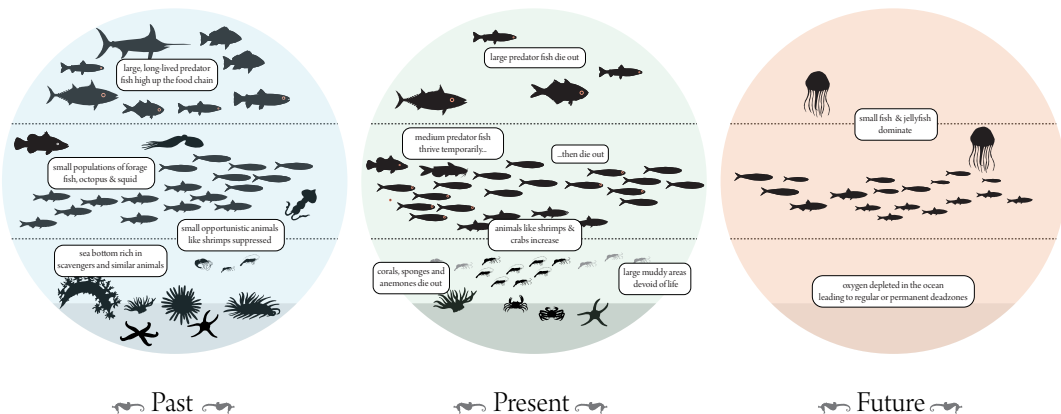


# How We are Eating our Way Through the Oceans

The effect of overfishing on marine ecosystems



source: Pauly, et al. Fishing Down Marine Food Webs (Science)

## OCEAN2012 – who we are

OCEAN2012 is an alliance of organisations dedicated to stopping overfishing, ending destructive fishing practices and delivering fair and equitable use of healthy fish stocks.

OCEAN2012 was initiated, and is coordinated 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 steering group of OCEAN2012 consists of the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements, Ecologistas en Acción, The Fisheries Secretariat, **nef** (new economics foundation), the Pew Environment Group and Seas At Risk.

[www.ocean2012.eu](http://www.ocean2012.eu)



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# OCEAN2012

## Transforming European Fisheries





*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, 63 percent of fish stocks in the Atlantic are overfished, 82 percent in the Mediterranean and four out of the six stocks for which scientific advice is available in the Baltic, with over 20 percent being fished beyond safe biological limits, threatening their very future.

The European Union's (EU'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.

Continuous overfishing has resulted in less-productive fisheries with a gradual loss of jobs and livelihoods. Fewer and smaller fish are being caught, with greater effort required to find them, which often results in the targeting of other, sometimes even more vulnerable, species.



The current CFP reform provides an opportunity to make European fisheries economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. There is a need to finally end overfishing and destructive fishing practices in order to deliver fair and equitable use of resources for future generations. Other EU legislation is calling for this. For example, the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSD) aims to achieve Good Environmental Status in Europe's seas, including ensuring that:

- populations of fish and shellfish are within safe biological limits, exhibiting a population age and size distribution that is indicative of a healthy stock; and
- 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 fundamental reform of the CFP and its implementation is necessary to achieve these targets.

## The CFP's failure

The failure to address overfishing is due to a lack of political will. In 2007 the EU Court of Auditors judged that the CFP had failed to achieve its central objective: the sustainable exploitation of living aquatic resources. There are several areas that it has failed to remedy.

## Overcapacity

It is estimated that some fleet segments in the EU have two to three times the capacity required to catch the available fishing quota. This has resulted in overfishing, illegal fishing and political pressure on EU member state fisheries ministers to set catch limits above scientific advice. Efforts to curb capacity have so far failed to achieve the stated results.

## Catch limits set too high

In the EU decision-makers often ignore scientific advice in the setting of fishing limits. In 2009, in the Bay of Biscay and Iberian-Atlantic Seas, quotas exceeded scientific advice by 55 percent on average; in the West of Scotland, Irish Sea and Celtic Sea the quota was 49 percent over scientific advice. For 2012, the quota for cod in the North Irish Sea and herring in the North Sea were set 100 percent above the scientific advice. Despite improvements in recent years, fishing limits continue to be set by fisheries ministers exceeding scientific advice.

## Paying for fish twice

The EU continues to provide subsidies to modernise fleets rather than focusing on mitigating overcapacity or investing in more sustainable fisheries. 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.

*...an opportunity for change*

## fish facts

### The reality of overfishing

1. North Sea cod reach spawning age at around four years old. The average age of cod caught in the North Sea is 1.6 years, with a mean weight of less than one kilo. Scientific estimates suggest that 93 percent of 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.

3. In 2010 the EU reliance on imports for fishery products was estimated to be 48 percent.

4. The North Sea has been one of the richest fishing grounds in the world: in 1995 it produced five percent of total world fish landings. Since then, catches have fallen from 3.5 million tonnes a year to less than 1.5 million tonnes in 2007.

5. The EU fleet is estimated to have the capacity to fish two to three times the sustainable level.

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



*...following scientific advice*

## The EU's global reach

The EU has enormous influence on global fisheries management and with this comes considerable responsibility. Its fleet is the third biggest globally and operates in every ocean of the world. It is the largest importer of fisheries products, importing almost 50 percent of its fish.

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

## 2012 – an opportunity for change

Reform of the CFP provides a timely opportunity for a new policy that could stop overfishing, end destructive fishing practices, and deliver fair and equitable use of abundant fish stocks.

### **OCEAN2012 is working for a CFP that:**

- enshrines environmental sustainability as the over-arching principle, without which economic and social sustainability is unobtainable;
- ensures decisions are taken at the most appropriate levels and in a transparent way, ensuring effective participation of stakeholders;
- delivers sustainable fishing capacity at EU and regional level;
- makes access to fisheries resources conditional on environmental and social criteria; and
- ensures public funds are only used in a way that serves the public good and alleviates social impacts in the transition to sustainable fisheries.

*fair and equitable use  
of abundant fish stocks*

