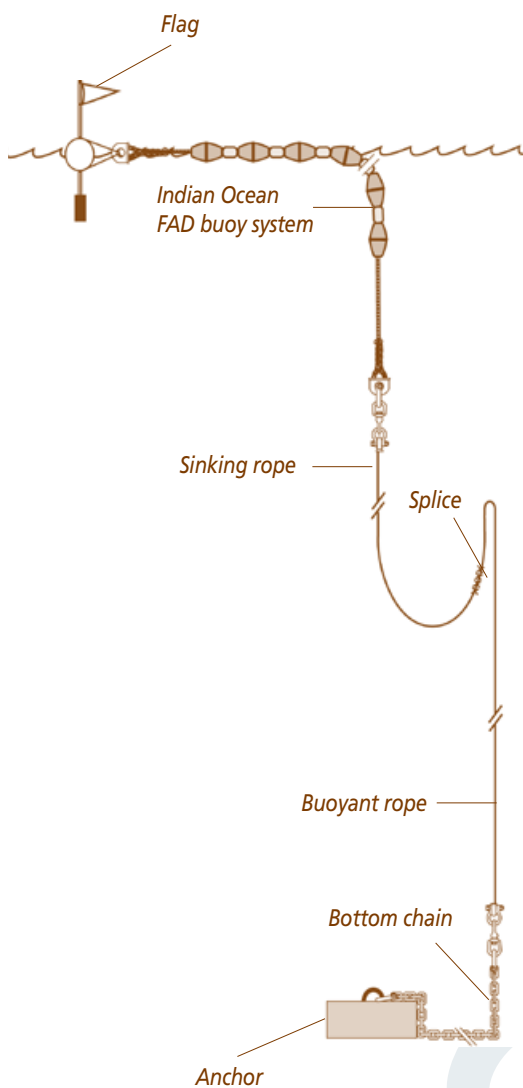
Offence and penalty

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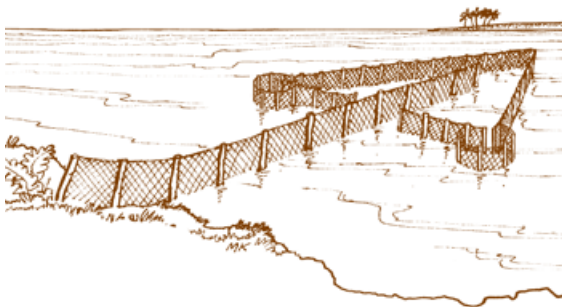
Ref. Fisheries Regulations, Order No. 28 of 2009

A fish aggregating device (FAD) is a man-made floating device anchored at some distance from the reef in the open ocean. It is used to attract oceanic fish species such as tuna, marlin, mahi mahi and rainbow runner. The reasons why FADs attract fish are not fully understood, but it is believed that they provide a point of reference in the middle of a vast empty space, and probably create a shelter for small marine organisms, which attract small fish, which in turn attract the bigger fish species.

To control the way FADs are set, and to make sure they don't constitute a danger for navigation, the Department of Fisheries regulates the mooring of FADs in Vanuatu's waters.



Fish fences



- A person must not use for fishing a fish fence unless he or she is authorised to do so, in writing, by the Director.

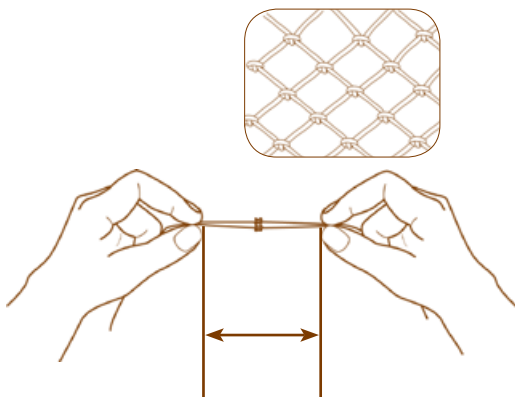
Offence and penalty

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- in the case of a company or association or body of persons corporate or incorporate – **VT 1,000,000** max.

Ref. Fisheries Regulations, Order No. 28 of 2009

A well-constructed and well-placed fish fence is an efficient method of fishing, which allows a fisher to keep only the targeted fish and release the others. But it can damage the reef, be an obstruction to navigation or create tensions with other users of the area where it is placed. This is the reason why a specific authorisation must be obtained from the Director, who will verify that these issues have been correctly addressed.

Fishing nets



Drag net or beach seine net : not less than 50 mm

Cast net : not less than 20 mm

- A person must not use for fishing:
 - (a) a drag net or a beach seine net that has a mesh size of less than 50 millimeters when fully stretched; or
 - (b) any cast net that has a mesh size of less than 20 millimeters when fully stretched or a radius that exceeds 2 meters in diameter.

Offence and penalty

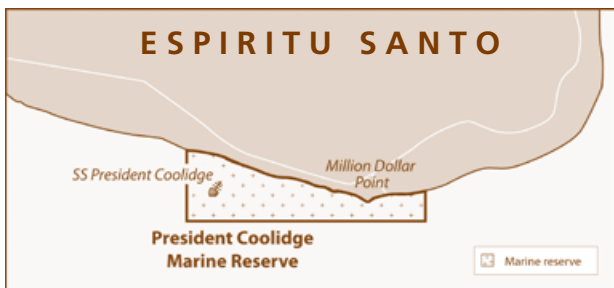
- in the case of an individual – **VT 500,000** max.; or
- in the case of a company or association or body of persons corporate or incorporate – **VT 1,000,000** max.

Ref. Fisheries Regulations, Order No. 28 of 2009

When small mesh nets are used, young fish are caught and die before they get the time to reproduce. These young fish are small and have little value on the market anyway.

MARINE RESERVES

Currently, there are two declared marine reserves in Vanuatu waters:



In the President Coolidge Marine Reserve off the south coast of Espiritu Santo (see map):

- Any person who, except with the written permission of the Minister:
 - engages in fishing; or
 - destroys any coral; or
 - dredges or takes any sand or gravel; or
 - otherwise disturbs the natural habitat; or
 - takes or destroys any wreck or part of a wreck;

is guilty of an offence punishable on conviction by a fine not exceeding **VT 50,000,000**.

*Ref. Fisheries Act 55 of 2005 & CAP. 158,
Subsidiary legislation of 1983*



In the closed area of Port Patrick in Aneityum (see map):

- A person must not fish for any trochus, green snail or lobster (both rock and slipper).
- A custom owner or any person directed by a custom owner may fish for trochus, green snail or lobster in the prohibited period, provided that the custom owner or any person directed by the custom owner obtains a written authorisation from the Director, on such conditions as the Director may deem appropriate.

Offence and penalty

- in the case of an individual – **VT 200,000** max.; or
- in the case of a company or association or body of persons corporate or incorporate – **VT 1,000,000** max.

Ref. Fisheries Regulations, Order No. 28 of 2009

FISHING LICENSE

- All vessels engaged in commercial fishing or related activities in Vanuatu waters must have a License, issued by the Director, except traditional canoes or outriggers.
- The operator of any local fishing vessel used for commercial fishing or any related activities within Vanuatu waters must provide any information in respect of that vessel's activities as is required from time to time by the Director.

Offence and penalty

- VT 50,000,000 max.

Ref. Fisheries Act No. 55 of 2005

Annual fees for local fishing vessel licenses (All fishing methods)

Fishing area	Vessel category	Fee
Efate and Luganville	Less than (or equal to) 8 meters	VT 20,000
	More than 8 meters	VT 20,000 plus VT 5,000 for every meter over 8 meters
	Sportfishing	VT 50,000
Other islands	Less than (or equal to) 8 meters	VT 10,000
	More than 8 meters	VT 10,000 plus VT 2,500 for every meter over 8 meters
	Sportfishing	VT 30,000

Licensing all vessels engaged in commercial fishing activities helps ensure that the Department of Fisheries has information about the level of fishing activities in Vanuatu waters. It also helps the department better plan the distribution of resources (funding, fish storage and marketing facilities, FADs, etc.) in relation to the number of licensed fishermen in an area.






In addition, the data provided by the operator of each licensed vessel allows the Department of Fisheries to better manage and monitor the marine resources of Vanuatu. It is always easier to take good management decisions when there is reliable information on the resource.






Registered (licensed) operators also benefit from the system by getting access to:

- reduced taxes on fuel and other imports (fishing gear, etc.);
- training sessions organised by the Department of Fisheries; and
- fishing equipment (FADs, etc.).



Summary of Vanuatu fisheries regulations

	Species	Size limits	Harvesting season	Other restrictions	Max. criminal penalties
	Trochus (<i>Trochus niloticus</i>)	Diameter: 9 cm minimum & 13 cm maximum	Open	Export permit required	Individuals: VT 200,000; Company: VT 1,000,000
	Green snail (<i>Turbo marmoratus</i>)		Closed until 1 October 2020		Individuals: VT 200,000; Company: VT 1,000,000
	Trumpet shell (<i>Charonia tritonis</i>)		Closed until 1 January 2019		Individuals: VT 200,000; Company: VT 1,000,000
	Sea cucumbers (beche-de-mer)		Closed until 1 January 2013		Individuals: VT 200,000; Company: VT 1,000,000
	Rock lobsters (<i>Panulirus</i> spp.)	Total length: 22 cm minimum; carapace length: 7.5 cm minimum	Open	No taking of egg-bearing females; no spear fishing; export permit required	Individuals: VT 200,000; Company: VT 1,000,000

	Slipper lobster (<i>Parribacus caledonicus</i>)	Total length: 15 cm minimum	Open	No taking of egg-bearing females; no spear fishing; export permit required	Individuals: VT 200,000; Company: VT 1,000,000
	Coconut crab (<i>Birgus latro</i>)	Carapace length: 9 cm minimum	Torba Province: Closed from 30 Aug. – 1 Nov.; Sanma Province: Closed until 31 March 2012; Maewo Is.: Closed from 1 Nov. – 30 April; Erromango Is.: Closed from 1 Sep. – 31 March	Yearly quotas: Torba Province: 5,000; Sanma Province: 2,000; Maewo Is.: 1,500; Erromango Is.: 2,000; export permit required	Individuals: VT 200,000; Company: VT 1,000,000
	Marine turtles		Closed permanently		Individuals: VT 200,000; Company: VT 1,000,000
	Marine ornamental products		Open	Export permit required; quota for <i>Centropyge loriculus</i> (flame angel) in Efate and surrounding islands: 12,250 pcs.	Individuals: VT 200,000; Company: VT 1,000,000
	Marine mammals		Closed permanently		VT 50,000,000 or 2 years in jail or both



0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 cm

Other prohibited actions	Max. criminal penalties
Fishing without a permit using any form of underwater breathing apparatus (scuba or hookah)	Individuals: VT 500,000; Company: VT 1,000,000
Fishing with a drag or a beach seine that has a mesh size of less than 50 mm when fully stretched	Individuals: VT 500,000; Company: VT 1,000,000
Fishing with a cast net that has a mesh size of less than 20 mm when fully stretched or a radius of more than 2 m	Individuals: VT 500,000; Company: VT 1,000,000
Setting a fish fence without the written authorisation of the Director	Individuals: VT 500,000; Company: VT 1,000,000
Fishing using explosives, poison or any other noxious substance	VT 10,000,000 or 2 months in jail or both
Setting, retrieving or destroying a fish aggregating device (FAD) without the written authorisation of the Director	Individuals: VT 200,000; Company: VT 1,000,000
Fishing, breaking corals, dredging sand or taking a part of a wreck in a declared marine reserve	VT 50,000,000
Fishing for trochus, green snail or lobster (both rock and slipper) in the closed area of Port Patrick, Aneityum (does not apply to traditional owners with a valid permit)	Individuals: VT 200,000; Company: VT 1,000,000
Engaging in a commercial fishing activity using a boat – other than a traditional canoe or outrigger – without a valid license.	VT 50,000,000