

Scientists call for coral reef regulations

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Twenty marine scientists, including prominent Britons, are asking the world's governments to regulate the live fish trade to help protect coral reefs.

With the health of tropical coral reefs facing a serious threat from the burgeoning live fish trade in areas like Hong Kong, a team of scientists from the University of Cambridge have joined with other marine specialists to ask that governments regulate the harvesting of reef fish worldwide, said the journal *Science*.

The scientists claim reef fishermen employ destructive methods in gathering fish from coral reefs and also over-harvest the larger fish that help sustain the ecosystem around the reefs.

"Due to the high international demand for live fish, these roving bandits deplete coral reef stocks before local institutions have time to implement laws to regulate the poaching. The bandits take advantage of porous world trade policy and ineffective fisheries management to sell their plunder," the University of Cambridge's Dr Helen Scales said.

A 2004 *Status of the Coral Reefs of the World* report said 20 percent of coral reefs in the world have likely been removed permanently mainly due to human activities, with 50 percent facing either immediate or long-term collapse, *Science* said.

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