

OCEAN2012

Transforming European Fisheries



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*healthy oceans
with abundant fish
and wildlife*



European fisheries in crisis

Decades of intensive fishing in European waters have led to dramatic declines in once abundant fish populations. Currently, 88 percent of all assessed fish stocks are estimated to be over-exploited. Almost a third of all assessed stocks are being fished beyond safe biological limits, threatening their very future.

This continuous overfishing has resulted in less productive fisheries with a gradual loss of jobs and livelihoods. Fewer and smaller fish are being caught and greater effort is required to find them, often resulting in the targeting of other, and sometimes even more vulnerable species. It is not just that there is overfishing but also that some environmentally harmful fishing methods are used.

Since its start in 1983, the European Union's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) has failed to prevent overfishing. Over 25 years, short-term economic interest and political expediency has landed European fisheries in deep crisis.

A broad CFP reform now provides an opportunity to make European fisheries economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. There is a need to finally end overfishing and destructive fishing practices, delivering fair and equitable use of resources for future generations.

Through other EU legislation, Member States are already calling for this e.g. the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSD) aims to achieve Good Environmental Status in Europe's seas:

- ... ensuring populations of fish and shellfish are within safe biological limits;
- ... ensuring all elements of marine food webs ... occur at ... levels capable of ensuring the long-term abundance of the species and the retention of their full reproductive capacity.

A radical reform of the CFP and its implementation is necessary to achieve these targets.

The CFP's failure

The EU Court of Auditors judged in 2007 that the CFP had failed to achieve its central objective: the sustainable exploitation of living aquatic resources. This failure to address overfishing is in essence due to a lack of political will. In particular, it has failed to adequately meet the challenges of:

Overcapacity

It is estimated that some fleet segments in the EU are two to three times the size required to catch the available fishing quotas – we can fish more fish than there are fish. Newer boats with better and better technology are exhausting the stocks we have.

Catch limits set too high

In the last years, the catch limits agreed were on average 48 percent higher than scientific advice. In 2007, the quota for one population of Scottish haddock was set at eight times the recommended level.

Paying for fish twice

The EU continues to provide subsidies to modernise fleets rather than focussing on mitigating overcapacity or investing in technologies that could support more sustainable fisheries. Furthermore, exemption from fuel tax, the cost of national administration, fisheries research and control measures could also be considered a subsidy to the fishing sector. In several Member States, it has been estimated that the cost of fishing to the public budgets exceeds the total value of the catches. As a result, we are currently paying for our fish twice, through subsidies and in the shop.

fish facts

The reality of overfishing

1. North Sea cod reach spawning age at around four years. The average age of cod caught in the North Sea is 1.6 years, with a mean weight of less than a kilo. Scientific estimates suggest 93 percent of the North Sea cod are caught before they can reproduce.
2. Atlantic bluefin tuna, one of the biggest and fastest ocean predators, is facing the threat of commercial extinction through overfishing. Despite this, for 2009

the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the body responsible for managing the tuna population and deciding on catch levels, set quotas 47 percent higher than scientists recommended.

3. In 2007 the EU reliance on imports for fishery products was estimated to be 69 percent.

4. Between 1995 and 2004 total catches by the EC-15 countries decreased by 27 percent, from 7.2 to 5.2 million tonnes.

5. Discard rates in European fisheries are up to 70-90 percent of the fish caught in some trawl fisheries. On average 44 percent of the catch in the North Sea shrimp trawl fisheries is thrown back into the sea, in most cases dead.

6. Some species are particularly vulnerable to overfishing. This is particularly true for fish with slow growth and late maturity, including most deep sea species, sharks and rays. Almost a third of evaluated shark species in European waters are classified as threatened or at risk by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

...an opportunity for change

*fair and equitable
use of abundant fish
stocks*

The EU's global reach

The EU has enormous influence on global fisheries management and with it considerable responsibility. Its fleet is the third biggest and operates in every ocean of the world. It is the largest importer of fisheries products, importing almost 70 percent of its fish.

The EU has a seat in almost every regional fisheries management organisation, and therefore an opportunity to exert influence on international fisheries management, including the high seas.

The EU could be championing sustainable practice at home and abroad. Instead, the level of imports and fishing activities outside EU waters mean that the effects of overfishing are being exported, frequently to distant coastal communities who rely on fish for food and income.

2012 – an opportunity for change

The 2012 reform of the EU Common Fisheries Policy provides the opportunity for a new policy that will stop overfishing, end destructive fishing practices and deliver fair and equitable use of abundant fish stocks.

OCEAN2012 is committed to shaping a CFP that:

- Enshrines environmental sustainability as the over-arching principle, without which economic and social sustainability is unobtainable;
- Reduces the fleet based on environmental and social criteria;
- Makes public funding available to smooth the transition to more sustainable fisheries;
- Makes access to fisheries resources and public aid for fishing conditional on environmental and social factors;
- Gives the public access to fisheries data from Member States, such as catches, fleet figures and compliance;
- Commits decision-makers to following scientific advice.

*healthy oceans with
abundant fish and
wildlife contributing to
human well being*



OCEAN2012 – who we are

OCEAN2012 is an alliance of organisations dedicated to transforming European Fisheries Policy to stop overfishing, end destructive fishing practices and deliver fair and equitable use of healthy fish stocks.

OCEAN2012 was initiated, and is co-ordinated, by The Pew Environment Group, the conservation arm of The Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-governmental organisation working to end overfishing in the world's oceans.

The founding members of OCEAN2012 are the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements, The Fisheries Secretariat, **nef** (new economics foundation), The Pew Environment Group and Seas at Risk.

www.ocean2012.org



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