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Nearly One-Third of Global Fishing Goes Unreported, Study Finds

MAY 1, 2017 BY EMILY MONACCO

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Nearly a third of the fish caught by global fisheries is **unreported**, according to new research from the University of British Columbia.

The research, which was compiled over ten years by a team of about 400 scientists and researchers as part of the University's Sea Around Us project, showed that as much as 120 million tons of fish were caught in 2015, as compared to **official capture reports** from the United Nations, which reported an 81.2 million ton harvest.

The discrepancy was found by examining and restructuring official data with external data from university studies, nutritional surveys, and local knowledge, amongst other sources.

"Fifty percent more fish were actually taken out, were caught by fisheries around the world, than the officially reported data that countries provide actually would suggest," Dirk Zeller, a senior scientist and executive director for the Sea Around Us project, told **CBC**.

The new information points to an even more dire overfishing situation than experts had already feared: the Food and Agriculture Organization reported that thirty percent of fish stocks were **overfished** in 2013, a ten percent increase since 1974, though these estimates were made based on official data, and given this new research from UBC, the true numbers may be even worse.

Zeller says that many global fish stocks are already close to collapse.

“If you take a fish population and you deplete it substantially to a very small percentage of its original version (...) then you create a situation where these fish might not be able to recover — even if you stop harvesting it, purely because its place in the ecosystem might have changed,” he says.

A new documentary called “An Ocean Mystery: The Missing Catch” explores this global overfishing crisis and the data collected by the research team. The film premiered on April 28 at UBC’s Institute for Oceans and Fisheries.

The United States is currently attempting to address the issue of overfishing with the new “Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act,” introduced into Congress in April. The Act addresses alternative management for recreational fishing, fishery allocations, rebuilding fishery stocks, and exemptions where annual catch limits don’t fit, amongst other issues related to worldwide fishery.

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