



Taking action for a living planet

WWF is best known for its work to conserve endangered species but we also endeavour to protect people and nature against threats such as climate change and the use of toxic chemicals.

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Europe's fishing madness must stop

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A new WWF report criticises the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) for wasting billions of euros in harmful and unsustainable subsidies.

Fishing madness calls upon the 15 European fisheries ministers to implement radical reform of this 20-year-old policy, which has been driving the UK's fish stocks and fishing communities into decline. This year's review of the policy will be the first opportunity for change for a decade.

"After 20 years under the CFP, many of our commercially important fish stocks have been fished beyond sustainable levels," said Louise Heaps, WWF's Marine Fisheries Policy Officer, "and as WWF's Oceans Recovery Campaign highlighted last year, several are on the verge of collapse. It makes no sense. The European Union currently subsidises its fishing fleet to the tune of 1.4 billion euros (£868 million) a year, much of which is invested in expanding fishing capacity instead of recovery plans for many of our important fish stocks. Two thirds of our fish stocks are over-exploited and heading towards commercial extinction. These unsustainable subsidies have resulted in the fishing fleet being at least 40 per cent over capacity. There are simply not enough fish resources in EU waters to support the existing size of the fleet."

A common vision for reform

In contrast, the UK fleet does not receive subsidies for expansion. A strong alliance between UK fishermen and WWF has created a common vision for CFP reform that is backed by the UK government. Much of this vision is now contained in the European Commission's Green Paper on the reform of the CFP. In Scotland, a welcome £25 million investment by the Scottish Executive is set to decommission a significant proportion of the fleet.

In June 2001, EU leaders agreed that the review of the CFP would address the overall fishing pressure by adapting fishing effort to the level of available resources. "This year the European Union's fisheries ministers will determine the future of our oceans, Europe's fishing communities and Europe's fish stocks. This madness has got to stop," added Louise Heaps.

Further information

- To find out more about WWF's European campaign to stop overfishing, visit: <http://www.wwf.org.uk/fishforthefuture/>
- For more information about WWF's work to protect the marine environment, visit our [research centre](#)
- To find out more about the Common Fisheries Policy, visit the [CFP website](#), where an online version of the [Green Paper](#) can be found.

Clear and measurable commitments

The Fishing Madness report contains 101 reasons why the CFP needs radical reform and marks the launch of the WWF's European campaign to stop overfishing. In particular, WWF wants to see clear and measurable commitments to:

- secure the long-term health of marine ecosystems and safeguard the future of dependent fishing communities;
- eliminate over-capacity of the EU fishing fleet within 10 years;
- across the EU, redirect harmful subsidies so that they support investment in recovery and management of our resources; and
- reduce the footprint of the EU fishing fleet globally.

WWF also believes that the EU does not do enough to reduce the bycatch of fish. Nearly one third of total catches are thrown back into the sea, often dead, because they are either the wrong species, too small, or over-quota. Poor fishing practices and inadequate management measures have also led to the degradation of the marine environment as a whole.

In addition, the EU pays its fishing fleets to fish off the coast of developing countries, such as those of West Africa. Under the existing terms and conditions, many of these access agreements pose a threat to coastal communities, who depend on fish for their livelihoods and as their main source of food. A reformed CFP should ensure fair and sustainable agreements that respect the needs of local people and the marine environment.