

**Current Status of Conch Fisheries in the
Caribbean and Exports to the United States**

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ABSTRACT

A survey of fisheries officers and personal observations in the Caribbean gives the general impression that conch stocks throughout the region are depleted and heavily overfished. Conch are being fished in more distant areas and at greater depths than ever before. New areas are being exploited as traditional areas are being depleted. Conch are being imported by Caribbean islands and by the United States. Annual imports of conch meat into the U.S.A. through the Port of Miami over the period 1972 to 1985 have a mean value of 517,000 kg, with most of the values falling within $\pm 10\%$ of the mean. The largest exporters to the U.S.A. are Belize and the Turks and Caicos Islands. The Belize conch fishery experienced a gradual decline to its current levels, whereas the Caicos fishery fluctuated greatly. Both areas show evidence of depleted stocks and overfishing. The market in the U.S. and within the Caribbean, however, appears to be expanding.