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Experts warn of a sea empty of fish as annual tuna catch spikes to 6 million tonnes on back of global demand

The tuna fishing rate rose by 1,000 percent in the past 60 years and this is unsustainable, says a study published in Fisheries Research.

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It's easy enough to get your hands on a tuna salad, perhaps even easier to just use some canned fish. But, there's a high possibility that it may be hard and almost impossible to keep eating tuna the way you do now. In a first-of-its-kind study published in Fisheries Research, it has been revealed that as the demand for tuna has exploded, so have the rates at which we are pulling out the fish from the oceans. It spiked up by 1,000 percent in the past 60 years and it's not just unparalleled, it's also unsustainable, the study implies.

We are fishing tuna at rates like never before and it is only a matter of time, the species stocks decline, says Daniel Pauly, Principal Investigator of the Sea Around Us initiative at the University of British Columbia, who was a part of the study along with nine other researchers. An estimated 6 million tonnes of tuna are caught annually, says the study.



In a first of its kind study published in *Fisheries Research*, it has been revealed that as the demand for tuna has exploded, so have the rates at which we are pulling out the fish from the oceans. (Getty Images)

As a result of overfishing, stocks of the bluefin tuna were affected severely and even though they're in the restricted range, their population is about 5 percent of what it originally was. For the booming demand for tuna, we rely mostly on the Yellowfin and Skipjack and even though it grows rapidly and is enormously resilient, we could completely lose them, says Pauly. "We will get down to that at some point where the fisheries are relentless and there is no good agreement to limit fishing and the competition between the various players," he said speaking to MEA World Wide.

Extinction may be a big word, say researchers but several tuna populations are already depleted. But, tuna reproduces in large numbers. "The good news is that tuna fishing can be sustainable over the long-term if we put science-based rules in place that say how many fish we can catch, where we can catch them, and what fishing methods we can use," said Shana Miller, Senior officer of the International Fisheries Conservation Program, which is a hosted project under The Ocean Foundation.

No fishing grounds unexplored

The study has also found that the hunt for tuna is going further from the shore, with the fish being pursued by fisheries everywhere they swim. Which means they have no respite from the hunt, says Miller. It makes them bad for other marine fauna and harder to control - although satellite and electronic technologies have increased oversight of fisheries, regardless of their distance from shore.

"This also applies to the approximately 150 other species that the study highlights are caught incidentally in tuna fisheries. The other concern with these high seas fisheries, occurring outside of national waters, is that they're more difficult to monitor and control, enabling illegal fishing," she said. Tuna by nature is highly migratory and because of climate change, they're shifting. The fisheries will follow them, says Miller. "The flip side is that the more tropical waters become too warm for some tunas, and those fisheries will also disappear."

Link: <https://meaww.com/tuna-fishing-annual-catch-high-demand-unsustainable-extinction-depletion-sea-around-us>