



A sea of opportunities for Europe

From a sea of troubles...

Fish populations all round the world are in trouble, but the EU is in a state of crisis. More than 85% of its commercial stocks are overfished, a rate far above the current global average of 25%. Nearly one-third of fish in EU waters, including iconic species like Mediterranean bluefin tuna, are at risk of collapse.

Indiscriminate and short sighted fishing practices, together with poor fisheries management – quotas set too high, fishing seasons open too long, too many boats – continue to put our seas at serious risk.

Overall the capacity of the European fleet remains far greater than the available fish in the sea. Overcapacity is one of the fundamental barriers to effective recovery of fish stocks and efficient economic performance of the fleet.

... to a sea of opportunities

The reform of the EU Common Fisheries Policy is a once-in-a-decade opportunity to bring urgently-needed change to the way our fisheries are managed; it may be our last chance to get it right.

WWF calls on the European Union to adopt a new Common Fisheries Policy. We need to:

Improve the way we manage fisheries inside and outside European waters

- Phase out centralised and micromanaged decision making, and replace it with a system in which fishermen co-manage stocks with the involvement of all stakeholders (fisheries managers, scientists, NGOs, retailers, processors, consumers) under improved national and EU oversight;
- Integrate the management of fisheries with other environmental laws, like the Habitats Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, in order to guarantee Member States can identify protected areas by 2010 and achieve Good Environmental Status in their waters by 2020;
- Make sure that the same conservation and management standards are applied to the EU fleet wherever they operate, inside or outside Community waters.

Respect marine ecosystems and follow scientific advice

- Require that every commercial fishery in Europe be subject to an ecosystem-based long term management plan. These plans must be designed to restore or maintain fisheries at healthy levels as defined by the latest science;
- Adopt clear strategies to eliminate the catching and discarding of unwanted fish and other species like birds and turtles, protect juvenile and spawning fish and establish protections for critical or sensitive habitats;
- Enhance the role of science by creating a scientific body like ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea) that will give Europe's Mediterranean States binding advice on fisheries conservation and management.

Eliminate Overcapacity

- Ensure that Member States take urgent action to match their fleet capacities to the fish available in the sea;
- Encourage Member States to adopt systems of fisheries access that provide rights to fishermen and respect historical fishing patterns;
- Eliminate harmful subsidies that result in a bloated fleet and wasteful fishing practices. Any subsidies should be clearly targeted to avoid environmental damage and to improve management, oversight and research.

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WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption

