

Global fisheries research finds promise and peril

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Global fisheries, a vital source of food and revenue throughout the world, contribute between US\$225-\$240 billion per year to the worldwide economy, according to four new studies released today. Researchers also concluded that healthier fisheries could have prevented malnourishment in nearly 20 million people in poorer countries.

This first comprehensive, peer-reviewed estimate of the global economic contribution of [fisheries](#) was published online today in four papers as part of a special issue of the *Journal of Bioeconomics*.

This research, conducted by the University of British Columbia's Fisheries Centre, with support from the Pew Environment Group, quantifies the social and economic value of fish around the world and also calculates the loss of both revenue and dependable protein sources from years of [overfishing](#).

"We know fish play an important ecological role in the marine environment, but these studies assess their 'out-of-the-water' value to people across the globe," says lead economist Associate Professor Rashid Sumaila at the University of British Columbia's Fisheries Centre. "Whether you are looking at fish as a financial resource or a source of protein, our research shows that the benefits of healthy, robust fisheries have enormous value far beyond the fishing dock."

Dr. Sumaila and his team of researchers also found that:

- Overfishing reduces revenue. Annually, estimated global catch losses from overfishing totaled up to seven to 36 per cent of the actual tonnage landed in a year, resulting in a landed value loss of between US\$6.4-36 billion each year.
- Fishing has a multiplier effect. The fishing industry's economic impact on related businesses, such as boat building, international transport and bait suppliers, is roughly three times larger than the value of fish at first sale.
- Fisheries generate incomes. Wild fisheries generate more than US\$63 billion in annual household incomes around the world.
- Non-industrial uses of the oceans are a net positive for economies and jobs. Recreational use of ocean ecosystems by sport divers, whale watchers and recreational fishermen contributes US\$47 billion each year to national economies worldwide and generates nearly 1.1 million jobs.

One of the four papers focused on global fisheries subsidies, or financial incentives that countries offer to their fishing industries, which may contribute to depleted fish stocks. Large developed countries are spending twice the amount of tax-payer money on global fisheries subsidies that encourage overfishing than they are on subsidies that protect oceans.

"Many economies are paying doubly for continued overfishing of our oceans," says Sumaila. "First, tax-payer money is directly contributing to the decline of worldwide fisheries, and second, fishermen and undernourished people are hurting from a steadily declining resource. From a socioeconomic standpoint, subsidies that promote overfishing are doing far more harm than good."

Provided by University of British Columbia

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