

Farmed fish numbers outpace human population; Farms are boosting the global fish population, but at what cost to wild populations?

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THE amount of fish on people's plates is rising, thanks to a boom in fish farming.

The latest report on world fisheries from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, published on Monday, shows that the amount of fish available to eat is growing faster than the human population. Fish farms now produce half the fish we eat, up from less than a third in 2002. The outlook for wild fish remains gloomy, though. The FAO says some 80 per cent of fisheries have reached their maximum yields, yet overfishing continues.

The international fisheries pressure group **Oceana** is not convinced that the rise in fish farming is good for wild fisheries. Many farmed fish such as salmon are fed fish

meal and oil made from small wild fish such as sardines. In a report published on the same day, **Oceana** says that the production of fish meal is starving life in the sea. Species used for fish meal, it says, are prey for important food fish such as tuna, as well as marine mammals and seabirds, all of which are now going hungry.

Both the FAO and **Oceana** point out that climate change will unbalance marine ecosystems, and the FAO notes that overfishing itself could fuel climate change.

Unrestricted competition for fish leads to wasted energy as too many boats mean fewer fish are caught per litre of fuel - especially when boat owners buy more powerful, less efficient engines to beat the competition.