

FACTSHEET OVERFISHING



WHAT IS OVERFISHING?

When fish are caught at a faster rate than their populations can replenish.



GROWING APPETITES Human population will be 9.6 billion by 2050— seafood consumption expected to rise 27%, yet stocks are decreasing 3.5% annually.



PRESSURE ON FISH STOCKS

61% are fished to capacity, 29% are fished above sustainable levels.



DECLINING CATCH Global fish catch peaked in 1996 and has been steadily declining since.

CAUSES OF OVERFISHING?

- **Poor Management:** 75% of fisheries could increase profitability while catching less fish.
- **Oversized Fleet:** Fishing capacity is estimated to be 250% higher than would be sustainable.
- **Pirate Fishing:** 13-31% of global catch is illegal, unreported, or unregulated (IUU).
- **Bycatch:** ~40% of global catch is discarded or unmanaged.
- **Harmful Subsidies:** \$20-30 billion annually encourages more fishing despite fewer fish.
- **Destructive Practices:** Such as blast fishing and driftnets, damage habitat and cause bycatch.



EFFECTS OF OVERFISHING

LOSS OF JOBS 780 million livelihoods depend on fisheries.

LOSS OF FOOD SECURITY Primary food source for over 1 billion people (20% for 3 billion).

LOSS OF PROFITS \$50 billion yearly from mismanagement, 2 trillion over 3 decades.

LOSS OF HABITAT Destructive fishing, such as bottom trawling, alters or permanently damages critical seafloor environments.

LOSS OF ECOSYSTEM BALANCE Up to 90% declines in "big fish" (e.g., tuna) causes "fishing down the food web" (switching to smaller, less desirable fish).

WHAT CAN WE DO?



SOUND MANAGEMENT Fishing at sustainable levels, reducing bycatch, increasing enforcement, and protecting habitats can increase catches by 10-20% while lowering fishing costs.



IMPROVE TRACEABILITY Strengthen chain of custody certification and transparency, support retailers that use certification, and use seafood guides.



ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS Strengthen Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs) and encourage co-management and community supported fishers (CSFs), territorial users rights in fisheries (TURF), and individual transferable quotas (ITQs).



ESTABLISH MARINE RESERVES 90% of the global fish catch comes from national jurisdictions, yet only 1.6% of that area is protected. Scientist recommend 30%.



REDUCE SUBSIDIES Pressure national governments and international bodies (i.e., WTO) to cease harmful subsidies.



Overfishing is the world's biggest solvable environmental problem."
Dr. Callum Roberts



KEY WEBSITES

Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch

www.seafoodwatch.org/ocean-issues/wild-seafood

National Geographic

ocean.nationalgeographic.com/ocean/global-fish-crisis-article/

World Wildlife Foundation | Overfishing

www.worldwildlife.org/threats/overfishing

Ocean Health Index

www.oceanhealthindex.org/Components/Stock_Status/

Oceana | Responsible Fishing Campaign

oceana.org/our-campaigns/promote-responsible-fishing/campaign

Smithsonian Ocean Portal | Overfishing

ocean.si.edu/conservation/overfishing



VIDEO

Ocean 2012 | Ending Overfishing

www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6_mbozoqL8

Callum Roberts | The Unnatural History of the Sea

www.youtube.com/watch?v=xECNAvjgr8Q

Oceana | How Saving the Oceans Can Feed the World

www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBoIHk7_fxg

Running Out of Fish

www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhDbJL1V0mc



EXPERTS

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