

# New era of fisheries policy needed to secure nutrition for millions

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A new study published in *PNAS* argues that for fisheries policies to be effective they must take in to account not just fish stock conservation and environmental issues, but also research data on the patterns and dynamics of fish trade, markets and user consumption.

Securing the critical contribution of wild [fish](#) stocks to food and nutrition security in the developing world depends on better governance and management of the fisheries sector.

Fish is a key source of [animal protein](#), [fatty acids](#), vitamins, and micronutrients like iron and zinc that contribute to a [balanced diet](#), and is a particularly important food source in many developing countries.

A new study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* of the United States of America argues that for fisheries policies to be effective they must take in to account not just fish stock conservation and environmental issues, but also research data on the patterns and dynamics of fish trade, markets and user consumption.

"This is particularly important in the developing world, where the countries whose populations are most dependent on fish for nutrition are found," says Director General of WorldFish, Dr. Stephen J. Hall, lead author of the paper.

Fisheries don't exist in isolation and multi-sectoral perspectives and approaches need to be developed and supported to ensure policies also

consider the millions of small-scale fishers.

"These fishers often work part-time during times of seasonal hunger or temporary unemployment, and the ways that they catch, prepare and sell fish are diverse. Policies need to take in to account the varying contexts that fisheries exist in. A 'one size fits all' policy is destined to fail," says Dr. Hall.

Policies developed for open ocean trawlers whose catch is primarily destined for an export market must be different to those for small-scale fishers selling their catch to local customers.

This will help to ensure a constant supply of good quality fish for consumers, a satisfactory standard of living vital for millions of fishers, and the sustainability of wild fish stocks.

FAO estimates that 30% of the world's fish stocks were over-exploited, depleted or recovering in 2009, and this number is increasing.

While aquaculture is the fastest growing agricultural sector for most developing countries, its growth and production rate cannot replace capture fisheries or even make up losses of local [wild fish](#) in the next 10 to 15 years.

The paper is highly relevant for responding with effective and efficient policies to the strategic challenges fisheries will face in the future.

The authors argue that such policies will have to consider the appropriate level for decentralized decision making, the primacy of genuine stakeholder dialogues, the inclusion of the whole value chain for fish and the incorporation of fisheries in the perspective of other sectors of the economy and rural development.

With such policies we will secure wild [fish stocks](#), ensure an income for fishers, and food and nutrition security for consumers throughout the developing world.

The study titled 'Innovations in capture [fisheries](#): an imperative for nutrition security in the [developing world](#)' was written by internationally renowned experts Stephen J. Hall (WorldFish), Ray Hilborn (University of Washington), Neil Andrew (WorldFish) and Edward H. Allison (University of East Anglia).

Provided by WorldFish Center

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