

# Fish consumption at all time high, says UN agency

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Fishmongers check bluefin tunas at Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market this month. Fish consumption reached record levels in 2010 and world stocks need to be urgently rebuilt, experts at the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation say.

Fish consumption reached record levels in 2010 and world stocks need to be urgently rebuilt, experts at the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation said in a report Monday.

"The contribution of fish to global diets has reached a record of almost 17 kg per person on average, supplying over three billion people with at least 15 percent of their average animal [protein intake](#)," the FAO's report said.

The 'State of the World's Fisheries and Aquaculture' report, published at the FAO's Rome headquarters, said the increase was due mainly to a

surge in [fish farming](#), predicting that the number of fish which are bred for consumption was set to overtake those caught by fishermen.

Overall, fisheries and aquaculture support the livelihoods of an estimated 540 million people, or eight percent of the world population, the agency said.

"The status of global [fish stocks](#) has not improved," the report said, adding that people have never eaten as much fish and more people than ever are employed in or depend on the sector.

"That there has been no improvement in the status of stocks is a matter of great concern," said senior FAO fisheries expert Richard Grainger, one of the report's editors.

"Fish is a good quality and high protein food and the sector contributes in an important way to world food security," he said.

"The percentage of overexploitation needs to go down although at least we seem to be reaching a plateau," he added.

The report explores the growing legal efforts to enforce tighter controls on the fisheries sector, revealing that a recent study estimates the cost of illegal and unreported fishing alone at \$10-23.5 billion per year.

Among other tactics, the FAO report flags up debates surrounding trade measures meant to block entry of such fish and fish products from international trade, and a proposed global record of fishing vessels.

The record would assign a unique vessel identifier to each vessel that would remain constant regardless of ownership or flag changes over time and make it easier to police vessels engaged in illegal fishing activities, it said.

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