

## Surfacing the True Value of Honduras' Small-Scale Fisheries



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Earlier this month, the Smithsonian Institution, in collaboration with the Sea Around Us initiative and Fish Forever Sr. Vice President, Steve Box, published a new report in *Fisheries*

*Management and Ecology* that surfaces the true value of small-scale fisheries in Honduras. ["The hidden value of artisanal fisheries in Honduras"](#) highlights the importance of Honduras' coastal fisheries to both the local and national economy and challenges the long-held belief that the industrial fisheries are more important.

This groundbreaking report is **one of the first publications to show that both the catch volume and value of a country's small-scale fisheries exceed that of industrial fishing.** By disaggregating catch data for industrial and artisanal fisheries and adding up best estimates of unreported catches by each fishing sector, the researchers discovered that from 1996 onward the small-scale fishing fleet caught more fish, and from 2000 onward had bigger revenues, than the industrial fleet.

Once the researchers had reconstructed the catch for each sector, they observed that industrial catches started declining in 1986 and dropped dramatically in the mid-2000s. They also concluded that **aggregating the data in official statistics obscured this decline, hiding the strong growth of the small-scale fishing sector, and ultimately, limited the country's ability to accurately value its small-scale fisheries for decades.** The report points to the informality of the coastal fisheries sector as the driver behind their underestimation: *"The majority of artisanal fisheries in Honduras are within the informal sector, and therefore no official records of catches or the associated value exist, which proliferates the underestimation of their importance to coastal communities and their economies."*



A local fisher in Punta Gorda, Honduras. (credit: George Stoye)

Co-author Dirk Zeller, Director of the Sea Around Us—Indian Ocean at the University of Western Australia, asserts the need for action. “This highlights the urgent need for comprehensive fisheries management and reporting systems in Honduras.”

The report highlights the use of the digital app *OurFish* as a solution to small-scale fisheries data collection, dissemination,

and use in Honduras. Rare and partners in the region are supporting coastal fishing communities' use. Importantly, this publication reinforces critical elements of Fish Forever's approach—the need to collect data and make it readily accessible for decision-making; establish ways to connect small-scale fishers to the formal economy through financial and market inclusion; prioritize small-scale fisheries alongside industrial fisheries; and engage fishing communities [and their local leaders](#) in transforming the sector.

The publication coincides with a Mayors' Summit in Honduras (read about that [HERE](#)), where 14 coastal mayors have pledged to protect the natural resources and the communities that depend on them.

Co-author Steve Box reinforces the link between better data and a sustainable coastal fisheries sector in Honduras: “The results of this report are likely the case in many other developing countries with coastal fisheries. Without data about what small-scale fishers are catching, it's impossible to manage these fisheries effectively. What's exciting is that Honduras is a leader in solving this problem and Rare, working with partners, is proud to support systemic change that will empower communities to collect better data, sustainably manage their fisheries, protect marine life and improve fisher livelihoods.”

Link: <https://medium.com/in-rare-form/surfacing-the-true-value-of-honduras-small-scale-fisheries-fd9428f4c936>