

Trawler suspected of operating illegally intercepted in joint operation (with photo)

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) today (March 14) announced the laying of charges against nine Mainland fishermen on board a fishing vessel suspected of engaging in illegal trawling in Hong Kong waters near Shek Ngau Chau.

When AFCD officers and the Marine Police mounted a joint anti-illegal fishing operation in the abovementioned waters on March 12, a shrimp trawler suspected to be trawling was intercepted for investigation. Some fishing gear was seized on board.

Charges were laid against the Mainland fishermen found on board the vessel. They were suspected to have contravened the Fisheries Protection Regulations by using prohibited fishing gear. They will appear at the Fanling Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (March 15).

An AFCD spokesman reminded the public that a ban on trawling had come into force since December 31, 2012. According to the Regulations, any person using prohibited fishing gear for fishing upon conviction is liable to a maximum penalty of a fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The spokesman said that trawling is a non-selective fishing operation which damages the seabed and marine ecosystems. A ban on trawling brings this harmful depletion to an immediate halt, enabling marine ecosystems to be gradually rehabilitated to a sustainable level and be better conserved in the long run.

The spokesman said, "The AFCD and the Police will continue to carry out joint enforcement operations to crack down on illegal fishing activities."

