

Pacific fisheries face collapse by 2035: study

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File photo shows Nauruans competing for fish at the entrance to Nauru's harbour. Pacific island fisheries face collapse in the next 25 years as overfishing, population growth and climate change threaten one of the region's main economic resources, a study warned Wednesday.

Pacific island fisheries face collapse in the next 25 years as overfishing, population growth and climate change threaten one of the region's main economic resources, a study warned Wednesday.

The report, published by the Noumea-based Secretariat of the Pacific Community, said the two billion US dollar a year industry was poorly managed, with a lack of coordination between the 22 island nations in the region.

It warned some types of tuna were already being dangerously overexploited and the problem would spread to other species as foreign fleets clamoured for access to rich fishing grounds amid a global fall in fish stocks.

"There is a dangerous misconception that these resources will always be there but this is not true," the report said.

"If changes are not made now, the road ahead could be a bleak one."

The study said coral [fisheries](#) were particularly vulnerable to climate change, which not only affected fish stocks but also threatened the [coral reefs](#) that were a major tourist drawcard for many Pacific island nations.

"Attempts to mitigate the effects of climate change at the fisheries level are likely to be futile," it said. "Adaptation to changes will be the key to maintaining the flow of benefits from fisheries."



A new report, published by the Noumea-based Secretariat of the Pacific Community, said the two billion US dollar a year fishing industry in the Pacific was poorly managed, with a lack of coordination between the 22 island nations in the region.

Without proper planning, the fishing industry would struggle to cope with ocean warming and acidification, changed [rainfall patterns](#) and intensified cyclones caused by [climate change](#), the report said.

In addition, it predicted growing populations in

island nations -- set to rise by 50 percent to 15 million by 2035 -- would fuel demand for fish, increasing the risk of unsustainable practices.

"Pacific island fisheries are the major renewable resource available to the region for [food security](#), livelihoods and economic growth," it said.

"Despite considerable progress in [fisheries management](#) and development, many of these fisheries face collapse over the next 25 years and major development opportunities will be missed unless strategic action is taken."

The report said avoiding a worst-case scenario would involve managing fish stocks more scientifically and increasing regional cooperation to ensure the oceans were harvested in a sustainable manner.

It also called for more effective policing to curb illegal fishing, a phased reduction of foreign fishing vessels and the introduction of long-term planning in consultation of local fishing communities.

"Ineffective fisheries management frameworks are resulting in a 'race to fish', an unstable investment climate, and industry looking for short-term gains rather than contributing to long-term sustainable development outcomes," the report's authors said.

It also warned that improvements would require strong political will from Pacific island governments, as imposing restrictions was likely to prove unpopular in the short term.

"A promising future can only be the result of major changes and much effort," the report said. "Wealth requires wise stewardship, otherwise it is lost."

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