

## Square Mesh Codends in the Queensland Trawl Fishery

The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) are funding an extension project through SeaNet QLD to inform trawler operators and net makers about square mesh codends.



*Square mesh (left) and standard diamond mesh net (right).*

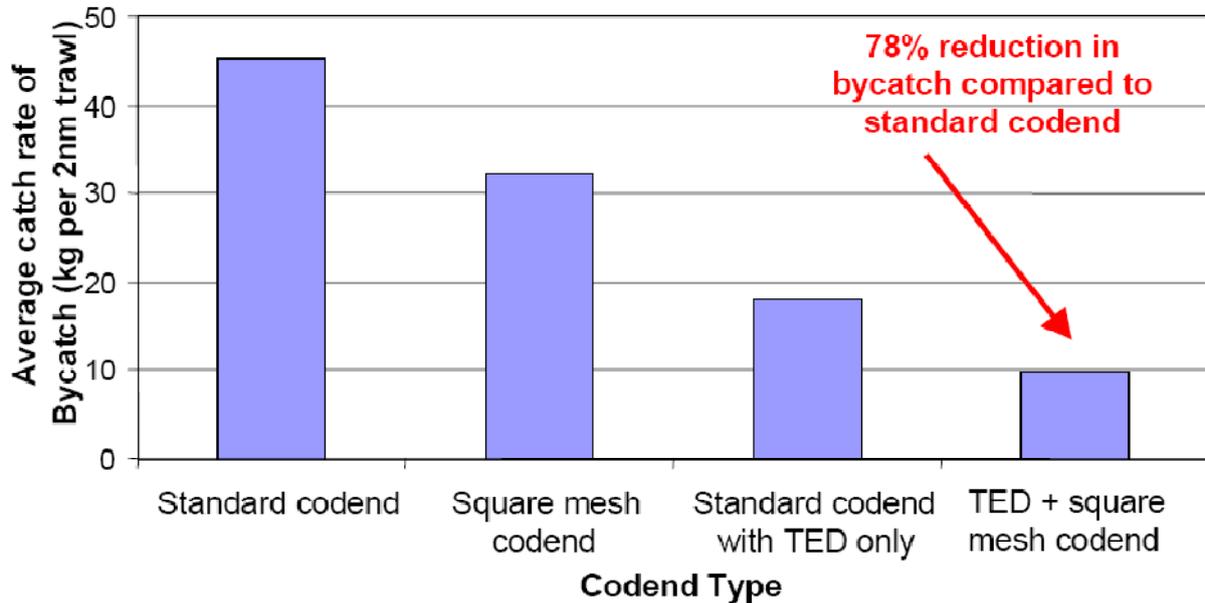
The project is a collaborative effort between the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F), SeaNet and Ecofish, a non-profit regional economic development group representing the seafood and marine industries in Far North Queensland.

Recent research has shown that square mesh codends can be very effective at reducing bycatch (i.e., unwanted small fish and invertebrates) and regulating the size of target species such as prawns and scallops. Diamond mesh codends used by the majority of trawler operators close up whenever the net is under any appreciable load, but square mesh codends remain open and allow bycatch to escape. By regulating the size of the square meshes, the selectivity of the prawns and scallops can also be controlled more effectively.



*This square mesh codend was used in a research charter in the Queensland scallop fishery in 2002. The 12mm polyethylene rope was used to take the weight of the catch, reducing knot slippage and distortion.*

**Effect of TED and square mesh on the catch rate of total bycatch in the Queensland Scallop Fishery**



*When 100mm square mesh codends were used with a turtle excluder device (TED), bycatch was reduced by 78% compared to a standard net codend with no TED. Importantly, there was no reduction in the catch rate of legal sized scallops, but the catch rate of undersized scallops was greatly reduced. The small scallops passed through the square meshes, remaining on the sea floor.*

The extension project has constructed several square mesh codends for prawn and scallop fisheries and is lending them to fishers for trialing, free of charge. Project staff are also providing advice on how to manufacture and install the devices.

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**Australian Government**

SeaNet is a program of OceanWatch Australia funded by the Australian Government.  
[www.oceanwatch.org.au](http://www.oceanwatch.org.au)

OceanWatch Australia is a national environmental, not-for-profit company that works to achieve sustainability in the Australian seafood industry through protecting and enhancing fish habitats, improving water quality and advancing the sustainability of fisheries through action based partnerships with the Australian seafood industry, government, natural resource managers, private enterprise and the community.