

Dateline Earth

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Oceans being killed off to feed livestock, farmed fish

A startling conclusion emerges from a study released today: More than one-third of all the fish caught in the world's oceans are going into food for livestock and farmed fish.



Whoa! We knew for some time about the problems with catching wild fish to feed to farmed fish. But we had no idea of the scope of the catch going to livestock. What we're talking about here are so-called "forage fish" -- the little critters like anchovies, sardines and menhaden that are occupy a key spot low on the [ocean food chain](#).

To quote the [press release](#) by the Institute for Ocean Conservation Science:

Forage fish account for a staggering 37 percent (31.5 million tonnes) of all fish taken from the world's oceans each year, and 90 percent of that catch is processed into fishmeal and fish oil. In 2002, 46 percent of fishmeal and fish oil was used as feed for aquaculture (fish-farming), 24 percent for pig

feed, and 22 percent for poultry feed. Pigs and poultry around the world consume more than double the seafood eaten by Japanese consumers and six times the amount consumed by the U.S. market.

As you might expect, plenty of these fish would be entirely fit for human consumption, and now, you wouldn't have to eat all those anchovies on pizza. (Just ask the Italians and the French!)

Here's what lead study author Jacqueline Alder had to say about that:

We need to stop using so many small ocean fish to feed farmed fish and other animals. These small, tasty fish could instead feed people. Society should demand that we stop wasting these fish on farmed fish, pigs, and poultry.

She's from the [Institute for Ocean Conservation Science](#) at Stony Brook University in New York. The study was funded primarily by the [Pew Institute for Ocean Science](#), which is being folded into the Stony Brook institute.

Of note: The senior author on the paper is Daniel Pauly from the University of British Columbia, who Dateline Earth readers have met before when he talked about [jellyfish as a food source](#).

The new study, entitled "Forage Fish: From Ecosystems to Markets," is to be published next month in the Annual Review of Environment and Resources. The authors promised an abstract would be posted [here](#), but it isn't there yet. I'll try to remember to link to it here when it is up.

Posted by [Robert McClure](#) at October 29, 2008 1:32 a.m.

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