

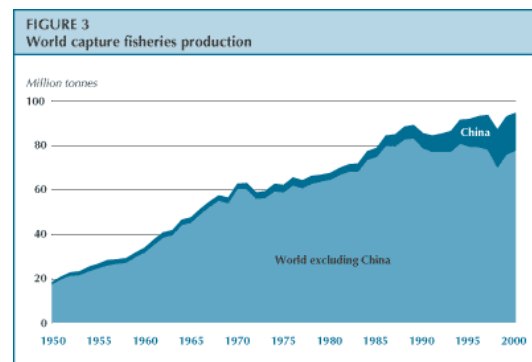


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State of World Fisheries (FAO 2002)

World fisheries production has remained relatively stable since the early 1990's in spite of regional fluctuations. Following a decline to 79.2 million tonnes in 1998 attributed to the 1997-1998 El Niño, total production of marine capture fisheries increased to 86.0 million tonnes in 2000 recovering to levels close to the historical maximum recorded for 1996 and 1997. Capture fisheries production increased to 93.2 million tonnes in 2002.

In terms of fishing effort, 47% are fully fished at maximum sustainable yield (MSY) levels; 21% are moderately fished and 4% under fished. Overfished stocks make up 18%, which includes both growth and recruitment overfishing, and 9% are classified as depleted meaning that recruitment has dropped below sustainable levels and that there has been a loss in production. It does not mean that these stocks are depleted (i.e., gone). Shifts in stock classifications between these categories has slowed in the past ten years with fully fished stocks relatively stable, moderate stocks declining slightly and overfished stocks increasing slightly.



On occasion, these fishery classifications are reported in various groupings to present negative statements like “75% of the world’s commercially-fished species have been fished to or beyond the brink at which their populations can easily sustain themselves.” In these statements, stocks fished sustainably at MSY (47%) are mixed with overfished (18%), depleted (9%) and recovering (1%) stock classifications. Phrases like “beyond the brink” are used to dramatize statements. Stocks “fish to” levels that can be sustained are fished at their maximum sustainable yield (MSY). The same data can present a positive report by grouping fully fished (47%), and underfished (4%) and moderately fished stocks (21%) to report that 72% of stocks fished at or below sustainable levels.

What does overfishing mean?

Recruitment overfishing occurs when fishing effort is thought to reduce the number of new recruits below levels needed to sustain stocks on a long-term basis. Growth overfishing refers to the size of fish harvested before they grow to the maximum size after which any further increase in growth is offset by natural mortality. Stocks may be healthy and abundant, but the yield per fish is not maximized. Growth overfishing may indicate an increase in fishing pressure or simply may be an artifact of the gear used or market size preference.