

New Oceana-Supported Research Maps Wealthy Nations' Harmful Fisheries Subsidies Supporting their Fleets Abroad, Including in the Waters of Least Developed Countries

Oceana calls on WTO member states to curb the harmful fisheries subsidies that facilitate overexploitation and unsustainable distant water fishing

Press Release Date

Location: Washington, DC

Contact: Patricia Roy: patricia@communicationsinc.co.uk, +34 696 90 59 07

Oceana released a new report today showing evidence that the world's top industrial fishing nations are using fisheries subsidies programs to shift the risk of overfishing to other countries' waters. For the first time, harmful subsidies worth billions of dollars from wealthy nations can now be tracked to destinations around the world, including to least developed countries (LDCs) and the high seas.

China, Japan, Korea, Russia, U.S.A, Thailand, Taiwan, Spain, Indonesia, and Norway are the world's top 10 providers of harmful fisheries subsidies for a cumulative total of US \$15.4 billion (2018 data, the latest available). The EU, counted as a bloc, provides \$2.0 billion in harmful subsidies, which would make it the third largest provider, behind China at \$5.9 billion and Japan at \$2.1 billion.

Looking solely at distant water fishing - activity beyond a country's own waters – the 'top 10' spent \$5.4 billion in harmful subsidies fishing in the waters of 116 other nations, and another \$800 million on the high seas. When it comes to distant water fishing, China is again the top provider of harmful subsidies at \$2.9 billion, whereas the largest cumulative harmful subsidies footprint is found in Japanese waters where an estimated \$1.4 billion was spent by the distant water fishing fleets of other nations.

In the waters of several LDCs, the catches made and estimated subsidies received by foreign fleets surpasses those of the domestic fleet. Often receiving subsidies worth 20 to 40 percent of the catch's value, it is highly probable that distant water fleets would not be profitable without fisheries subsidies and unfettered access to waters of other nations, including LDCs. An extreme example is that of Guinea-Bissau, where subsidies spent by foreign fishing in its waters exceeds domestic subsidies by a ratio of 1,173 to 1.

According to co-author and Oceana board member, Dr. U. Rashid Sumaila, "The mismatch between the cost and the benefits of fisheries subsidies has real moral and ethical

implications. On average, twice the dollar amount of subsidies from foreign nations go toward enabling distant water vessels to fish in Africa than what Africa provides to its own domestic fisheries. For some West African countries, fish account for up to 60% of protein intake." These top subsidizers may therefore be supporting their own fishing fleets by transferring overfishing risks to the waters of countries that can least afford it.

This study comes at a critical moment. The WTO plans to host world leaders at a ministerial level meeting on July 15 to agree on rules to cut fisheries subsidies that are fueling overcapacity, overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. "Hundreds of millions in coastal communities rely on fisheries for their health and livelihoods, yet we see those same resources exploited by heavily subsidized foreign and industrial vessels. After twenty years of delay, we are running out of time and out of fish – we must stop subsidizing overfishing now. The WTO is way overdue in adopting strict rules to eliminate harmful subsidies, which is the single greatest global action we can take to ensure an abundant future ocean." Says Oceana CEO, Andy Sharpless.

As political leaders, ministers, and delegates prepare for a planned July 15 WTO ministerial meeting, Oceana calls on the WTO to:

- Prohibit harmful subsidies to all fishing and related support activities outside of each member state's own jurisdiction.
- Call on the largest providers to take on the largest share of responsibility to eliminate and redirect harmful subsidies into beneficial areas.
- Develop a framework to mitigate harmful fisheries subsidies that is transparent, time bound, performance based, and has clear standards for reporting data across member states.

To learn more about Oceana's Transparent Oceans Initiative, click [here](#).