



FACT SHEET

Fisheries in Crisis

- At least 60% of the world's 200 most valuable fish species are either overfished or fished to the limit.
- Nearly 25% of the world's marine catch - around 30 million tons p.a., including fish, marine mammals and sea turtles - is thrown back into the ocean either dead or dying.
- In the Gulf of Mexico and the southeastern United States, 9 to 22 pounds of bycatch - including red snapper and other commercially valuable fish species - are discarded by shrimp trawlers for every two pounds of shrimp they catch.
- In 1994, trawlers in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska caught and discarded a record 751 million pounds of edible fish. According to a study commissioned by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, this fish could have provided about 50 million meals.
- Governments worldwide pay more than US\$18 billion each year to subsidize an industry that catches only about US\$25 billion worth of fish.
- The EU has 40% more vessels than necessary to catch fish on a sustainable basis.
- Some species, like Atlantic halibut and bluefin tuna, have been fished to the brink of commercial extinction. The spawning of bluefin tuna in the western Atlantic has fallen by nearly 90% since 1975.
- A large, top quality bluefin can now fetch more than US\$30,000 dockside, sell at auction in Tokyo's Tsukigi fish market for US\$60,000 and cost US\$200 a plate at the sushi bar. Tuna fish are now so profitable that it has become common practice to use spotter planes to locate them.
- More than 100 million people in developing countries are dependent on fisheries for their livelihoods. More than 200 million people rely on fishing and its associated effects worldwide. More than one-third of the world's population lives within 25 miles of the coast and, thus, depends on coastal economies.
- The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation reports that fish provide 29% of the total animal protein consumed by Asians, 19% by Africans, and 8% by Latin Americans. The International Centre for Ocean Development estimates that over 1 billion people in Asia alone depend on fish and seafood as their major source of animal protein.
- The FAO predicts a supply gap of up to 25 million tons of food fish by the year 2000.
- At the same time, fish and other seafood have never been in greater demand. Americans ate a record 900 million pounds in 1994. In China, consumption has doubled in the last decade.