

FISHERIES, OCEAN & AQUACULTURE

INDUSTRY OVERVIEW



Revised: May 17, 2024

Unama'ki- Cape Breton has a long and rich history tied to the fisheries, ocean, and aquaculture industries where existing resources and infrastructure can be used to support growth in the industry.

INDUSTRY FACTS

› Unama'ki - Cape Breton - Producing Seafood for the World!

In 2021, Unama'ki - Cape Breton and Nova Scotia exported \$2.4 billion in fish and seafood products to more than 80 countries, with two major catches; lobster and snow crab. The estimated total value of the Island's seafood exports is about \$342 million, or about 6.2% of total provincial exports - which means \$1 out of every \$16 brought into the province from international markets comes from the Island's seafood operations.

- › The Aquaculture industry on the Island is part of a growing and prosperous province-wide sector. Aquaculture is defined as the farming of aquatic organisms, including fish, molluscs, crustaceans, and aquatic plants. In 2020, Nova Scotia's aquaculture production was valued at \$90.2 million, up 10% from 82.1 million in 2019.
- › The Island hosts 38% of Nova Scotia's marine shellfish commercial licenses (58 of 170 in the year 2020), and 9% of the province's marine finfish sites (3 of 33 in the year 2020). You can see all of Nova Scotia's Marine Shellfish, Marine Finfish and Land Based Aquaculture sites on the provincial [Site Mapping Tool](#), which displays information relating to all aquaculture and rockweed licenses and leases in the province.
- › Unama'ki - Cape Breton is also home to innovative solutions adding value to the industry. [Live Ship](#) is a Cape Breton-based company that uses a proprietary live lobster container and shipping solution to increase efficiency, decrease carbon footprints and lower costs. In addition, the [Verschuren Centre](#) is attracting high-growth tech companies that use bio-waste from the fishing sector. Home to one of only three bioreactors in Canada, the Verschuren Centre helps cleantech companies develop new sustainable technologies and bring them to market.
- › Unama'ki - Cape Breton (RFA 1) is Nova Scotia's number one location for sportfishing tourism. 42% of non-residential anglers visit Unama'ki - Cape Breton.

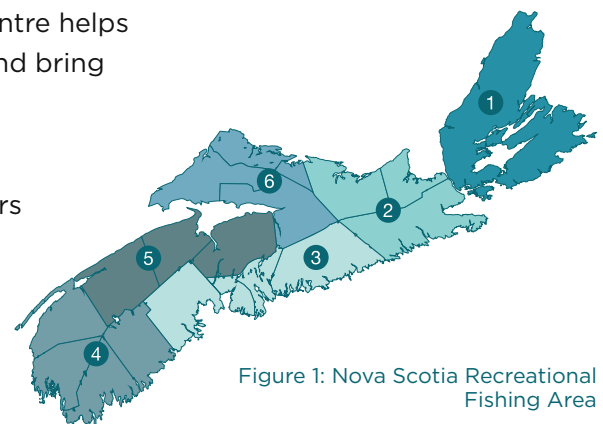


Figure 1: Nova Scotia Recreational Fishing Area

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

Location

Location: Unama'ki - Cape Breton's location gives the Island advantages of easily accessing the North American market. Fish grown on the Island are within 12 hours' delivery time of the major marketplaces of Canada and the United States.

High Skilled Workforce

With a total number of 58,135 people in the workforce (2021 Census), Unama'ki - Cape Breton provides the second largest talent pool in the province.

Seafood Resources

The commercial fishery in Unama'ki - Cape Breton lands a total of 63 species, with snow crab, lobster and shrimp accounting for 88% of the volume and 95% of the landed value. Cape Breton's waters, along with the Gulf and the Eastern Shore, are mainly Spring-Summer fisheries. In 2018, Unama'ki - Cape Breton held a total of 612 lobster licenses by Lobster Fishing Area (LFA), constituting 21% of the licenses in the Maritime Region. Each licence allows fishing with limits of up to 275 traps in LFA27 and 250 traps in LFAs 28-30.

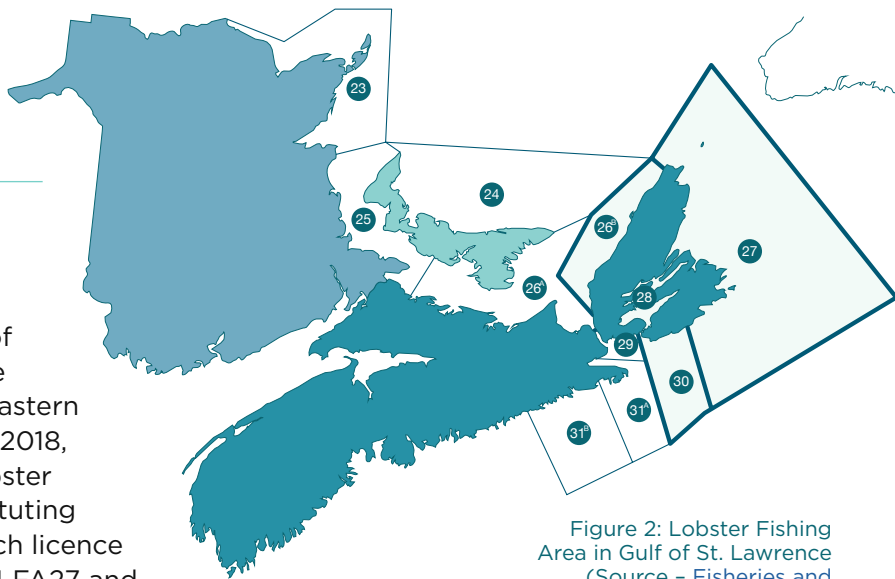


Figure 2: Lobster Fishing Area in Gulf of St. Lawrence (Source - Fisheries and Oceans Canada)

Existing Infrastructures

- ▶ **Processing Facilities:** Unama'ki - Cape Breton has 11 active processing facilities, processing a large share of both product volume and value. Cape Breton's fish harvesters and processors such as [Louisbourg Seafoods](#), [Lobsters R Us](#), [Victoria Co-operative Fisheries Ltd](#), and [We'koqma'q Fisheries](#) offer the highest quality fish and shellfish, pulled responsibly and sustainably from the icy waters of the North Atlantic.
- ▶ **Small Craft Harbours:** Government-owned harbour infrastructure can be found in 30 Cape Breton communities as shown in Figure 3. Unama'ki - Cape Breton's harbours are mainly for small craft and are used for inshore fishing by vessels of less than 45 feet.
- ▶ **Supply Chains:** Cape Breton's seafood industry also benefits from reliable, efficient supply chains that support everything from harvest to processing to distribution. It is easy to export large quantities of fresh products from ports in Sydney and Port Hawkesbury. Port Hawkesbury has ice-free conditions year-round with convenient road and rail connections and limited air services, while Sydney's harbour is mostly ice-free with road and air connections. Daily air services from Sydney connect Cape Breton to Montreal and Toronto, while Halifax Stanfield airport connects the Island's seafood products to Asia, Europe, and North America via a state-of-the-art cold storage facility right on the tarmac.



Figure 3: Small Craft Harbours in Cape Breton (Source - Fisheries and Oceans Canada)

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Commercial Fishing

Cape Breton has a long history of commercial fishing, and there are opportunities for individuals and businesses to engage in harvesting various seafood species, including lobster, snow crab, scallops, and various species of fish. This includes both inshore and offshore fishing operations. Regulations require the use of existing harbour and processing infrastructure, which can utilize improved technology and automation systems to produce value-added traditional products.

Aquaculture

Aquaculture has been recognized as an increasingly important role in food supply. Cape Breton has a great natural environment to support this industry with wide support from the Province of Nova Scotia and the Government of Canada. Investors could consider starting an aquaculture operation for species like Atlantic salmon, mussels, oysters, or trout. Aquaculture offers a sustainable and environmentally friendly way to produce seafood. For more information on aquaculture site licensing, marine sites leasing, and land base sites administrative processing, please visit: [Licensing & Leasing](#).

Seafood Exports

Exporting Unama'ki - Cape Breton's seafood to international markets can be a lucrative opportunity, as the region is known for high-quality products. Establishing partnerships with international distributors and participating in trade shows can help increase access to global markets.

Seafood Education and Training

Establishing a seafood-related training center or offering courses in fisheries management, aquaculture, or seafood processing can help build a skilled workforce in the region.

Eco-Tourism and Marine Activities

Cape Breton's stunning coastline and marine biodiversity make it an ideal location for eco-tourism and recreational activities such as whale watching, fishing charters, and scuba diving.

Sportsfishing

There is a potential for sportfishing operators to support the booming tourism sector in Cape Breton. For more information, please visit [Government of Nova Scotia -Sportfishing](#).

KEY RESOURCES

BUSINESS SUPPORT

- › [Cape Breton Partnership](#) is Unama'ki - Cape Breton's private sector-led economic development organization that supports companies and entrepreneurs by promoting our island as a great place to live, work, and invest.
- › [EntrepreneurCB.com](#) is a comprehensive database of business tools, programs, and resources that developed and maintained by CBP to support your business in various stages.

INDUSTRY SUPPORT

- › [Fish Harvesters Registration and Certification Board of Nova Scotia](#) represents fish harvesters across the province with licensing, training, and industry information.

- › [Nova Scotia Seafood Alliance](#) represents land-based seafood buyers and processors across the province with networking, training, and professional development.
- › [Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture](#) plays a significant role in the fisheries and aquaculture sector by providing business development and funding support.
- › [Fisheries and Oceans Canada](#) is the federal government institution responsible for managing and regulating Canada's fishery sector and ocean resources.
- › [Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia](#) is a not-for-profit industry trade association that work directly with companies to support the production of quality-farmed seafood, business development and other support services.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

- › [Verschuren Centre](#) has fermentation facilities at Cape Breton University that bridge the gap between laboratory prototypes and industrial scale, while working with companies on special projects.
- › [Université Sainte-Anne-Marine Research Center](#) in Petit-de-Grat, Richmond County provides a small-scale facility to support industry challenges and product and market research.
- › [Perennia](#) is a provincial technical development agency with the mission to support growth, transformation and economic development in the agriculture, seafood, and food and beverage sectors.

WEB RESOURCES

- › [Nova Scotia Seafood Quality Program](#)
- › [Seafood Accelerator Program](#)
- › [Site Mapping Tool - Government of Nova Scotia, Canada](#)
- › [Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture \(novascotia.ca\)](#)
- › [Quick Facts About Aquaculture | Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia \(seafarmers.ca\)](#)
- › [Clean Technology | Nova Scotia Business Inc.](#)
- › [Aquaculture Industry May Be The Saving Grace For Nova Scotia's Rural Communities - Huddle.Today](#)
- › [Verschuren Centre - Aquatics Industry Cluster](#)
- › [Key Industries | Municipality of the County of Inverness \(invernesscounty.ca\)](#)
- › [Support for Marine Research in Cape Breton - Government of Nova Scotia, Canada](#)
- › [Nova Scotia Department of Finance - Statistics](#)
- › [Canadian Aquaculture Production Statistics, 2020 | Fisheries and Oceans Canada \(dfo-mpo.gc.ca\)](#)
- › [Aquaculture Statistics - Government of Nova Scotia, Canada](#)
- › [Lobster Fishing Areas 27 - 38 - Integrated Fisheries Management Plan \(dfo-mpo.gc.ca\)](#)
- › [Seafisheries Landings \(dfo-mpo.gc.ca\)](#)

4 of 4

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