Devon & Severn IFCA
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

# Comparative Analysis of Crab, Lobster and Octopus Landings and Value of Landings for Eighteen Inshore Potting Vessels operating in South Devon

## 2023 and 2025

This document provides data on the changes in crab and lobster landings between 2023 and 2025 for 18 inshore potting vessels operating out of the ports of Dartmouth, Salcombe and Plymouth. The octopus blooms' main extent stretched to an easterly limit of Dartmouth and therefore these vessels are those that were impacted more by the octopus bloom than those fishing further east.

The 18 vessels are commercial potting vessels and are an important part of the inshore potting fleet in South Devon. These vessels operate in an area called the Inshore Potting Agreement area which was set up as a conflict resolution system to allow potters to fish in areas without the concern of conflict with towed gear vessels, such as scallop dredge vessels or trawlers. Each vessel works specific areas (through a Gentlemen's Agreement with each other ) and they do not move from these areas. Therefore, their catches are dependent on what shellfish come to their pots. The yellow and red areas in the chart below (Figure 1) are where the potters out of Dartmouth, Salcombe and Plymouth operate all year.

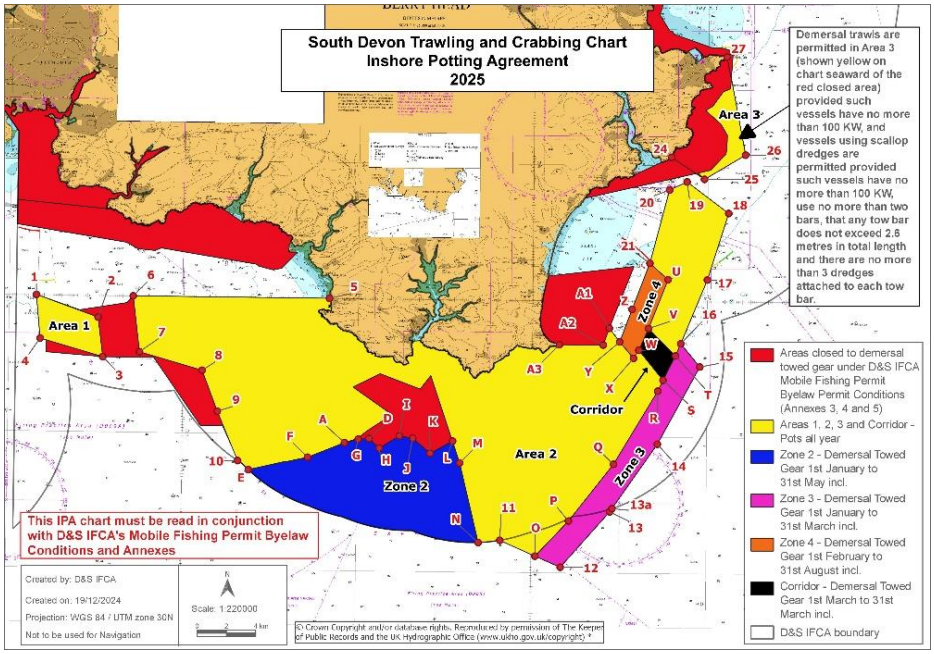


*Figure 1 Chart of the Inshore Potting Agreement Area*

## Landings

Data used in this analysis are from landings of crab, lobster and octopus in 2023 and 2025. Landings of octopus in 2023 were low for some vessels or non- existent for the majority. Data for 2024 have been requested from the MMO and will be analysed in the near future. The data for 2023 and 2025 are being analysed to highlight the impact of the octopus influx into South Devon in terms of landings to the fishermen and to the stocks of crab and lobster on which octopus predate.

Table 1 below indicates the percentage changes in the landings of crab and lobster between 2023 and 2025. Where there is a negative value this shows the percentage decline in the landings of crab and lobster recorded. Of the 16 vessels that landed crab, all but two vessels have seen dramatic declines in their landings of crab. Fifteen have seen declines in lobster landings. The amount of octopus caught varies dramatically depending on where the vessel's crustacea pots are located, and is also dependent on depth, closeness to shore, habitat type, and pot type used. Therefore, the impact of predation by octopus on crab and lobster will be different dependant on these factors.

There has been a significant decline in crab landings of between 16.32% and 95.59% in 2025 compared to those landings 2023 for 14 out of the 16 vessels that caught crab (those entries showing N/A in the table did not land crab in these years ). Ten of the 16 vessels have seen declines greater

than 70% with three vessels having a percentage loss in crab landings over 90%. The mean percentage decrease in crab landings for the 14 vessels that showed a decline is 71%. Only two vessels showed a slight increase in landings in 2025, although landings were similar to those in 2023.

For lobster landings, 15 out of the 18 vessels had landings significantly lower in 2025 than in 2023. Declines ranged from 34% to 79.26%. Twelve vessels had a decline of over 50% of the landings in 2025 compared with 2023, and half of these vessels had a decrease in landings of lobster over 70%. Some of the vessels have increase in landings but these tended to be on small increases relative to their 2023 landings.

**Table 1: Percentage change in crab and lobster landings between 2023 and 2025**

| Vessel | %age Change in Crab landings from 2023 to 2025 | %age Change in lobster landings from 2023 to 2025 |
|---|---|---|
| Vessel 1 | -84.22 | -68.39 |
| Vessel 2 | -92.66 | -73.42 |
| Vessel 3 | -94.33 | -50.93 |
| Vessel 4 | -65.73 | -61.65 |
| Vessel 5 | +3.44 | +29.55 |
| Vessel 6 | -37.90 | -64.73 |
| Vessel 7 | -74.02 | -7.95 |
| Vessel 8 | -77.91 | -49.84 |
| Vessel 9 | -54.74 | -79.11 |
| Vessel 10 | -95.59 | -79.26 |
| Vessel 11 | -81.40 | -75.46 |
| Vessel 12 | -16.32 | +57.65 |
| Vessel 13 | +0.45 | +226.79 |
| Vessel 14 | -75.48 | -34.00 |
| Vessel 15 | -72.31 | -72.66 |
| Vessel 16 | N/A | -65.00 |
| Vessel 17 | -74.30 | -52.22 |
| Vessel 18 | N/A | -77.18 |

The graphs in Annex A below show the landings of the 18 vessels for 2023 and 2025. Due to scaling of the graphs to show a comparison between 2023 and 2025 some of the landings are not seen clearly due to their proportional low value. Those for 2025 also show the octopus landings where applicable and a few show small amounts of octopus landed in 2023. Whilst most vessels did land octopus in 2025, there were marked difference between vessels, and the graphs clearly show that there was a limited season for

catching octopus. The majority of landings were between March and July with peak landings between April and July. After July very low landings of octopus were recorded. This indicates a four-month peak season for the inshore vessels. Very few of these inshore vessels landed of octopus in the autumn or winter. The MMO recorded peak landings in octopus in October and November 2025, but these were from a few nomadic vivier vessels working offshore in the Western Channel in deeper water.

Whilst the landings of octopus for some of the inshore vessels may have helped to supplement overall landings, the short season meant that after the octopus disappeared only a few vessels were able to land other species such as crab or lobster due to the high level of predation by octopus on these species. For many vessels landings of crab were depleted throughout the 2025 octopus influx and low thereafter. Having a short fishing season in 2025, which was not anticipated due to the unexpected influx of octopus, many fishing businesses suffered with little income from late summer onwards. This is particularly evident for half the vessels whose data was analysed - vessels 1, 2, 7, 8, 10, 11 14, 15 and 17. For those vessels that did see some crab in their autumn catches the level of landings were much reduced in these months and across the year compared to 2023.

It is important to recognise the impact of the octopus influx in South Devon and the Southwest. The ports of Salcombe and Dartmouth together have, historically, had some of the highest if not the highest landings of crab in England and the significance of the fishery goes far beyond the fishing businesses but to the crew without whom the boats cannot go to sea, the onshore businesses that support the fleet, the economic and social aspects of the fishery to the coastal communities and the heritage of fishing to these ports. Whilst the octopus influx might have been beneficial in 2025, it has decimated crab and lobster stocks. As recorded in previous octopus 'bloom' events, recovery times of these stock, and the knowledge of the time it takes for crab and lobster to reach the minimum landing size, it is clear that the impact of the octopus influx will be seen for five to seven years post the octopus presence.

From previous octopus influx events (1899 to 1990 and 1950 to 1951) the post influx impacts have been significant on the crab and lobster stocks and on the fisheries, fishermen and their businesses. Octopus have been seen to disappear approximately two years after the start of the bloom and leave decimated stock behinds with nothing for the fishermen to catch. This has already been seen in 2025 during late summer, and autumn where the octopus have disappeared and there is, for most, a much-reduced catch

## Value of Landings

MMO data were further analysed for the 18 vessels to show the changes in the value of landings from octopus, crab and lobster between 2023 and 2025. Table 2 shows the value of landings as percentage changes between 2023 and 2025. It is important to note that some of the vessels whose data were analysed are small vessels with low earnings and therefore any increase in landings will be seen as large percentage increase. The negative value indicates a decline in the value of landings.

As can be seen, 12 out of the 18 vessels showed an increase in the value of their landings due to the octopus landings. The presence of octopus did financially mitigate the impacts on crustacea stocks for two thirds of the vessels studied but there were six vessels whose value of landings, as shown in the table, were significant less in 2025 than in 2023 – vessels 1, 2, 8, 11, 16 and 17. These vessels saw losses in value of their catches between 34.61% and 72.24% which is almost certainly due to the octopus predating on crab and lobster and not being caught in these vessels' pots. In terms of the value of crab landings 14 out of 16 of the vessels had significant decreases in the value of crab landings (two vessels did not land crab – marked N/A in the table) and eight of the 14 vessels saw a decline in the value of crab landings greater than 50%, and five of these showed decline in landings value of over 70%. The value of lobsters landings to these vessels followed a similar pattern with 15 out of the 18 vessels having a decline in their value. Nine of the 18 vessels showed a decrease in lobster landings of over 50%.

Whilst it might be assumed from the data that the octopus landings have made up for the decline in the landings and value of crab and lobster to the fishermen, it is important to consider the uncertainty ahead for the fishermen. It is not known if the octopus will return in 2026 and beyond in similar numbers as in 2025. If the octopus catches are less or eventually disappear as has happened in past influxes in 1899/1900 and 1950/1951 then it can been seen from these data that the inshore crabbing fleet in South Devon will have very reduced landings of crab and lobster and it is unlikely that this fishery will continue to be viable. . Whilst in the past 10 years there has been a gradual decline in crab landings in the South West of England, lobster stocks were fairly stable and the dramatic decline in landings and value of landings of both these species is worrying and of great concern to the South West inshore crabbing fleet and D&S IFCA Potting Permit Holders.

**Table 2: Percentage change in value of landings between 2023 and 2025**

| Vessel | % Changes in Value Total Landings (Octopus, Crab, Lobster) | % Change in Value of Crab Landings | % Change in Value of Lobster Landings |
|---|---|---|---|
| Vessel 1 | -40.01% | -79.87% | -65.41% |
| Vessel 2 | -34.61% | -83.01% | -71.18% |
| Vessel 3 | 90.40% | -27.56% | -45.13% |
| Vessel 4 | 41.49% | -45.98% | -5.77% |
| Vessel 5 | 109.59% | 22.73% | 5.91% |
| Vessel 6 | 39.88% | -26.20% | -63.47% |
| Vessel 7 | 35.27% | -58.76% | 7.03% |
| Vessel 8 | -54.64% | -80.27% | -38.11% |
| Vessel 9 | 102.15% | -42.03% | -78.77% |
| Vessel 10 | 31.95% | -92.81% | -63.84% |
| Vessel 11 | -59.33% | -72.50% | -74.51% |
| Vessel 12 | 30.91% | -16.91% | -27.50% |
| Vessel 13 | 219.47% | 38.59% | 197.35% |
| Vessel 14 | 147.50% | -55.48% | -24.91% |
| Vessel 15 | 13.65% | -61.03% | -72.21% |
| Vessel 16 | -59.09% | N/A | -59.09% |
| Vessel 17 | 52.19% | -33.12% | -46.92% |
| Vessel 18 | -72.24% | N/A | -73.94% |

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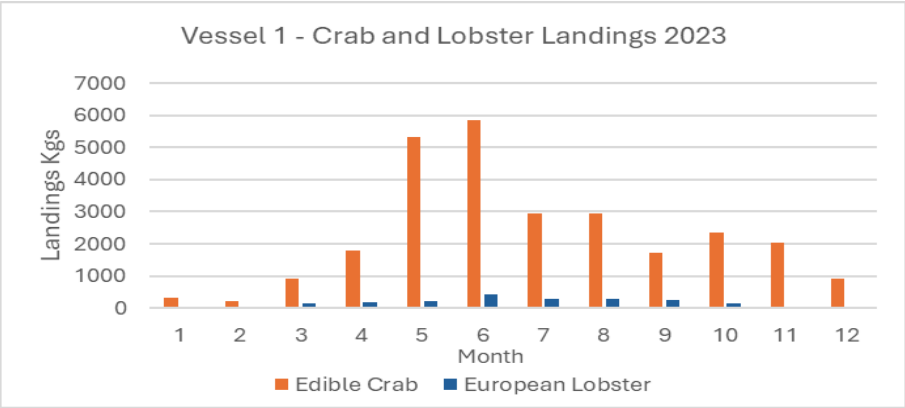
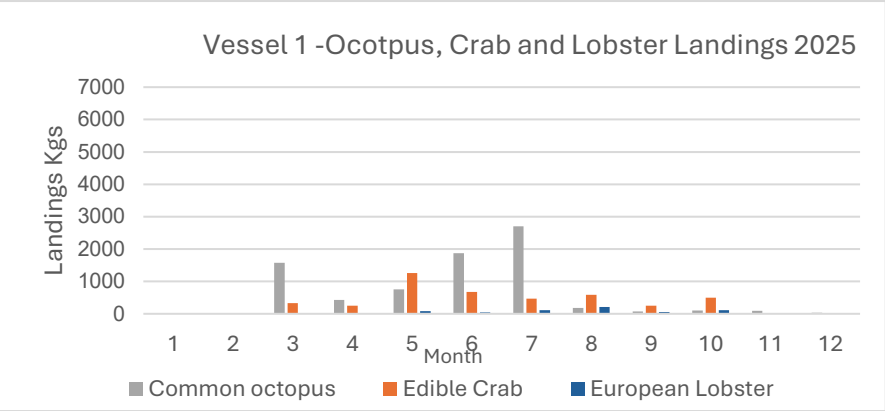
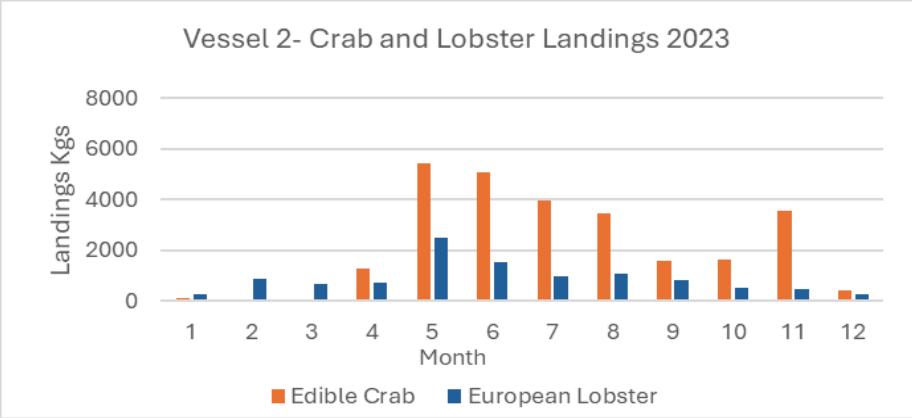
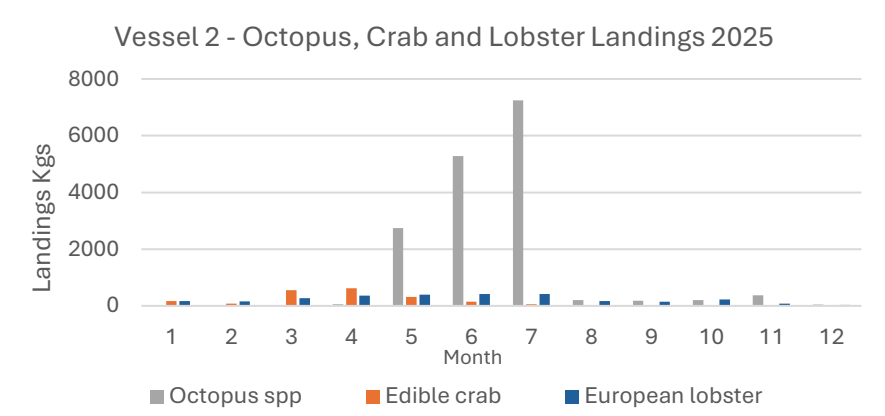
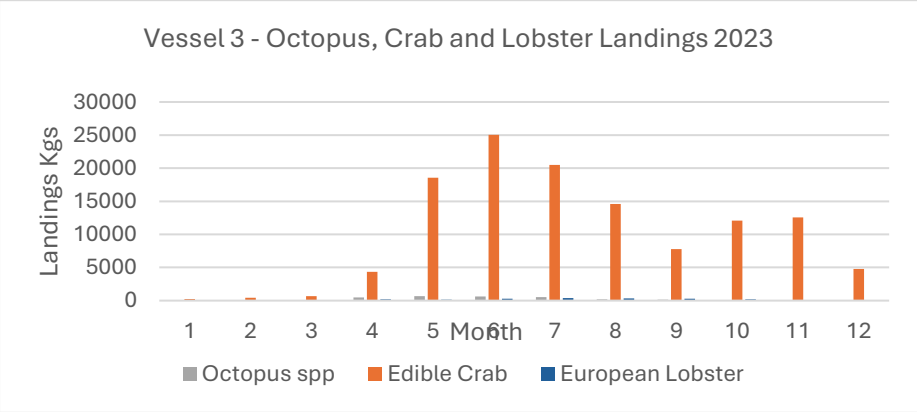
## Annex 1: Graphs of Landing Data for 13 Vessels operating in South Devon – 2023 and 2025

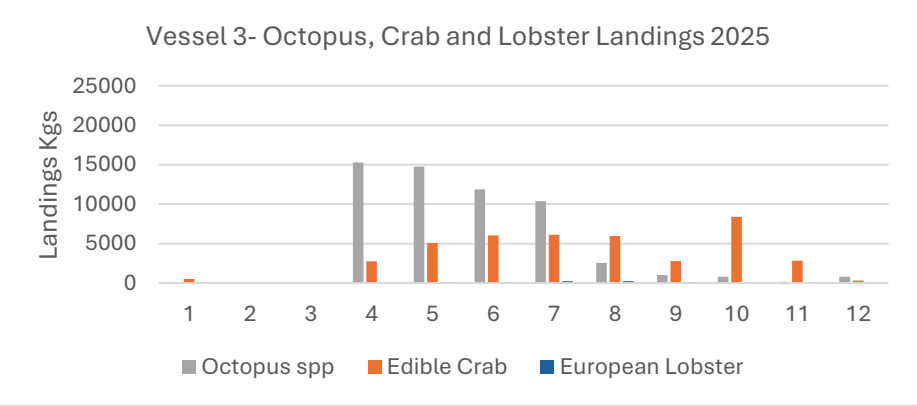


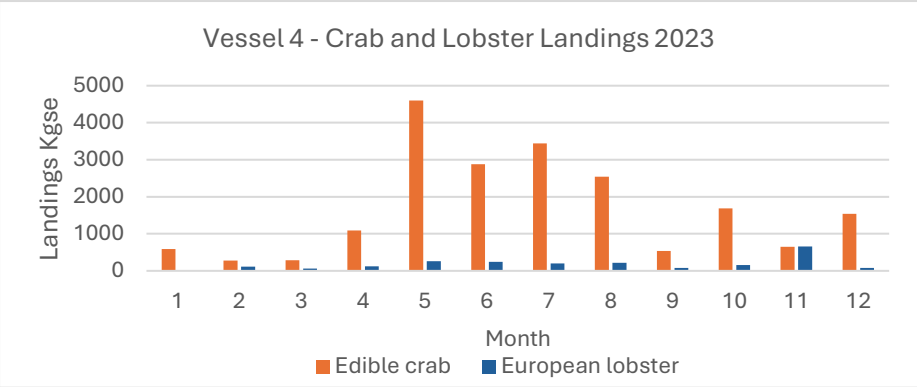



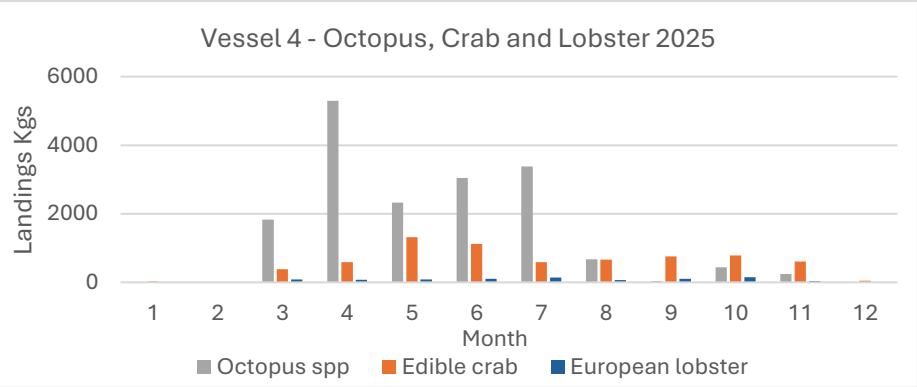



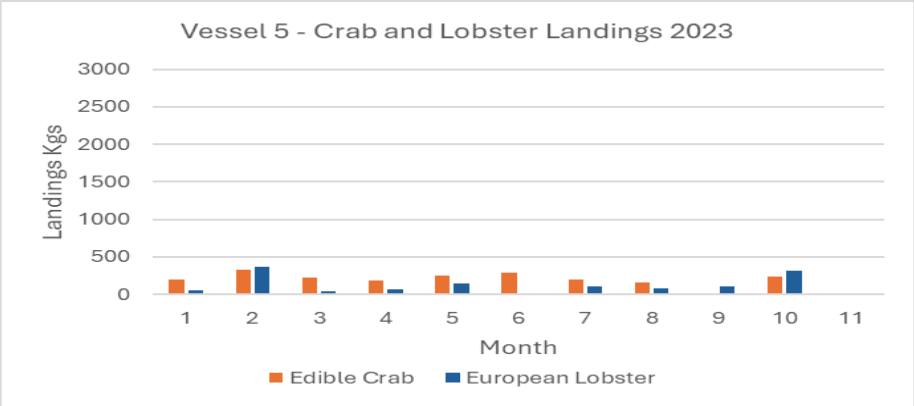



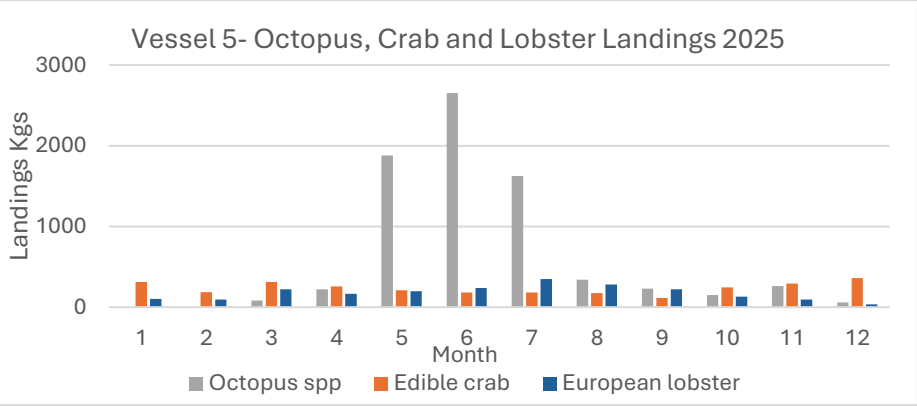



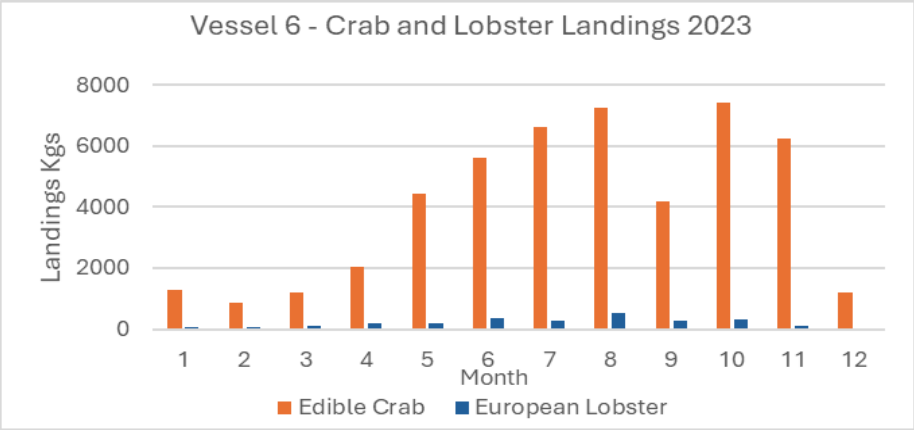



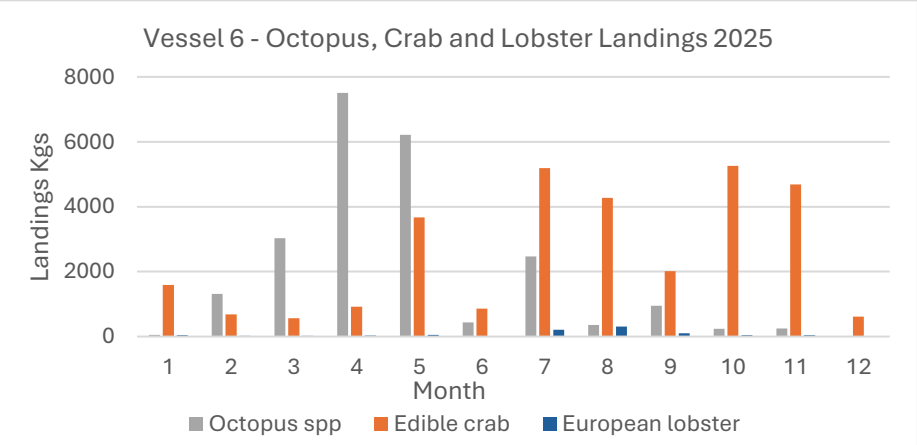

Vessel 4 - Crab and Lobster Landings 2023
Landings Kgse
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Edible crab
European lobster

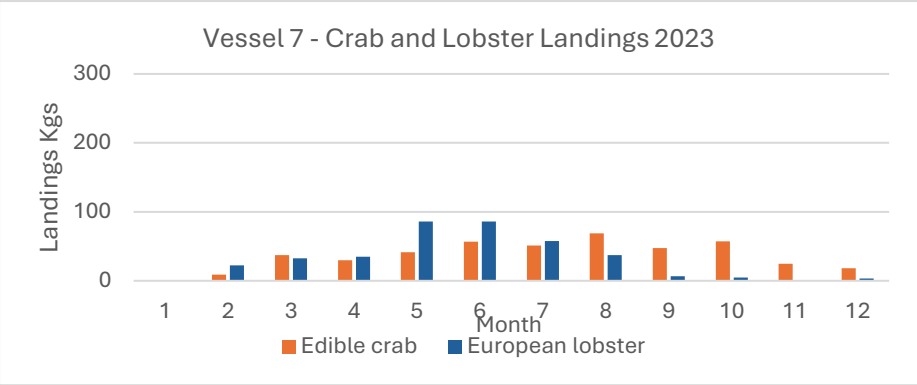

Vessel 4 - Octopus, Crab and Lobster 2025
Landings Kgs
6000
4000
2000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster

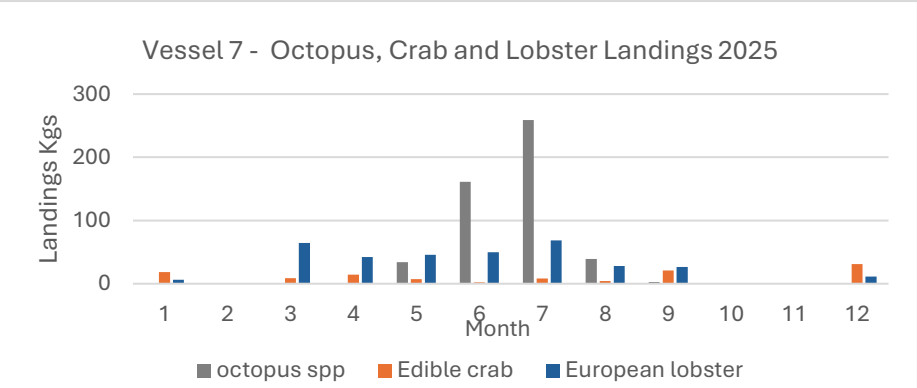

Vessel 5 - Crab and Lobster Landings 2023
Landings Kgs
3000
2500
2000
1500
1000
500
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
Month
Edible Crab
European Lobster

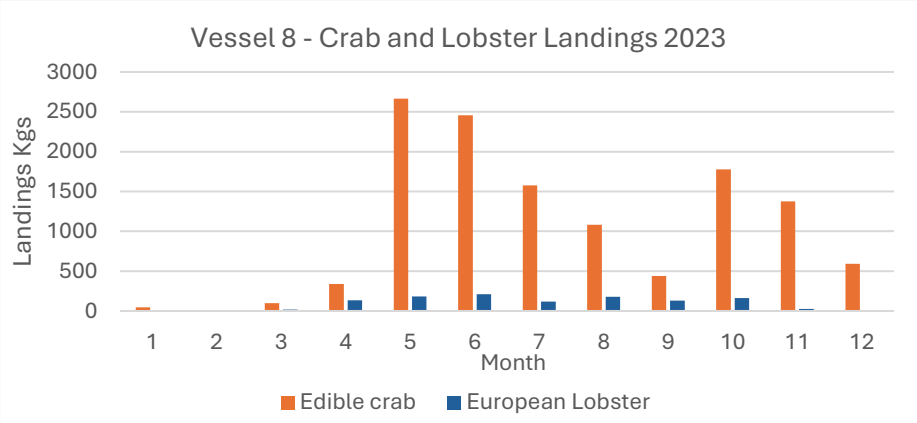

Vessel 5- Octopus, Crab and Lobster Landings 2025
Landings Kgs
3000
2000
1000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster

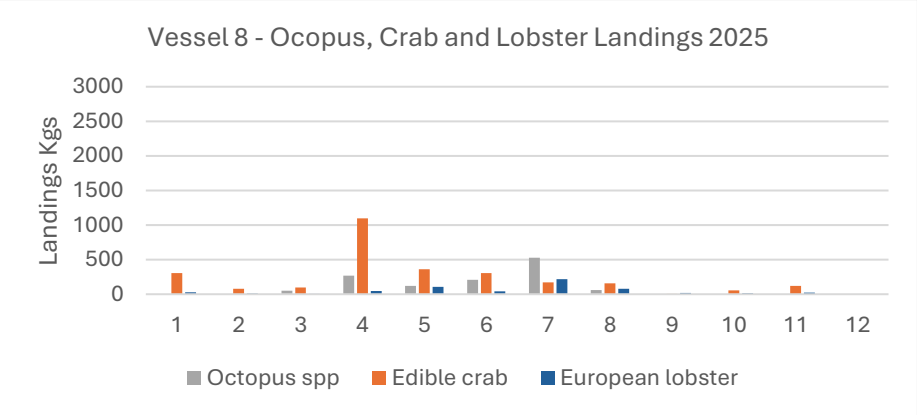

Vessel 6 - Crab and Lobster Landings 2023
Landings Kgs
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Edible Crab
European Lobster

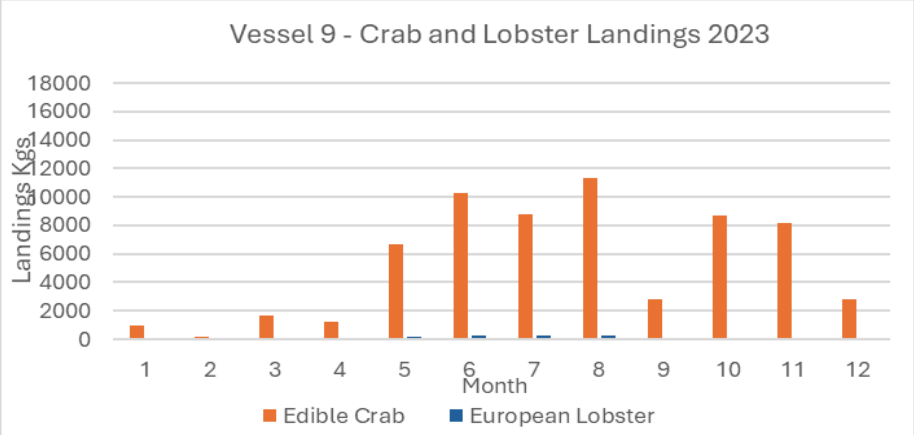

Vessel 6 - Octopus, Crab and Lobster Landings 2025
Landings Kgs
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster

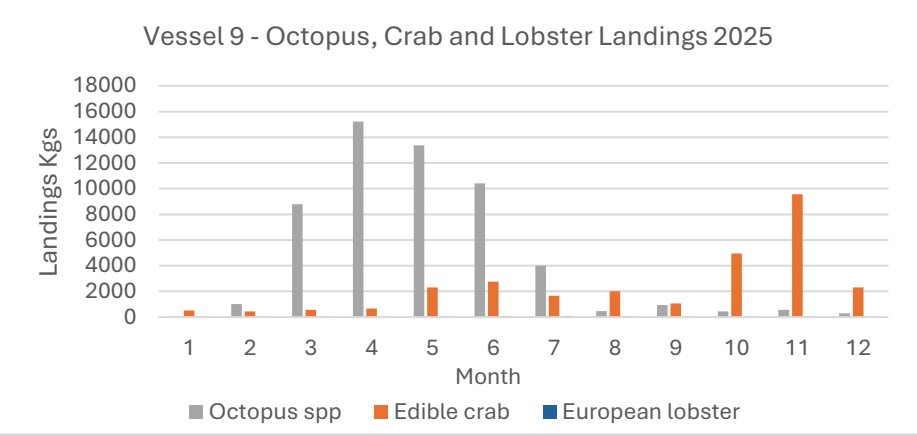

Vessel 7 - Crab and Lobster Landings 2023
Landings Kgs
300
200
100
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Edible crab
European lobster

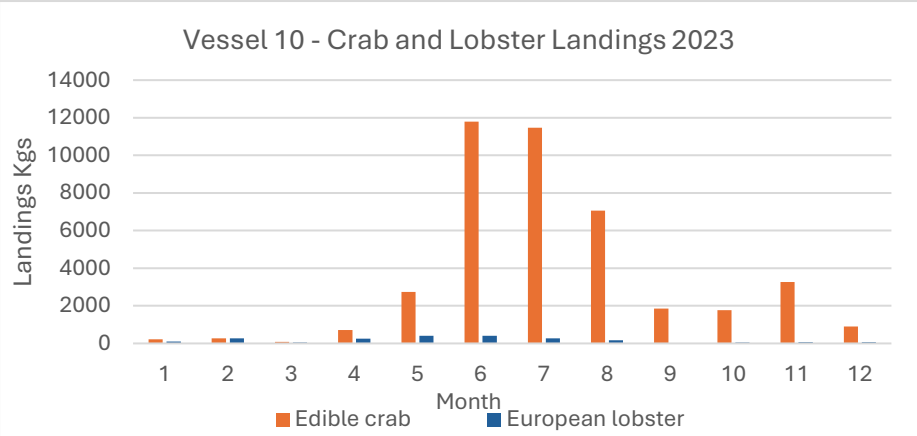

Vessel 7 - Octopus, Crab and Lobster Landings 2025
Landings Kgs
300
200
100
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster

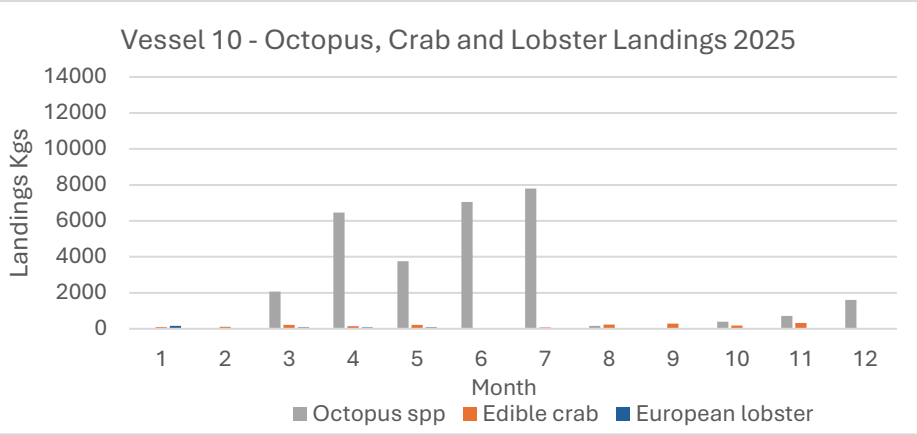

Vessel 8 - Crab and Lobster Landings 2023
Landings Kgs
3000
2500
2000
1500
1000
500
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Edible crab
European Lobster

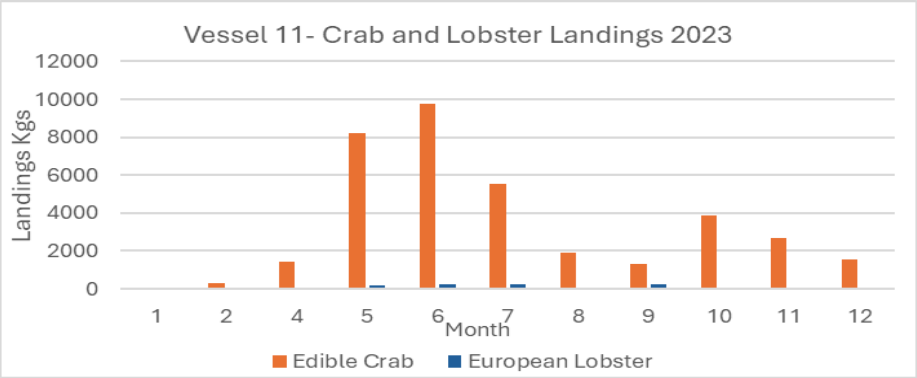

Vessel 8 - Ocopus, Crab and Lobster Landings 2025
Landings Kgs
3000
2500
2000
1500
1000
500
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster

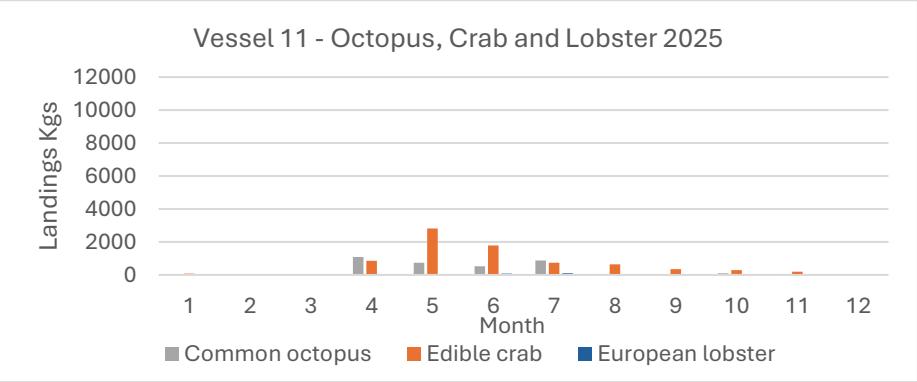

Vessel 9 - Crab and Lobster Landings 2023
Landings Kgs
18000
16000
14000
12000
10000
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Edible Crab
European Lobster

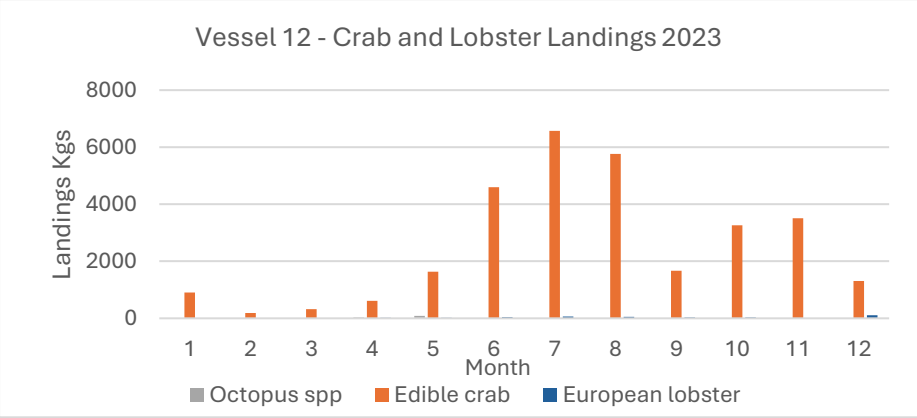

Vessel 9 - Octopus, Crab and Lobster Landings 2025
Landings Kgs
18000
16000
14000
12000
10000
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster

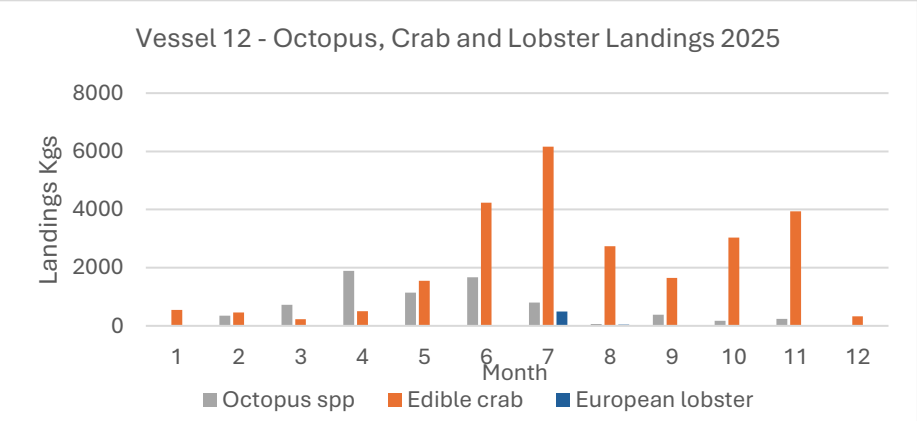

Vessel 10 - Crab and Lobster Landings 2023
Landings Kgs
14000
12000
10000
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Edible crab
European lobster

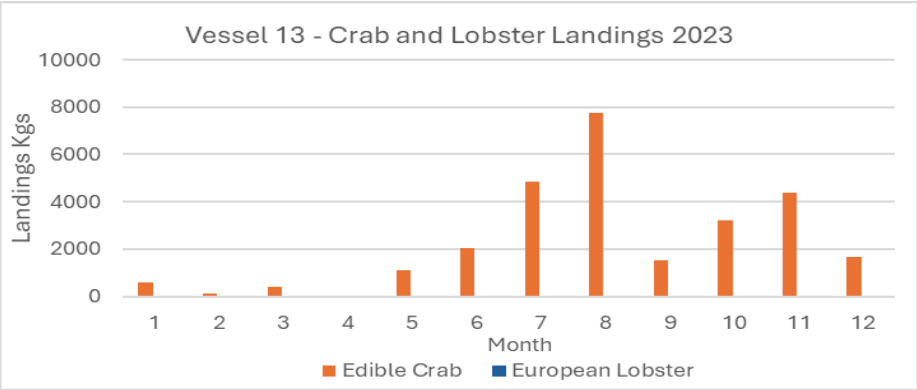

Vessel 10 - Octopus, Crab and Lobster Landings 2025
Landings Kgs
14000
12000
10000
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster

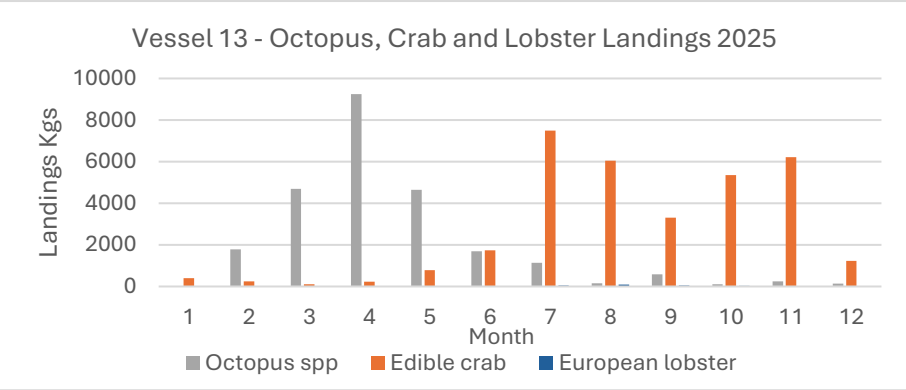

Vessel 11- Crab and Lobster Landings 2023
Landings Kgs
12000
10000
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
1 2 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Edible Crab
European Lobster

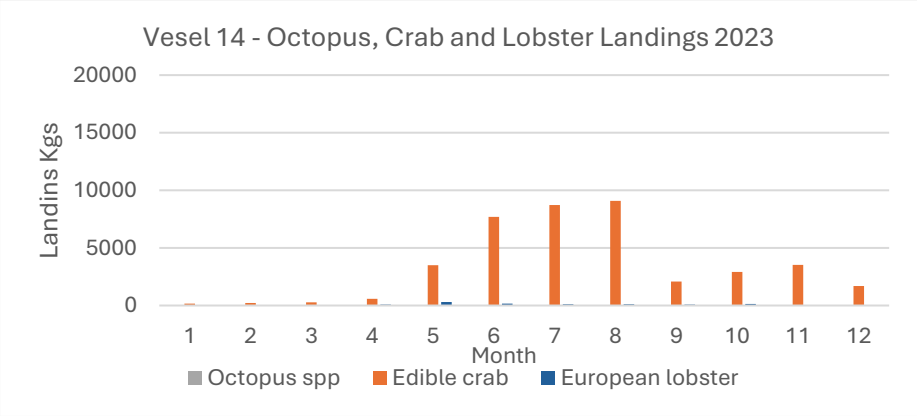

Vessel 11 - Octopus, Crab and Lobster 2025
Landings Kgs
12000
10000
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Common octopus
Edible crab
European lobster

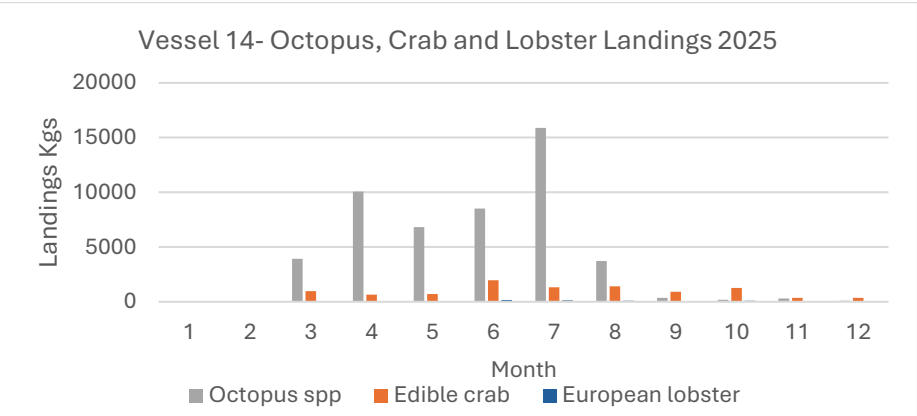

Vessel 12 - Crab and Lobster Landings 2023
Landings Kgs
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster

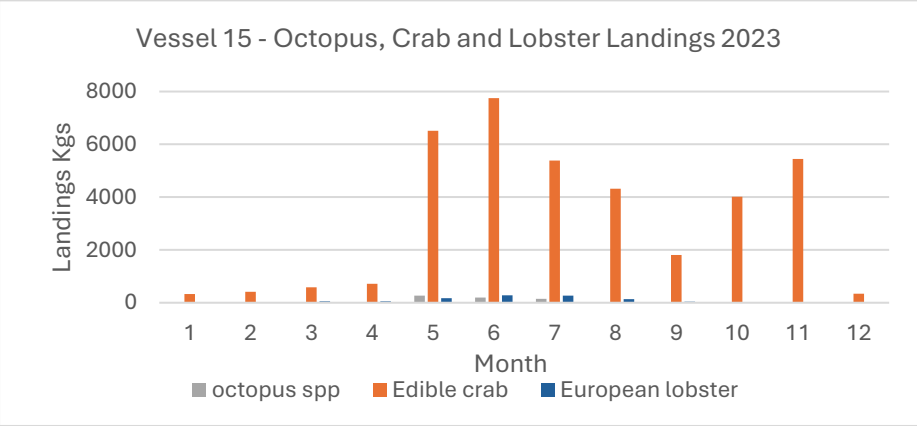

Vessel 12 - Octopus, Crab and Lobster Landings 2025
Landings Kgs
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster

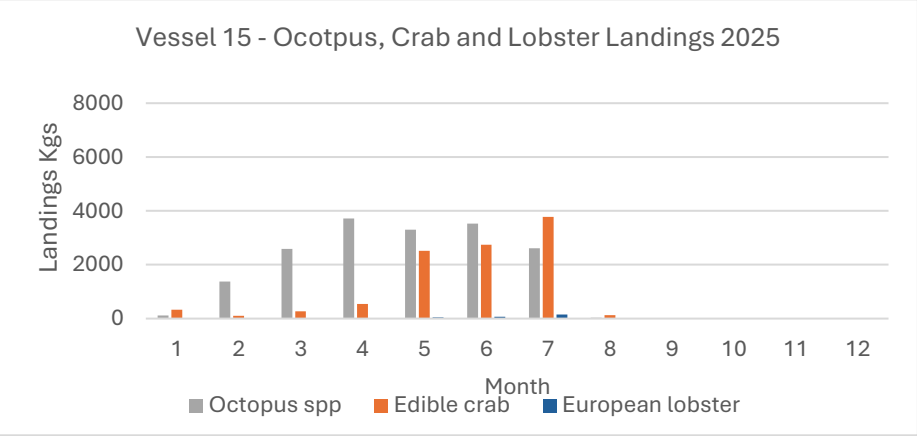

Vessel 13 - Crab and Lobster Landings 2023
Landings Kgs
10000
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Edible Crab
European Lobster

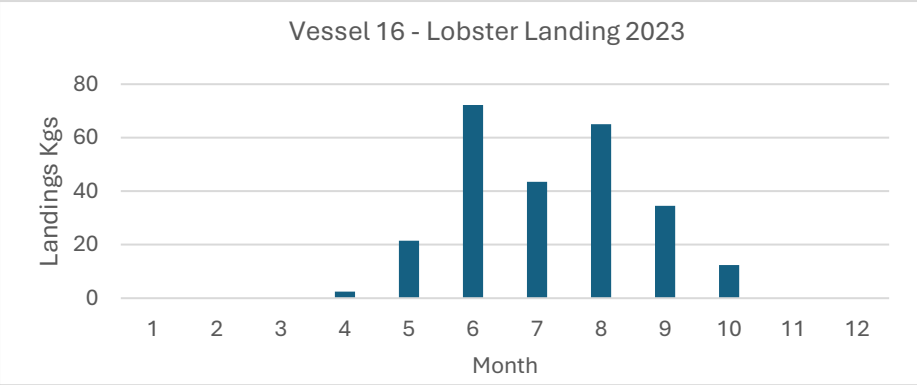

Vessel 13 - Octopus, Crab and Lobster Landings 2025
Landings Kgs
10000
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster

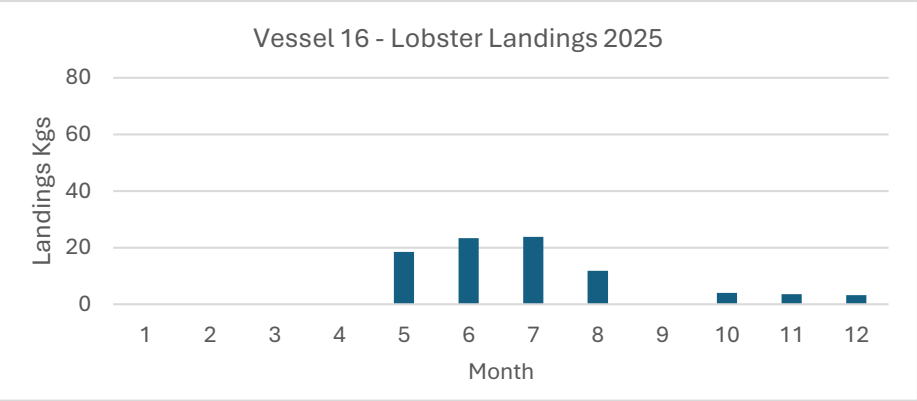

Vesel 14 - Octopus, Crab and Lobster Landings 2023
Landins Kgs
20000
15000
10000
5000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster

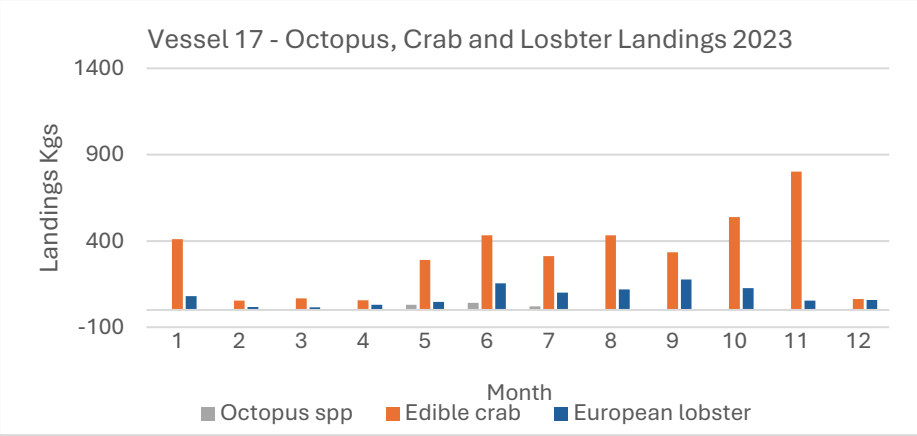

Vessel 14- Octopus, Crab and Lobster Landings 2025
Landings Kgs
20000
15000
10000
5000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster

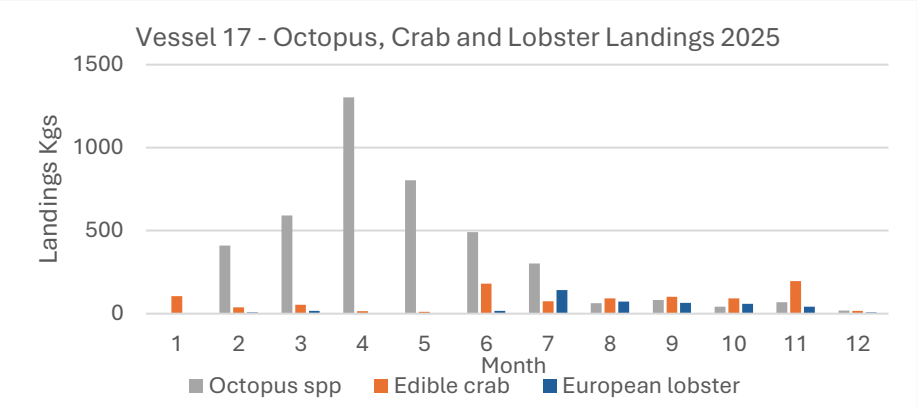

Vessel 15 - Octopus, Crab and Lobster Landings 2023
Landings Kgs
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster

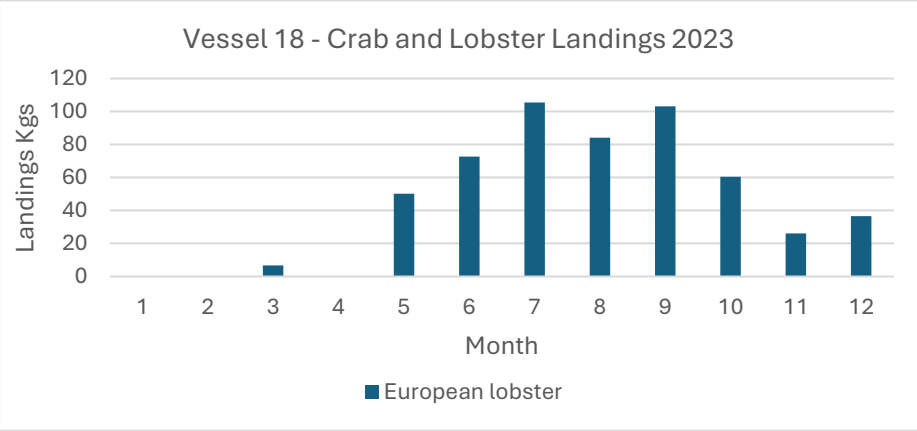

Vessel 15 - Ocotpus, Crab and Lobster Landings 2025
Landings Kgs
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster

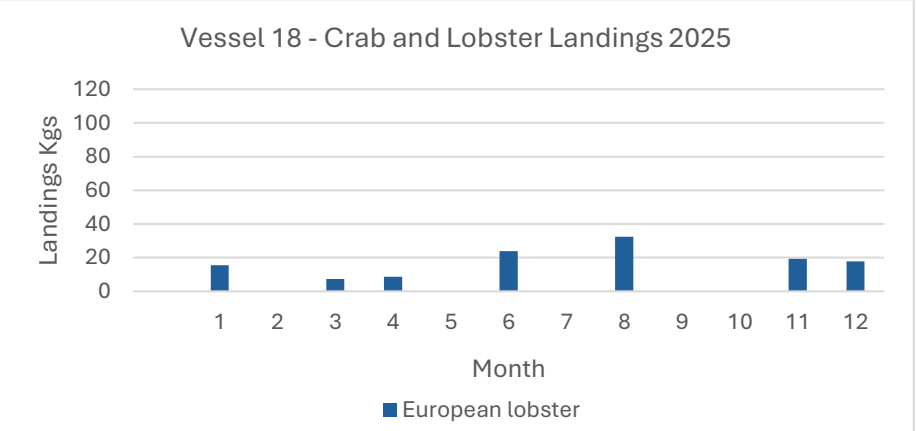

Vessel 16 - Lobster Landing 2023
Landings Kgs
80
60
40
20
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month


Vessel 16 - Lobster Landings 2025
Landings Kgs
80
60
40
20
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month


Vessel 17 - Octopus, Crab and Losbter Landings 2023
Landings Kgs
1400
900
400
-100
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster


Vessel 17 - Octopus, Crab and Lobster Landings 2025
Landings Kgs
1500
1000
500
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
Octopus spp
Edible crab
European lobster


Vessel 18 - Crab and Lobster Landings 2023
Landings Kgs
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
European lobster


Vessel 18 - Crab and Lobster Landings 2025
Landings Kgs
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Month
European lobster