

## Poachers depleting abalone exports

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A new article by: Dynamic Export

Abalone poaching is severely depleting commercial harvests in Australia, a licensed diver has told The Bay Post. The diver, who wished to remain anonymous, suggested that within a decade abalone divers will not be able to find enough of the delicacy to service export markets in Asia. Over 90 percent of Australia's abalone harvest is sold into Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and China, with only a small portion sold on the domestic market.

The Eurobodalla diver works for a commercial exporter. He said poachers tend to take undersized abalone and sell them on the black market to local restaurants and if the practice continues unchecked it could severely damage the industry.

Abalone is Australia's fourth most valuable fisheries export, currently worth about \$180 million a year. Illegal harvesting gouges up to \$23 million a year from the industry, according to the Australian Institute of Criminology.

"Poachers are damaging [the industry] because they're taking below the size limit," the diver said. "The limit was put there because abalone don't spawn until they're a certain size. If they're not spawning there's less and less every year."

Ten years ago a licence holder could harvest 10 tonnes in a good season, the diver said. This year he harvested about a quarter of that. "Poaching causes depletion. It just wipes them out. It's not like 10 or 20 years ago when they were everywhere. Now you struggle to find them in places, and it's directly related to poaching."