

Expert sounds warning on global overfishing

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

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Pauly, director of the Fisheries Centre at the University of British Columbia, will deliver the public keynote address Wednesday at the opening of a University of Victoria forum titled Are We Killing the World's Oceans?

Pauly, to whom Science magazine referred as "arguably the world's most prolific and widely cited living fisheries scientist," wants governments to stop subsidizing overfishing. He advocates for small- scale fisheries instead of the trawlers, industrial draggers and purse seiners.

FULL TEXT

The world's oceans are being overfished to such an extent that humans are starting to eat fish that previous generations would have discarded as inedible, says Daniel Pauly, one of the world's leading fisheries conservation scientists.

Pauly, director of the Fisheries Centre at the University of British Columbia, will deliver the public keynote address Wednesday at the opening of a University of Victoria forum titled Are We Killing the World's Oceans?

"The Chinese and the Japanese are already eating jellyfish, and that's all there will be in a few decades, jellyfish and similar stuff," said Pauly, whose lecture is titled Are We Past the Point of No Return in Mining Fish from the Sea?

Food such as surimi is now regarded as acceptable, Pauly said in an interview. "It's the ultimate non-fish – fibres extracted from trash stuff," he said.

Pauly, to whom Science magazine referred as "arguably the world's most prolific and widely cited living fisheries scientist," wants governments to stop subsidizing overfishing. He advocates for small- scale fisheries instead of the trawlers, industrial draggers and purse seiners.

Canada subsidizes gas for fishing boats, does all the stock research at taxpayers' expense and subsidizes construction and decommissioning of fishing vessels, Pauly said.

"It's utterly crazy, because the subsidies are making it possible for them to overfish. The oceans are not dying, but many large fish species are becoming scarcer and the ecosystems in which they are embedded are seriously affected."

New Zealand, Iceland and Alaska are among the few areas where governments are acting responsibly, Pauly said.

"In Alaska, they've rolled back the fishing effort and it's much more profitable," he said. Small fisheries on a rich stock are more profitable than everyone fishing on a depleted resource, he added.

Fish farming is another problem as wild species struggle for survival. "If you have a vibrant fishery for wild salmon, do you want to endanger it with parasites from farms?"

There is no argument in scientific circles about the effect of parasites from fish farms on wild stocks, Pauly said.

"And you are producing a low-quality product and allowing it to compete with a high-quality product."

The free lecture will start at 7.30 p.m. at the University Centre's Farquhar Auditorium. For information call 472-4747.

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