

OVERFISHING AND OCEAN SUSTAINABILITY

An estimated 34% of the world's fish stocks suffer from overfishing today.

Fishing vessels wage war on the oceans! Modern fishing ships use technologically advanced fish-finding sonar that can find a school of fish with almost military precision.

The Mediterranean and Black Sea's fish stocks suffer from an estimated 62% overfishing.

Apex predators are disappearing fast: In just 55 years, humans have managed to wipe out 90 percent of the ocean's top predators. These are animals like sharks, bluefin tuna, swordfish, marlin, and king mackerel.

The Atlantic Ocean's fish stocks similarly suffer from an estimated 59% overfishing.

Fishing disrupts the natural marine food chain. After depleting the most valuable fish, the apex predators, and large fish like bluefin tuna, the next step is moving down the food chain. This means going after typically smaller species and fishing in different locations of the ocean.

On average, only an estimated 39% of the Pacific Ocean's fish stocks suffer from overfishing.

By 1989, when about 90 million metric tons of catch were taken from the ocean, the industry had hit its high-water mark, and yields have declined or stagnated ever since.



Depleted fish stocks cost the global fishing industry an estimated \$50 billion every year.

On average, bycatch (other fish and creature that weren't targeted to be caught) makes up to 25% of all fish caught, and in some cases, can go even higher.

The bycatch in shrimp fishing actually accounts for up to five times the commercial catch. This means many fish and other species die for no reason, further adding to the effect overfishing has on the environment.

Fishing nets catch far more than intended! The term for non-targeted animals that end up in fishing nets is bycatch. Many animals, like turtles, dolphins, sharks, and sea birds, get caught on fishing lines or pulled up by nets and then tossed back into the sea, often dead or dying. In the 1990s, a huge boycott led to the "Tuna Safe" label on tuna cans, which implied that the nets used to catch the tuna were fitted with holes to let dolphins escape. However, dolphin-safe does not imply sustainable or responsible, and the issue of bycatch is ongoing.

A "tragedy of the commons", refers to how people with common access to unregulated resources will not only exploit, but deplete them out of self-interest. The term originally applied to how shepherds and other animal herders in Britain would allow their flocks to graze common grounds to depletion. Now, observers note that the same term could apply to overfishing, or how fishermen deplete fishing grounds in international waters.

Tax dollars go to paying for fishery subsidies.

As if technologically advanced ships weren't the only reason fisheries are capable of overfishing, many governments provide subsidies to fisheries. According to a 2010 study by Oceana, overfishing subsidies total an estimated \$16 billion annually, which is equivalent to roughly 25 percent of the value of the world fish catch.

Bottom trawling is tearing the ocean apart! Bottom trawling is the ocean equivalent of clear-cutting a forest. Ships drag huge, heavy nets held open by doors, many of which weigh several tons each, over the seafloor to catch fish that dwell near the bottom of the ocean. In the process, they destroy everything else, including deep-sea coral and sponges, and other sensitive seafloor life.

National Geographic reports, "A study of catch data published in 2006 in the journal Science grimly predicted that if fishing rates continue apace, all the world's fisheries will have collapsed by the year 2048."

