

EU fishing fleets reap profits while taxpayers foot the bill

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The European Union's taxpayers are paving the way for fishing fleets to reel in valuable catch in developing countries while fishing companies pocket the profits, according to University of British Columbia researchers.

In a study published today in the online journal *PLOS ONE*, researchers from UBC's Fisheries Centre analyzed access agreements that allow EU-based fishing fleets to operate in Africa and the South Pacific. They found that EU governments pay 75 per cent of the annual access fees, which have ranged in value from 300,000 Euros paid to Equatorial Guinea, to 175 million Euros paid to Morocco.

Meanwhile, the amount paid by the industry represents only 1.5 per cent of the revenue generated from selling the catch.

"The EU's fishing companies are benefitting from these agreements far more than the [developing countries](#) where they go to fish," says Frédéric Le Manach, a PhD student at with UBC Fisheries Centre's Sea Around Us Project and the study's lead author.

In addition to access fees, EU government subsidies often cover the cost of fuel or equipment, says Le Manach, and previous studies have linked subsidies to overfishing and overcapacity.

"Since the companies aren't paying the full cost of doing business, they make more profit and in turn invest in bigger and more efficient boats,

which enable them to further exploit developing countries' fish stocks."

"The EU has the potential to lead the world in sustainable fisheries," says Daniel Pauly, principal investigator with the Sea Around Us Project and the study's co-author. "But as they stand now, these access agreements are being subsidised in ways that disadvantage developing countries and contradict the EU's own development goals by forcing their citizens to essentially pay twice for the [fish](#) they're taking off of the plates of developing countries."

More information: An infographic is available at news.ubc.ca/2013/11/27/eusubsidies/

Provided by University of British Columbia

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