



Talking points ----- Overfishing

Everyone knows about overfishing – but alarm bells just got even louder. A new study reveals that catches are falling 3 times faster than UN estimates – not because we are choosing to catch less fish, but because they simply aren't there. Over the course of a few decades, rampant fishing activities have led to 90 per cent of fish stocks being either fully fished or overfished. Reckless fishing activities are costing the global economy trillions of dollars, and are robbing our children of jobs and food for the future. Transitioning to sustainable fishing will boost the dwindling global catch, raise fishing profits by \$75 billion a year, and leave 36% more fish in the sea. What's not to like? This demands establishing more marine reserves, setting precautionary catch limits, stepping up monitoring and enforcement, fighting bycatch and discards, and stopping the perverse subsidies that fuel overfishing.

- The UN estimates that worldwide, fish provides about 3 billion people with almost 20% of their intake of animal protein, and 4.3 billion people with about 15% of such protein.
- 90% of fish stocks are now either fully fished (61.3%) or overfished (28.8 per cent) <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3720e.pdf>.
- The number of under-fished fish stocks have reached the lowest levels recorded, rapidly declining over the past decade from 24% to 9.9% (The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture, 2014 – 2004).
- "Fully exploited" is not necessarily undesirable if it is the result of an effective and precautionary management approach. However, it does indicate that fisheries are producing catches that are close to their maximum sustainable limits. This means that the maximum potential for these fisheries have been reached and a cautious approach to the further development of fisheries management is urgently needed to avoid these fisheries becoming over-exploited.
- While there are controversies in some quarters over the “correct” figures on the status of the world’s fish stocks, the bottom line is that the ocean is in crisis and business as usual is exhausting its natural capital. It is in all of our long term interest to support precautionary, ecosystem based measures that focus on ensuring sustainability for decades to come
- Studies have shown that industrialized commercial fisheries typically reduce the biomass of the stocks they target by 80% within 15 years of

exploitation (Myers and Worm 2003, Rapid worldwide depletion of predatory fish communities).

- A report released by the University of British Columbia says that countries have been drastically underreporting the amount of fish that they have been catching. The researchers compared the UN FAO data with estimates from a broad range of sources from over 400 people worldwide, and found that the annual catches were much bigger than previously thought, and the fall in catches much steeper than officially recorded.
- This misreporting has masked the fact that overfishing has caused catches to fall globally 3 times faster than estimated by the UN, not due to the fact that countries are fishing less but because they have systematically exhausted fisheries.
- A FAO and World Bank report in 2009 estimated that poor fisheries management means that global marine fisheries are worth US\$50 billion per year less than what they could be – a sum equivalent to more than half the value of the global seafood trade.
- The cumulative economic loss to the global economy of this mismanagement over the last three decades was estimated by the report's authors to be in the order of two trillion dollars.
- According to a recent updated study, global fisheries subsidies are estimated at about US\$35 billion in 2009, with harmful subsidies constituting the highest categories at over US\$20 billion.
- We are taking about 9,000-10,000 tonnes of fish from the Ocean every hour (based on a catch of 80-90 million tonnes per year). <http://www.stateoftheocean.org/threats.cfm>
- Global bycatch may amount to as much as 40% of the world's total fisheries catch, totalling 28.5 million metric tons per year (Davies et al. 2009, Defining and estimating global marine fisheries bycatch, Oceana 2014, Wasted Catch).
- A 2°C warming is projected to cause a 30–70% increase in the fisheries yield of some high-latitude regions by 2055 (relative to 2005), a redistribution at mid latitudes, but a drop of 40%- 60% in the tropics and the Antarctic (medium confidence in the direction of trends in fisheries yields, low confidence in the magnitude of change).
- Model projections suggest a potential loss of up to 13% to annual total fishery value in the US, or globally over 100 billion USD annually by 2100.
- Overcapacity – or too many boats chasing too few fish - of fishing fleets fueled by perverse subsidies significantly adds to overfishing, particularly for fisheries that are economically marginal and require those subsidies to break even or make a profit.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN?

- To ensure recovery it is essential that development models promote sustaining marine life, in particular the huge financial and environmental

benefits that can be gained from long-term protection, rather than short-term extraction.

- This means a reduction in fishing effort to ensure an increase in productivity and profit, the scrapping of fisheries subsidies that promote overfishing and illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, and protection measures to help rebuild fish stocks.
- The Ocean Prosperity Roadmap: Fisheries and Beyond explores how a transition to sustainable resource use – for example, by fishing smarter, not harder – can reduce poverty while increasing economic growth, food production, and fish populations.
- Well-managed, sustainable fisheries can generate significant economic value, well beyond their current levels.
- Fisheries reform can yield triple bottom line gains in terms of greater economic profits, food security, and conservation benefits.
- At the same time, sustainable global marine catch of fish could increase by about 12 million metric tonnes, with a 36% increase in the biomass of fish in the sea.