



Turning the tide on European overfishing



SOS OCEANS

GREENPEACE



FACTS & STATS

- 🐟 62% of fish stocks are overfished in the Atlantic and 82% in the Mediterranean (European Commission, 2011).
- 🐟 Overfishing costs over €32 billion in lost revenue and benefits worldwide every year (World Bank, 2009).
- 🐟 The EU fleet is capable of catching two to three times more fish than the stocks are capable of naturally replacing (European Commission, 2008).
- 🐟 The EU's combined catch is the third largest in the world (about 5.1 million tonnes in 2007), after China and Peru (European Commission, 2010).
- 🐟 80% of fishermen in the EU are small-scale, coastal fishermen, who only get about 20% of EU quotas. Industrial fishing accounts for the remaining 80% of the catch (based on European Commission data).
- 🐟 In many fisheries, 60% of fish caught is thrown back into the sea dead or dying because it won't sell for a high enough price or because quotas have been exceeded (European Commission, 2008).
- 🐟 Recently, 93% of the cod caught in the North Sea was fished before it could breed (European Commission, 2009).
- 🐟 Overfishing has decimated the Atlantic bluefin tuna stock to less than 15% of its original size (ICCAT, 2009).
- 🐟 Almost one quarter (1.2 million tonnes) of the EU's catch is fished in international and foreign waters (European Commission, 2008).
- 🐟 EU taxpayers annually contribute about €158 million to secure access to the fishing grounds of other countries (European Commission, 2008).
- 🐟 65% of the seafood consumed in the EU is imported (European Commission, 2008).
- 🐟 The EU recognises that in most European countries the cost of subsidising and administering fishing exceeds the value of the catches (European Commission, 2009).
- 🐟 Although efforts are underway to fight pirate fishing, annual EU imports of illegally caught fish were conservatively estimated in 2007 to be worth €1.1 billion (European Commission, 2007).





There is more animal and plant life in our seas than in all other natural environments combined. But our vast oceans are being emptied of this life as a result of overfishing.

Europe's fishing fleets have wreaked destruction from the Arctic to the Antarctic, and nowhere more than in European waters. They fish more than almost anyone in the world. And while fish are running out and the oceans struggle to absorb the effects of climate change, the destructive power of fishing fleets is increasing.

Governments must act before it's too late. The rules governing fishing in the European Union (EU) need to be changed. The good news is that these rules, known as the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), are up for review.



EU fisheries commissioner
Maria Damanaki

WHAT IS THE CFP?

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is the set of rules that governs fishing fleets from all EU countries regardless of where they fish. It determines who can fish, what they can fish, where and for how long. It should ensure that fishing is environmentally sustainable and that it can support the livelihoods of fishermen. But the CFP is broken. A full review, which only takes place every ten years, has just started. This is a unique chance to save our seas.

“Overfishing is so serious that more fish would be caught if there was less fishing.”

EUROPEAN COMMISSION





The Spanish fishing armada

Spain is Europe's largest fishing nation with the largest global reach, accounting for one quarter of the EU's fleet tonnage and 15% of EU production. Spain's 12 largest vessels can catch more than the entire Swedish fleet. Its fishing industry gets almost 50% of EU fisheries subsidies (four times more than Italy and five times more than France). The Spanish government has used these funds to finance devastating fishing practices, such as bottom trawling, and has even funded the construction of boats whose owners are known to fish illegally.

Comparison of the size of EU fishing fleets by gross tonnage

SPAIN
(668 035)
24.3 % of EU



UNITED KINGDOM
(212 609)
11.1 % of EU



FRANCE
(207 992)
10.8 % of EU



ITALY
(197 687)
10.3 % of EU



THE NETHERLANDS
(163 754)
8.5 % of EU



PORTUGAL
(106 624)
5.5 % of EU



GREECE
(90 653)
4.7 % of EU



DENMARK
(78 069)
4.1 % of EU



GERMANY
(69 342)
3.6 % of EU



SWEDEN
(43 497)
2.3 % of EU



POLAND
(21 241)
1.6 % of EU



Comparison of production (catches and aquaculture) by EU member states in tonnes of live weight

SPAIN
(1 005 788)
15.17 % of EU



UNITED KINGDOM
(787 629)
11.86 % of EU



FRANCE
(853 669)
12.88 % of EU



ITALY
(483 625)
7.33 % of EU



THE NETHERLANDS
(473 985)
7.15 % of EU



PORTUGAL
(235 875)
3.56 % of EU



GREECE
(209 869)
3.17 % of EU



DENMARK
(209 869)
3.17 % of EU



GERMANY
(116 721)
1.78 % of EU



SWEDEN
(76 804)
1.16 % of EU



POLAND
(158 034)
2.4 % of EU



Sources: European Commission and Eurostat





Scrap destructive overfishing

After four decades of EU fisheries policy, most fish stocks are overfished and many marine ecosystems seriously damaged or destroyed. Fishing fleets are taking more fish out of the sea than can be replenished naturally. They devastate habitats by using destructive fishing methods even in the most sensitive areas.



© Christian Aslund / Greenpeace

Deep-sea destruction paid for by you

A fleet of mainly Spanish and French deep-sea trawlers are propped up by EU subsidies to 'plough' the sea floor. Deep-sea bottom trawling is one of the most destructive, fuel-intensive and wasteful fishing methods that sacrifices tonnes of fish to seek out lucrative species. It involves dragging huge, heavy nets along the sea floor that crush everything in their path. Without public subsidies, it would simply not pay to fish in this way.

Stolen fish

After overexploiting fish stocks closer to home, some of Europe's largest fishing vessels have ventured further and deeper into the sea. This means that super-sized industrial factory ships are now competing with local fishermen in developing countries. Local people, who depend on fishing for their livelihoods and food, are pushed into poverty and sometimes crime. The European factory ships catch more fish in one hour than a typical local fishing boat would catch in a month. The fish is caught, processed and then frozen on board, so ships can stay at sea for months at a time.





“The sea is not an industry. She has her own rules. She doesn’t know anything about politics. We must respect her rules if we want to keep her alive.”

DIMITRIS, coastal fishermen representative – Andros island, Greece



“There are just too many boats out there. Ten years ago I just went out for the day and got my catch. Now I have to go much further for as long as two weeks and still my catch is declining.”

ISMAEL, small-scale fisherman – Mauritania

“Here at port you will hear that fishing is a dying profession. That quotas, regulations, inspectors won’t let a man live. I don’t think that way. Limits are necessary so that the fish can re-build their stocks. [...] For me, a much bigger problem than the allowed quotas is the bureaucracy.”

ROBERT, small-scale fisherman – Dziwnów, Poland



“The challenges that small-scale fishing faces derive from rules and political schemes that [...] fail to take into account the peculiarities of this fleet and have instead put the interests of industrial fishing first. Therefore, small-scale fishing needs to be defined, distinguished and promoted as sustainable fishing in the future GFP.”

JOSÉ LUIS, small-scale fishermen representative – Galicia, Spain





Marine reserves

Just like nature reserves are protected on land, sensitive environments at sea should be off limits to fishing and other destructive uses like oil exploration. Allowing fish and other species to reproduce in marine reserves will help replenish fish stocks inside and outside these areas and ensure that our oceans recover from overfishing and habitat destruction.



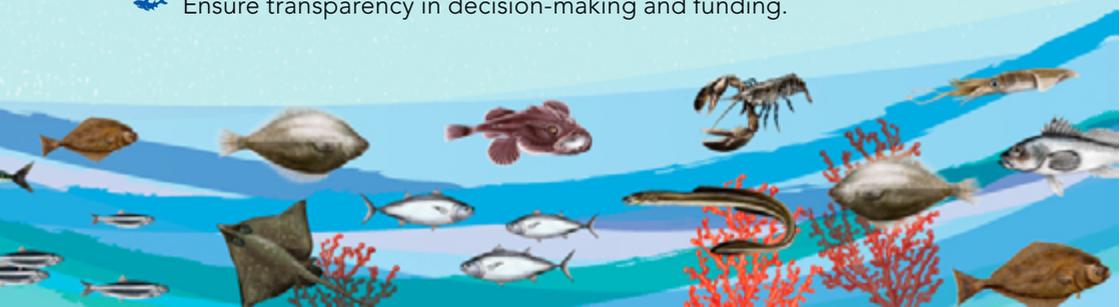
The Greenpeace marine reserves plan for the North Sea



... and the Mediterranean

How the EU should reform its fishing rules

-  Ban overfishing and reduce the size of the fishing fleet, scrapping the most destructive and wasteful fishing methods first.
-  Support a network of marine reserves that are off-limits to fishing.
-  Stop EU ministers from setting quotas above scientifically recommended levels.
-  Ensure transparency in decision-making and funding.





IN DEPTH:

The Destructive Practices of Spain's Fishing Armada:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/Global/eu-unit/reports-briefings/2010/5/Spain-and-the-CFP-03-05-10.pdf>

How Africa is feeding Europe:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/en/Publications/2010/How-Africa-is-feeding-Europe>

A deep sea disaster:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/Global/eu-unit/reports-briefings/2010/11/a-deep-sea-disaster.pdf>

The reform of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/Global/eu-unit/reports-briefings/2009/4/reform-of-the-eu-s-common-fish.pdf>

Where have all the tuna gone?

<http://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/en/Publications/2009-and-earlier/Where-have-all-the-tuna-gone>

Sea ... the future for European fisheries – submission to the European Commission:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/Global/eu-unit/reports-briefings/2010/1/greenpeace-submission-for-cfp.pdf>





Greenpeace campaigns to end destructive overfishing and protect the world's oceans. We investigate, expose and confront unsustainable fishing and we support a responsible use of ocean resources. We challenge the EU and other major fishing powers to make and enforce laws that protect the sea for future generations.

Greenpeace does not accept donations from governments, the EU, businesses or political parties.



July 2011

This booklet is available online in other languages.
Please keep it, pass it on or recycle it.

european.unit@greenpeace.org | www.greenpeace.eu | www.twitter.com/GreenpeaceEU

Printed on recycled paper with plant-based ink. Design: www.beelzpub.com
Responsible editor: Jorgo Riss, Rue Belliard 199, 1040 Brussels

