



## Quick Frozen Foods International News

### Something Fishy About Fishery Figures

Cooking seafood is one thing. Cooking the books is another. And two Canadian experts say the latter is just what China has done, creating a false impression of world fishery stocks by issuing bogus statistics.

Reg Watson and Daniel Pauly from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver trawled through figures compiled by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the only agency that provides a global picture on fish stocks.

China kept reporting increased catches from its coastal waters, even though these had been fished out, they said, and also submitted impossibly high figures for its distant water fisheries. As a result, the FAO reported that global catches were around 80 million tons at the start of the 1990s and generally rose throughout the decade.

Watson and Pauly think local Chinese officials were trying to impress the central government with inflated catch figures. Whatever the reason, they said, the industry was lulled into a false sense of security, despite scientific warnings of the perils of overfishing and the collapse of fisheries in the North Atlantic, Mediterranean and Southeast Pacific.

Since 1999, they said, Beijing - apparently having become aware of the over-reporting problem - has quietly begun to submit "more realistic" figures, suggesting stable rather than rising catches. But if these statistics are right, then global catch, far from increasing by 330,000 tons per year since 1988, has in fact slumped by 360,000 tons.

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