



Chinese Red Swimming Crab Fishery

An opportunity to improve one of China's most significant crab fisheries

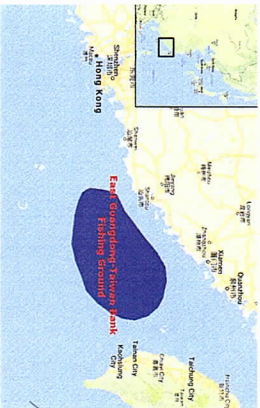
Zhangzhou City in China's Fujian Province is the leading fishing region in China for two commercially important species of crab: red swimming crab (*Portunus haanii*) and three spot (or red-spotted) swimming crab (*Portunus sanguinolentus*). On an annual basis over 60,000 metric tons of swimming crab is caught here. These species are not only commercially important in China, but they also supply an important export market of crabmeat, much of which is imported by the United States.

Historically, small-sized swimming crab species were a low value catch, often used for producing feed and manure. They were not targeted heavily until the mid 2000s, when canned crab meat trade with the U.S. expanded. During this period the U.S.-China crab trade supported the coastal Zhangzhou economy, creating an estimated 10,000 - 20,000 jobs and supporting over 20 seafood processing enterprises. However, the boom also incentivized overfishing, which became rampant due to the lack of a sound fishery management system.

The crab fishery, currently comprised of bottom trawl and pot seeding vessels, takes place on the Minnan-Taiwan Bank fishing grounds and is subject to a summer fishery closure common to all Chinese coastal areas. This closure attempts to protect stocks during the red swimming crab and three spot swimming crabs' reproduction periods. However, the current lack of science based stock assessments, minimum harvestable size limit, and maximum sustainable yield (MSY) fishery management strategies represent a serious risk to the fishery as little is known about the actual stock status of these species. Since 2012 many processors have found that large crabs reaching processable size, those with a carapace width of 8 cm or greater, have been decreasing in numbers. It's estimated undersized crabs might account for as high as over 80% of harvest. Crab processors, buyers, and fishermen have expressed concerns about the declining populations and have agreed something should be done to prevent a collapse of the fishery.



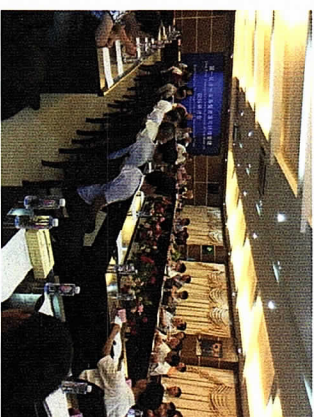
Three spot (or red-spotted) swimming crab (*Portunus sanguinolentus*) and Red swimming crab (*Portunus haanii*)



Minnan-Taiwan Bank, located in the southern part of Taiwan Strait at the boundary between the East and South China Seas

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Potential Improvements Through a Chinese Red Swimming Crab FIP?



The National Fisheries Institute (NFI), Ocean Outcomes (O2), and the China Aquatic Products Processing and Marketing Alliance (CAPPMA), along with local Chinese seafood processors and producers, have been working together over the past year to explore opportunities to improve the Red Swimming Crab fishery, making it more sustainable and opening the fishery up to new international markets. In July of 2016, NFI, O2, CAPPMA, and local affiliate Zhangzhou Aquatic Products Processing and Marketing Alliance (ZAPPMA) came together for a workshop in Dongshan, China to review a previously completed pre-assessment of the fishery and to begin co-designing a potential fishery improvement workplan and implementation strategy.

The workshop, attended by over 40 stakeholders from industry, fishermen association, government and civil society, included discussions on how to better monitor fishery bycatch, the plausibility of establishing a science based MSY management approach, and recommendations on options to transition from destructive fishing gear types to more sustainable options. Stakeholders are currently considering the next steps needed to take action on these discussions through a Fishery Improvement Project, or FIP. Learn more about FIPs and view a directory of global FIPs on fisheryprogress.org.

Current Project Participants

National Fisheries Institute (NFI), China Aquatic Products Processing and Marketing Alliance (CAPPMA), Ocean Outcomes (O2), and Zhangzhou Aquatic Products Processing and Marketing Alliance (ZAPPMA)

