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Mediterranean Marine Science  
Indexed in WOS (Web of Science), ISI Thomson and SCOPUS  
The journal is available on-line at: <http://www.mediterranean.net>  
DOI: [10.12681/mms.1043](https://doi.org/10.12681/mms.1043)

**Reconstruction of Marine Fisheries Catches for the Republic of Malta (1950-2014)**  
M. KHALFALLAH, M. BIMEKIF, A. ELMAN, B. ZELLER and B. PAVLEY  
\*Sea Around Us, Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries, University of British Columbia, 2302 Main Mall, Vancouver, BC V2T 2T6, Canada  
\*Marine and Island Fisheries Research (MIFIR), Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Research Division (FAP), Fisheries and Aquaculture Department (FAD), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy  
\*Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Parma, Via S. Epifanio, 14, Parma 27100, Italy  
\*Sea Around Us-Indian Ocean, School of Biological Sciences, University of Western Australia, Perth, 6009, Australia  
Corresponding author: m.khalfallah@seararound.us

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**Abstract**

The marine fisheries catches of Malta were reconstructed for the period 1950-2014, including for reported and previously unreported commercial, large- and small-scale catches, unreported fisheries catches, i.e., subsistence and recreational fisheries, as well as major discards. The present study updates and improves a previous catch reconstruction for Malta for the 1950-2010 time period. Reconstructed marine fisheries catches for Malta are nearly 1.3 times the official landings reported by the EU and national authorities on behalf of Malta, increasing from around 1,200 t year<sup>-1</sup> in the 1950s to 3,700 t year<sup>-1</sup> in the 2010s. The discrepancy between reported and reconstructed total catches is mostly due to the subsistence catches estimated, which have come exclusively of on-board consumption and take-home catch of commercial fishers. While the Maltese fisheries statistical system includes procedures to estimate "unreported" commercial landings, this contribution documents that it would be beneficial to also account for non-commercial catches.

Keywords: Unreported fisheries, Mediterranean, islands, recreational catches, subsistence catches, discards.

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**Introduction**

The Republic of Malta (hereinafter Malta) is an archipelago located in the centre of the Mediterranean basin (Fig. 1). It consists of three main inhabited islands, i.e., Malta (Fig. 1). This FISZ assignment has no legal standing and is purely used to assist in the spatial assignment of catch data (Zeller et al., 2016).

Maltese fisheries are typical Mediterranean, i.e., multi-species and multi-gear, where fishers deploy fish-

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Almost 700 tonnes of fish have gone unreported from Malta's statistical system every year for the past decade, a new study by the [Sea Around Us](#) project reveals.

The [study](#) shows that in recent times, fishers have been dumping approximately 380 tonnes of fish every year, which is the equivalent to the amount of seafood needed to feed 19,000 people for a 12-month period.

"Discards are playing an increasing role in the unreported catches," pointed out Myriam Khalfallah, lead author of the study and a Ph.D. candidate with the Sea Around Us.

Khalfallah stressed that authorities need to start monitoring discards in order to keep track of the health of Malta's fish stocks and guarantee the food security of its people and that doing so would make the country a leader in the region when it comes to fisheries management.

According to the researcher, fish caught by commercial fishers for their personal and crew or family consumption are also missing from government reports and their numbers add up to 285 tonnes per year in recent years.

Overall, Maltese catches between 1950 and 2014 were 1.3 times higher than reported, as the study shows.

"Malta is making good efforts to estimate unreported commercial landings, but the recreational and subsistence fisheries together with discards need to be monitored to get a better idea of what is really being killed and withdrawn from the ocean," the scientist stresses.

The study *Reconstruction of Marine Fisheries Catches for the Republic of Malta (1950-2014)* uses the Sea Around Us' catch reconstruction method to incorporate unreported catches and complement both national statistics and fishery data assembled by the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#). The aim is to provide comprehensive estimates of how much fish is really caught by the industrial and small-scale sectors and under what circumstances.

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