

# Norway unlikely to fulfill 4,000t snow crab quota

By [Neil Ramsden](#)

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 Snow crab. Photo: Jim Brickett

While Norway has just set the country's first official snow crab quota – 4,000 metric tons – it looks unlikely fishermen will catch that amount, Tor-Edgar Ripman of Norges Rafisklag (the Norwegian fishermen's sales organization) told *Undercurrent News*.

The crustaceans have been appearing in Norwegian waters over the past few years, and exploratory catches by a number of countries in these waters have yielded around 10,000t in 2015 and 2016.

Of course, catches in this region barely make a dent in the global supply of snow crab, around two-thirds of which come from Canada. For this reason sales prices tend to follow Canada's.

However, in Norway, prices to the fishermen so far in 2017 are up 38% on low catches, said Ripman. Norwegian catches are down 37% year-on-year at the end of May, “even with more boats on the fishing grounds”, he noted.

 Norway's 2016 snow crab catches: volumes (kg), price each month (NOK), and total value.  
Credit: Rafisklag

Around 40 more boats are expected to participate in the fishery this year, all small inshore vessels, he said.

Norwegian vessels in 2016 landed a total of 5,293t of snow crab worth NOK 187.7 million (\$22.05m); so far in 2017 they have landed 2,137t at a value of NOK 105.3m. While landings take place year-round, the bulk of catches in 2016 were landed in March-June, with monthly landings later in the year much lower.

Average price per kilogram in 2016 was NOK 55.25 (\$6.49); so far in 2017 it is

NOK 76.55.

This year Canada has seen total allowable catches of snow crab in the Gulf of St Lawrence double, to 43,823t. Prices [stabilized after a tumultuous start](#) to the season.

Meanwhile Russian oligarchs just [spent over RUB 23 billion](#) (\$389m) in an auction for the sale of quotas for the crab catch in the subarea of Primorye.

 Same data for 2017

This year's total quota for snow crab in the Russian Far East is 46,500t. Of these, about 15,600t will be produced in the North Okhotsk subarea. The quota for crab catch in the Primorye subarea is 5,200t, while in the West Bering Sea zone, it is about 2,600t.

In 2017 Norway has lost some of its snow crab fishing grounds, after disagreements over who could fish in the 'loophole' area under North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission management.

Early in the year the EU, UK, US and Russia all [challenged Norway's stance on sovereignty](#) over Svalbard's continental shelf. Norway feels it has complete control over the shelf, though the EU officially approved a list of 16 vessels which could fish crab there, apparently angering Norway's fisheries minister Per Sandberg.

With the recent announcement of the 4,000t snow crab quota, Norway also offered the EU 500t of quota.

## King crab volumes down too

The slow fishing picture continues in Norway's king crab landings as well.

As of the end of May 2017 landings reached 364t, compared to 788t by that time in 2016. The total 2017 quota is 2,000t.

 Norwegian king crab catches for 2017, compared to 2016 and 2015. Credit: Rafisklag

carved out a high-end niche specializing in handling and shipping live king crab.

Unlike snow crab – with which Norway operates an offshore, frozen-at-sea commodity-style product operation – the country has

For this reason, suggested Ripman, Norwegian prices should not be too affected when Russia and Alaska begin fishing this species later in the year.

However Erlend Johnsen of Cape Fish told *Undercurrent* that slow catches “are not so good for us, because we want most volume shipped live, and Russian

vessels start catching live in September so we expect red king crab prices to drop a lot then”.

“Now there is a much bigger demand than we can supply. The only supply for live crab now is blue king that Russians deliver to Korea, but these seem to be very weak and Korean exporters are losing money due to high mortality these days.”

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