



The World's Fisheries are in Trouble

Oceans cover more than two-thirds of the globe, and they are as important to us as they are vast. However, the world's oceans are at a critical juncture and face a bleak future if nothing is done to restore them. Global fish fleets are taking too much ocean wildlife from the water– and the laws meant to manage and conserve the fisheries are often ignored or selectively enforced.

The result: declining fisheries and destruction of marine habitat are threatening the Earth's largest and most important natural system, as well as the nearly billion people who rely on fish as their primary protein source and the tens of millions of people who depend on the sea for their livelihood. Since the 1980s, the global seafood catch has been falling despite more and better equipped fishing boats in the water.

Exacerbating global overfishing are massive subsidies given by a handful of foreign governments to their fishing fleets to increase their ability to fish. Eliminating these overfishing subsidies is likely the largest single action that can be taken to protect the world's fisheries and the communities that depend on them.

Key Findings of Recent Fisheries Related Research:

- Scientists project the collapse of all species of wild seafood that are currently fished by the year 2048 (B. Worm et al., 2006).
- 90 percent of all the “big fish” – tuna, marlin, and swordfish – are gone. (R. Myers et al., 2003).
- Nearly 80 percent of the world commercial fish populations are overexploited or fully exploited (SOFIA 2004).
- Of the top ten species that account for about 30 percent of the world capture fisheries production in terms of quantity, seven correspond to stocks that are considered to be fully exploited or overexploited (anchoveta, Chilean jack mackerel, Alaska pollock, Japanese anchovy, blue whiting, capelin and Atlantic herring). (SOFIA 2004)
- Global fleets continue to increase their catch of major tuna species despite the fact that most of the stocks are either fully fished or overfished. (SOFIA 2004)
- Scientists estimate that approximately 25 percent of all the fish caught in the world is thrown back – dead and dying – because they are not wanted (A. Rosenberg et al., 2005).

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