

Thirty Percent Of Global Fish Catch Wasted On Livestock

by Jeff Nield, Vancouver, British Columbia on 10.30.08



School of Sardines via Monterey Bay Aquarium

Whenever it feels like the [fishing industry is making steady progress to become more sustainable](#) another destructive trend is exposed. Published in the November 2008 issue of [Annual Review of Environment and Resources](#) "Forage Fish: From Ecosystems to Markets" demonstrates how mismanagement of the pelagic (mid ocean) fishery results in the catch being wasted on farmed fish, pigs, and poultry. The researchers say forage fish include anchovies, sardines, menhaden, and other small- to medium-sized fish species which are the primary food for ocean-dwelling marine mammals, seabirds (especially puffins and gulls) and several large fishes.

The research team from the [Sea Around Us Project](#) say that alternative feeds from soy and other land-based crops would be better suited for feeding livestock. But, fish-meal and fish oil are popular because forage fish are easy to catch in large numbers and are relatively inexpensive. Along with the obvious point that these fish would be better utilized if consumed directly by humans the authors are concerned that too little is known about what role forage fish play in the ocean ecosystem and this fishery "may be putting entire marine food webs at great risk."

"We must find a better way to manage forage fisheries before we cause irreversible damage to the broader ocean environment which depends on them as a food source," said Joshua Reichert, managing director of the Pew Environment Group. "Human beings are not the only, or necessarily, the most important consumer of these fish. Whatever people take out of the sea needs to be carefully calibrated to ensure that sufficient fish are left to sustain populations of other fish, seabirds and marine mammals which all play a major role in the healthy functioning of the world's oceans."

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What is particularly awful about this kind of waste is that our livestock are designed to be herbivores- why are we feeding them animal protein at all?

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