

Fisheries Fact File

Fish are not only important for the overall health of marine ecosystems, but also provide protein and livelihoods for billions of people. Globally, fisheries supply over 3.3 billion people with at least 20% of their average animal protein intake. (1)



Threats from unsustainable fishing

Overfishing

Overfishing means catching fish faster than they can reproduce. Due to overfishing, many fish stocks are in a state of serious decline. Overfishing pushes the fish population into smaller and smaller numbers, until there are so few fish that fishers can't make a living, and fish populations find it harder to grow again. Approximately 90% of large predatory fish such as tuna, swordfish & sharks have been lost. (2)

Damage to marine habitats

A wide range of fishing methods are used throughout the world, with different methods used to catch different types of fish. Some of these methods – like bottom trawling and dredging – involve scraping heavy machinery along the seafloor, which can be very destructive to marine habitats. Less than 2.5% of UK waters are closed to bottom trawling. (3)

Bycatch

During fishing, animals accidentally caught along with the 'target species' are known as bycatch. These animals can include dolphins, turtles, sharks and whales, as well as young fish deemed too small. In many parts of the world, bycatch are usually thrown back into the sea either dead or dying. In order to reduce the number of fish harmed in this process, in the UK it is illegal to throw some species of fish back into the sea. Approximately 10% of fish caught worldwide is bycatch. (4)



Fishing trawler ©
NarissaFotoSS
via Shutterstock



Species caught as
bycatch © Ivan Sarenas
via Shutterstock

1. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN 2020
2. Myers and Worm 2003

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Sustainable fishing

We need to end overfishing in order to maintain healthy marine ecosystems, and to sustain livelihoods and food security into the future.

There are several ways of managing fishing practices:

- Quotas based on scientific evidence on how many and what type of fish can be caught can help limit overfishing
- The improvement of fishing gear can help reduce bycatch by increasing the selectivity of the fishing activity
- Limiting damaging fishing practices in sensitive and diverse areas can help reduce damage to the overall environment
- No take zones or Highly Protected Marine Areas where no fishing activity is allowed, will allow fish populations to recover and will help protect and restore the marine environment
- Managing fishing activities to ensure everyone is sticking to the rules is tricky in a large ocean environment, which means technology plays a big part in fisheries management



Be a responsible consumer

Consumer choice can influence overfishing. We tend to eat the same key species, which puts a lot of pressure on their stocks. Many people are unaware of where the fish they eat comes from or how it's caught, and when this information *is* included on food packaging, it's often hard to understand what it actually means.

Increasing awareness amongst consumers is important in achieving sustainable fishing. **Our [Good Fish Guide](#) supports consumers in selecting sustainable fish to eat.**