

## Brazil Seizes Illegal Lobster Being Shipped to US

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Brazil's Ibama (Brazilian Environmental Protection Institute - Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis) together with the Federal Police and agents from the Ministry of Agriculture apprehended a total of 16 tons of lobster because they were smaller than permitted.

Ibama norms require lobster to be at least 13 centimeters in length for commercialization. The apprehension took place in Porto do Pecém, in the metropolitan region of Fortaleza, capital of the northeastern state of Ceará.

The lobster was being prepared for export to the United States by the company Acaraú Pesca Distribuidora de Pescado e Importação.

Under Brazilian law, the company can be fined up to US\$ 17,500 (41,400 reais) and the people responsible sentenced to one to three years in jail. Selling undersize lobster is serious offense in the country's Environmental Crime Law.

### Predatory Equipment

To put an end to predatory lobstering in Northeast Brazil, the government prohibited the use of gill nets ("caçoeiras"). This type of net catches lobsters of all sizes, as well as causing damage to the ocean floor.

Since May 1, the only legal form of catching lobsters is using "manzuás" (wooden traps which lobsters enter but are unable to escape).

Lobstering employs around 100 thousand people throughout the Brazilian Northeast. The crustacean is one of Brazil's major fishing exports. Last year alone lobsters brought in revenues of US\$ 20 million, 28% more than in 2003.

The breeding season for lobsters - when lobstering is prohibited throughout the country - runs from January 1 to April 30. During these months, registered fishermen receive unemployment insurance.

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