

harvested -- as with the Alaska pollock roe -- or the fishers caught species that they were not targeting, something known as bycatch.

"Discards also happen because of a nasty practice known as high-grading where fishers continue fishing even after they've caught fish that they can sell," said Zeller. "If they catch bigger fish, they throw away the smaller ones; they usually can't keep both loads because they run out of freezer space or go over their quota."

The study examined the amount of discarded fish over time. In the 1950s, about five million tonnes of fish were discarded every year, in the 1980s that figure grew to 18 million tonnes. It decreased to the current levels of nearly 10 million tonnes per year over the past decade.

The decline in discards in recent years could be attributed to improved fisheries management and new technology, but Zeller and his colleagues say it's likely also an indicator of depleted fish stocks. As the Sea Around Us' 2016 global catch reconstruction paper revealed, catches have been declining at a rate of 1.2 million tonnes of fish every year since the mid-1990s.

"Discards are now declining because we have already fished these species down so much that fishing operations are catching less and less each year, and therefore there's less for them to throw away," he said.

Zeller and his colleagues Tim Cashion, Maria Palomares and Daniel Pauly, say that the study also shows how industrial fleets move to new waters once certain fisheries decline.

"The shift of discards from Atlantic to Pacific waters shows a dangerous trend in fisheries of exporting our fishing needs and fishing problems to new areas," Cashion said.

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Journal Reference:

1. Dirk Zeller, Tim Cashion, Maria Palomares, Daniel Pauly. **Global marine fisheries discards: A synthesis of reconstructed data.** *Fish and Fisheries*, 2017; DOI: [10.1111/faf.12233](https://doi.org/10.1111/faf.12233)

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