

[Public News Service - OR](#) » [October , 2008](#)

## New Study: OR Pigs & Poultry Feast on Seafood

Vancouver, BC – Chickens and pigs eat six times more seafood than people in the United States, because they're fed pellets made from forage fish, the small fish that are the ocean food source for larger fish, mammals and seabirds. A nine-year study just released by the University of British Columbia (UBC), has found 37 percent the ocean fish caught worldwide are processed as animal feed.

The study calls the trend "alarming," and warns that it is stripping marine ecosystems. Dr. Ellen Pikitch, executive director of the *Institute for Ocean Conservation Science*, says there are few management plans in place to prevent overfishing, and some companies specialize in supplying forage fish.

"For example, in the menhaden fishery, which is one of the largest fisheries we've got – they go out with spotter planes to search for schools of these forage fish from the air, and then set the nets specifically to catch them."

Fish are also fed to other fish. Pikitch says it takes three to five pounds of fishmeal to raise one pound of farm-raised salmon. In her view, that's hardly the best use of a finite resource.

"I think a lot of people enjoy anchovies on their pizza, and which one of us hasn't had sardines at one point or another? These are tasty, nutritious fish, and it seems a waste to be feeding them to other animals and using them as fertilizer."

Pikitch believes the marine reserve system Oregon is developing will help preserve some of the ocean habitat, although she says fishing restrictions would be required on larger areas of ocean to make a real difference. Opponents of such restrictions say forage fish are plentiful and inexpensive, as well as being a good nutrition source for animals.

Pikitch is chairing a new task force that plans to come up with scientific approaches to manage forage fishing by 2010.

The study, funded in part by the *Pew Institute for Ocean Science*, will be published in the November issue of the *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*. "Forage Fish: From Ecosystems to Markets," will also be posted on the Web site of the UBC project, at [www.searounds.org](http://www.searounds.org).

Copyright © 2008 Public News Service