

US continues global leadership to address illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing

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Worldwide economic losses from IUU fishing from ships such as this are estimated to be between \$10 billion and \$23 billion annually. Credit: U.S. Coast Guard

In its 2015 biennial report to Congress on illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU), NOAA has identified six nations—Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Nigeria, Nicaragua, and Portugal—as engaging in the practice. IUU fishing and seafood fraud undermine international efforts to sustainably manage and rebuild fisheries, and creates unfair market competition for fishermen playing by the rules, like those in the United States.

"Protecting our country's reputation as a leader in sustainable fishing is at the heart of the President's efforts to combat illegal, unreported, and

unregulated fishing and seafood fraud around the world," said Kathryn Sullivan, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere, and NOAA administrator, during remarks she made at the SeaWeb Seafood Summit in New Orleans. "As one of the largest importers of seafood in the world, the United States has a global responsibility and economic duty to ensure that the fish we import is caught sustainably and legally. Tackling this challenge will require sustained collaboration between industry, conservation groups, and government."

The report also highlights U.S. findings and analyses of foreign IUU fishing activities and of bycatch of protected species and shark catch on the high seas where nations do not have a regulatory program comparable to the United States.

IUU activity of the identified nations included violations such as fishing in restricted areas, tuna discards, misreported catch, and improper handling of turtle entanglement. NOAA Fisheries will work with each of the cited nations to address these activities and improve their fisheries management and enforcement practices. If the nation does not take sufficient action and does not receive a positive certification in the next biennial report, the U.S. may prohibit the import of fisheries products from that nation and deny port privileges to their fishing vessels.

The 2013 report identified ten nations—Colombia, Ecuador, Ghana, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Panama, Spain, Tanzania, Venezuela—whose vessels engaged in IUU fishing activities. Over the last two years, the United States worked with these 10 nations and determined that each took appropriate action by adopting new laws and regulations or amending existing ones, sanctioning the offending vessels, improving monitoring and enforcement, or asking for a reexamination of the activities of certain vessels. While all 10 nations took appropriate action to address IUU activity in the 2013 report, three (Colombia, Ecuador

and Mexico) have been reidentified in the 2015 report for new IUU activity.

No countries were identified for bycatch of protected living marine resources or for shark catch on the high seas in the 2015 biennial report. However, Mexico was identified in the 2013 report for a lack of management measures for mitigating bycatch of North Pacific loggerhead sea turtles in the gillnet fishery in Mexico's Gulf of Ulloa. Mexico has since made meaningful progress in developing a regulatory program to address this issue. NOAA Fisheries will continue to work with Mexico and will delay its certification decision until May 2015.

"The United States is committed to working with all nations to combat illegal fishing, and to ensure the effective management of bycatch of protected species and shark catch on the high seas," said Eileen Sobeck, assistant NOAA administrator for NOAA Fisheries. "We are encouraged by the positive steps these nations took to address IUU fishing and will continue to explore all avenues to combat IUU activity on a global scale."

In addition to undermining international fisheries efforts, IUU fishing can also devastate [fish](#) populations and their productive marine habitats, threatening global food security and economic stability. Global losses attributable to IUU fishing have been estimated to be between \$10 billion and \$23 billion annually, undermining the ability to sustainably manage fisheries as well as economic opportunities for U.S. fishermen.

The report is a requirement of the High Seas Driftnet Fishing Moratorium Protection Act, as amended by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act and the Shark Conservation Act.

At the State Department's Our Ocean conference in June 2014, the White House announced a Presidential Task Force on IUU fishing, co-chaired by the departments of state and commerce and made up of a

broad range of other federal agencies. The Task Force, which was directed to report to the President within six months with "recommendations for the implementation of a comprehensive framework of integrated programs to combat IUU fishing and seafood fraud that emphasizes areas of greatest need," made 15 recommendations in December which, if implemented, would combat IUU fishing and seafood fraud, strengthen enforcement, Create and expand partnerships with industry and state and local governments, and track seafood from [harvest](#) to entry into the United States.

More information: The report is available online:
www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ia/iuu/msra_page/msra.html

Provided by NOAA Headquarters

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