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* [China] Statistics for China's Fishing Output Credible: Official

China | In General | Research | 2001.12.20

The figure for China's marine fishing output reported to the international community is accurate, said a senior official with the Ministry of Agriculture Monday.

The statistics for the country's total fishing output are based on information collected from the lowest administrations to the central government, said Yang Jian, director-general of the Bureau of Fisheries under the Ministry.

What the fisheries authorities do strictly follows China's Statistical regulations as set by the State Statistical Bureau though the method used differs from the internationally accepted sampling survey, he added.

Reg Watson and Daniel Pauly, two Canadian scientists, published a research paper in the British-based Nature Magazine on November 29 this year, saying that since the 1980s China has reported a fishing output higher than it actually was to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization.

The statistics from China raised the figures for the total world fishing output and gave a false global evaluation of fishery resources, which have been shrinking, they said.

China has seen a rapid growth in its fishing output in the past 20 years as fishing remains a profitable business here, Yang said. The total number of fishing boats in the country has risen from 49,000 in 1980 to over 280,000 last year.

"Fishing in China has its own characteristics so that foreign scientists' sampling patterns may not fit China," he said, "For example, people in other countries may not eat jellyfish and crab as regularly as the Chinese and the output of these two aquatic products account for a considerable portion of our total output."

China's method of collecting statistics also has problems and the government would like to improve it with the joint efforts of international organizations, he said.

The total fishing output of China dropped by 1.35 percent last year for the first time and Yang said it expects further decrease this year.

The Chinese Government has paid great attention to its fishery resources over the years. China has issued a 2-to-3-month ban on commercial fishing nationwide and more than 130,000 fishing boats were forced to stay in port during this year's ban leaving about one million fishermen temporarily idle.

The total number of fishing boats has remained stable in China since 1998 and the government plans to ban 30,000 boats from operating over the next five years.

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