

Our Oceans Are Running Out of Fish ... and 10 Million Tons Get Wasted by Fisheries Every Year

It is a common belief that fishing and, consequently, buying and [eating fish](#), are harmless practices and choices when it comes to the environment. Unfortunately, that is very far from the truth. [Industrial fishing](#) is a great contributor to the destruction of the oceans. And as long as the demand for seafood is high, the industry will develop further, finding more and more ways to catch as many fish as fast as possible – which is an approach that simply never ends well.

According to a decades-long review of fishing practices, researchers found that industrial fishing wastes [ten million tons](#) of fish every year. As reported by [Natural News](#), the study found that 10 percent of all the fish caught worldwide are thrown back into the ocean, which amounts to this staggering number. The fish dumped back into the water are either dead or dying and their disposal is the result of poor fishing practices and improper management.

The 10 million tons of fish is an equivalent of filling around [4,500](#) Olympic-sized swimming pools with fish – every single year. The highest amount of discards happens in the Pacific, by fleets from Russia, China, Taiwan, and South Korea.

Sea Around Us, an initiative by the University of British Columbia's Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries and the University of Western Australia,

gathered a group of 300 experts who were working on the review. “In the current era of increasing food insecurity and human nutritional health concerns, these findings are important,” says [Dirk Zeller](#), lead author of the study.

The fish thrown back into the oceans are those deemed to be unmarketable – too small or belonging to an unwanted species. It also happens when fishermen need only a specific part of the fish and discard the rest of the animal. A “nasty practice” known as “high-grading,” also contributes to this problem, Zeller points out. This is where fishers continue to fish even after they have caught enough fish to sell – but if they catch bigger fish, they discard the smaller ones.

Researchers underline that during the 1950s, just five million tons of fish were dumped back into the oceans, but the number rose dramatically during the 1980s – to around 18 million tons. The figures stabilized to the current 10 million tons per year over the last decade. Zeller notes that the numbers could be an indicator of depleting [fish](#) stocks. The fact is, there aren't plenty of fish in the oceans anymore. The FAO had previously known that [around 80 percent](#) of global fish stocks were “fully- to over-exploited, depleted, or in a state of collapse.” On top of that, experts predict that the [world's fish stocks will collapse by 2048](#) if we don't slow down the demand for fish.

Overfishing is a serious global issue resulting in a number of [dangerous phenomena](#). Not only does it kill an enormous number of fish, but also causes apex predators to disappear from the oceans, disrupts the marine food chain, creates an overwhelming amount of [bycatch](#), destroys the marine ecosystems by bottom trawling, leads to unsustainable agriculture, and more. It is an issue that has to be addressed – and, in a big part, by individual consumers shaping the market.

By simply leaving fish off your plate, you can help keep 225 fish in the oceans and save countless other marine animals from becoming bycatch. That might not seem like a huge amount, but if everyone in the U.S. alone made a concerted effort, we could help conserve a huge amount of marine life.

To learn more about how you can use your food choices to protect the oceans, check out [One Green Planet's #EatForThePlanet campaign.](#)

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Link: <http://www.onegreenplanet.org/news/millions-of-fish-wasted-every-year/>