

10 Million Tons Of Fish Dumped Each Year

29 June 2017



Industrial fisheries dump nearly 10 million tons of fish back into the ocean every year, new research reveals. While in the tuna fishery there are several measures in place to avoid high numbers of bycatch or reject fish getting cast off, it's likely that the practice can never be fully eradicated.

A report published in *Fish and Fisheries* states that a whole 10 percent of the global annual fish catch is thrown back into the sea every year. The study describes the reasons for this to be "poor fishing practices" and states that most of the fish that gets reentered into the ocean dies, making it a wasteful doing.

In the 1980s the same figure was 18 million tons, the report claims. Even though this is almost double what the tonnage is reported to be now, the authors argue this is an indicator of depleting fish stocks rather than improved fisheries management.

There are a number of reasons why fish dumping occurs, such as the fish being an unwanted species or size, as well as it potentially being damaged and therefore unmarketable. If the fish is a kind not targeted by the fishermen, or if they are overshooting their quota, this can also cause the disposal of fish in to the water.

It is not clear what proportion of this 10 million tons of fish waste is related to tuna fisheries, but there are several measures in place to limit the discarding of tuna or tuna bycatch species. In the PNA for example, it is required that all tuna bycatch from purse seiners is to be landed to avoid fishermen throwing this catch overboard. The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) has a regulation in place for 100 percent observer coverage on purse seiners, which means the discarding of fish can be monitored. The same rule has however not yet been imposed on longliners fishing in the region.

Tuna RFMOs also have similar measures in place, such as the WCPFC, which has adopted protocols on dumping at sea, which lays out rules for situations when discarding is acceptable, and also what reports need to be handed in when it does occur. Additionally, the European Commission has a discard ban enforced in EU waters as part of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), which includes an obligation to land all catches.

Although rules and regulations are in place to make sure tuna fisheries waste as little fish as possible, illegal fishing still remains an issue, as it does in other fisheries too, and it is not clear to what extent vessels involved in this practice do reject tuna and tuna bycatch, as well as other species.

Share this

