Fishing Regulations

Fishing is one of the oldest human endeavors. For most of our species’ history, we have not had to worry about losing the abundant supply of food under the sea. Fishing is a major part of the world’s economy, and is essential to the survival of over a billion people around the world. However, due to the vast increase in fish consumption, regulations have been set to keep predatory fish species such as cod and tuna from dying out. Fishing regulations range from setting limits on fishing methods to settling global quotas to maintain current stocks. The biggest challenges we face against the prevention of overfishing have to do with the legacy of decades we’ve spent fishing.

A Growing Issue

The rapid growth in demand for fish and fish products is leading to fish prices increasing faster than the prices of other meat. As a result, fisheries investments have become more attractive to both entrepreneurs and governments, much to the detriment of small-scale fishing and fishing communities all over the world.

In the last decade, in the north Atlantic region, commercial fish populations of cod, hake, haddock and flounder have fallen by as much as 95%, prompting calls for urgent measures. Some are even recommending zero catch limits to allow for the regeneration of stocks, much to the ire of the fishing industry.

85 NATIONS and up to $240 BILLION per year are involved in international trade of fish and fish products.

Fish Production

For a while, market demand for fish and dramatic developments in fishing technology - larger fleets, open ocean factory ships, transparent lines and nets, huge drift nets, bottom trawlers and electronic fish finders led to increases in annual catch. However, total annual catch has leveled off. The global fishing fleet capacity is nearly double the sustainable supply. Many populations of formerly abundant high trophic level species (such as cod) have collapsed. Fishermen are now fishing “down the food web” - catching smaller species that used to be considered “trash” for the larger fish that are no longer abundant enough to catch.

Scientists warn that if we continue catching fish at this rate, many fish species will be extinct in the next 40 YEARS.

What Can We Do?

Safe Catch Limits

A constantly reassessed, scientifically determined, limit on the total number of fish caught and landed by a fishery. Politics and short time economical incentives should have no role in this.

Controls on Bycatch

The use of techniques or management rules to prevent the unintentional killing and disposal of fish, crustaceans and other oceanic life not part of the target catch or landed.

Protection of Habitats

The key parts in ecosystems need full protection from destructive fisheries; e.g. the spawning and nursery grounds of fish, delicate sea floor, unique unexplored habitats, and corals.

Monitoring and Enforcement

A monitoring system to make sure fishermen do not land more than they are allowed to, do not fish in closed areas and cheat as little as possible.

Fishery Exploitation

With rapidly advancing fishing technologies and growing fleets, fish populations cannot keep up with the rate at which we are catching them. According to the University of British Columbia, the number of commercial fisheries that are overfished are steadily increasing.

80% of the world’s fish populations cannot keep up with the rate at which we are catching them. According to the University of British Columbia, the number of commercial fisheries that are overfished are steadily increasing.

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