

Seagrass is a key fishing ground globally

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In many places in the world fishers still, utilize spearfishing as a subsistence means of catching food. The Bajo of SE Asia is an indigenous group who still commonly practice such activity in Wakatobi, Indonesia. Credit: Richard Unsworth

New research demonstrates that seagrass meadows are important fishing grounds all around the globe. The work highlights that there is an urgent need to start appreciating and understanding this role to be able to build more sustainable fisheries. A study led by Dr Lina Mtwana Nordlund at Stockholm University, published in the scientific journal *Fish & Fisheries*, examines the global extent to which these underwater meadows support fishing activity.

"If there is seagrass and people there is most certainly fishing. It doesn't matter if it is a country with high or low human development, fishing occurs. But the reasons for fishing and the target species vary" says Dr Nordlund who is based at Department of Ecology, Environment and Plant Science at Stockholm University in Sweden.

In countries with a low human development index score seagrass fishery activity tends to target anything one can find that can be eaten, sold or used as bait. These seagrass fisheries have a major significance for daily food supply and livelihoods. In countries with a very high [human development index](#) score, seagrass fisheries are more commonly recreational with specific species targeted, such as clams. The research highlights that nearly every type of fishing gear is used within seagrass fisheries.

"The ecological value of seagrass meadows is irrefutable, yet their loss continues at an accelerating rate. Now there is growing evidence globally that many fisheries associated to seagrass are unrecorded, unreported and unmanaged, leading to a tragedy of the seagrass commons" says co-author Dr Richard Unsworth, Swansea University.

The researchers from Stockholm University, Cardiff University and Swansea University highlight that because seagrass is generally found nearshore in shallow sheltered environments, it creates an accessible fishing ground in nearly all weather conditions.

The authors have studied seagrass fisheries all around the world from the Philippines, to USA, Indonesia, the Turks & Caicos Islands and locations in the Mediterranean. "Seagrass meadows are being damaged and degraded globally and urgent action is needed to stem the loss of [seagrass meadows](#). Their importance as a key fishing ground is yet another reason why we need to start appreciating the value of seagrass" says Dr Mtwana Nordlund.

More information: Lina M Nordlund et al. Global significance of seagrass fishery activity, *Fish and Fisheries* (2017). [DOI: 10.1111/faf.12259](#)

Provided by Stockholm University

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