



## Over 80 percent of fisheries overfished: report



Employees of a fish company in Scheveningen, Netherlands, prepare the herrings for consumption



Guillermo Valles Galmes

1 day ago

GENEVA (AFP) — More than 80 percent of the world's fisheries are at risk from over-fishing and the World Trade Organisation must act urgently to scrap unsustainable subsidies, lobby group Oceana said Monday.

"The world's fishing fleets can no longer expect to find new sources of fish," said Courtney Sakai, senior campaign director at Oceana.

"If the countries of the world want healthy and abundant fishery resources, they must improve management and decrease the political and economic pressures that lead to overfishing."

Based on data from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, the report found that only 17 percent of the world's known fish stocks are under-exploited or moderately exploited.

Particularly overfished are stocks in significant parts of the Atlantic Ocean, the Western Indian Ocean and the Northwest Pacific Ocean.

The report said that in the Western Indian Ocean, for example, over 70 percent of known stocks have been fully exploited, while the remainder are overexploited, depleted or currently at a stage of recovery.

Oceana also notes that emerging fishing grounds have large numbers of stocks with unknown status, saying that it opens them up to the risk of overfishing and depletion.

The group estimated that current fishing subsidies are worth at least 20 billion dollars annually, or the value of 25 percent of the world's catch, giving strong economic incentives for overfishing.

"The scope and magnitude of these subsidies is so great that reducing them is the single greatest action that can be taken to protect the world's oceans," according to the group.

It urged countries to push to "reduce and control subsidies" during the current World Trade Organisation negotiations on fisheries subsidies.

The WTO last November proposed the elimination of most subsidies for the fishing industry in a compromise package.

The text, presented by Guillermo Valles Galmes, chair of the WTO's negotiating group on rules, proposes the scrapping of all subsidies for the acquisition, construction, repair or renewal of fishing vessels.

It also calls for the end of subsidies towards the operating costs of fishing fleets such as licence fees, or fuel purchases as is currently the case in the European Union.

Port infrastructure subsidies are also scheduled for the chop along with aid to wild marine life fishing.

Japan is the world's largest fishing subsidiser with annual payments amounting to 5.3 billion dollars a year, according to figures provided by Oceana.