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## How Somalia lost millions of dollars to fish poachers

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A fisherman carries fish on his head on the shores of the Indian ocean in Mogadishu. Somalian waters are some of the world's most productive with countless species of commercially valuable fish. PHOTO FILE | REUTERS

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Up to 2.4 million tonnes of fish have been caught by foreign fleets off Somali waters in the past six decades, a new study shows.

The study notes that from the 1990s, much of the fish was shipped away by foreign trawlers, denying the country millions of dollars in fisheries revenues every year.

The study was conducted by scientists in a research programme, Sea Around Us, at the Universities of British Columbia and Western Australia's Indian Ocean division as well as peace lobby One Earth Future's Secure Fisheries programme.

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Somali waters are some of the world's most productive, with stocks of tuna, shark, swordfish, sardines, squid, and countless species of commercially valuable fish, providing food for coastal communities.

The domestic fishing sector annually contributes about \$135 million to the economy.

Destructive fishing practices, illegal fishing, insecurity caused by conflict, underdeveloped infrastructure and competition from foreign fishing boats threaten the long-term sustainability of Somali fisheries.

One study's findings, recently published in *Marine Policy*, also reveals 80 per cent more fish were caught from the country's waters over the past six decades, contrary to official reports.

## **Exploitation**

Lack of proper monitoring and control allowed foreign industrial vessels to exploit Somali marine resources or operate under dubious licences in the years before the Federal Government was established in 2012.

“Using catch reconstruction, which improves the completeness of statistics assembled by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, our researchers determined that foreign boats were responsible for more than half of the total amount of fish taken from Somali waters between 1950 and 2015,” the report says.

With more reliable and accurate data on each sector's catch, the researchers say the Somali government can strengthen recently passed legislation and develop income generating policies for small-scale domestic fisheries, while at the same time controlling the amount of fish that legally licensed foreign vessels catch.

Link: <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/business/How-Somalia-lost-millions-of-dollars-to-fish-poachers-/2560-4186678-115axjc/index.html>