

CLIMATE CHANGE TRIGGERS FISH FAMINE, REPORT WARNS

12 Oct 2009

Fish stocks in the world's poorest countries are forecast to drop drastically, jeopardising the livelihoods and survival of millions, a new report forecasts. People's incomes and food main food sources will be dramatically affected by the fall in catch, warns the first report to look at how climate change will affect food supplies from the sea. The amount of fish in the tropics could fall by as much as 40% over the next 50 years because of global warming, jeopardising a vital food source for the developing world, the study published today has found.

The sea off Indonesia – which has currently has the most fish – could see supplies fall by more than 20% by 2055 because of changes in ocean conditions. Fishermen working off the US coast could also face large falls in the numbers of fish stocks, as would those working off Chile and China. "Many tropical island residents rely heavily on the oceans for their daily meals. These new findings suggest there's a good chance this important food source will be greatly diminished due to climate change," said William Cheung, who led the study. "Fish are very sensitive to temperatures, and when the temperatures warm because of climate change, the fish will move away. And some of the species - those that can't swim that far - may go extinct," he said. But it also found that cooler parts of the world would see their catch rise by between 30% and 70% by 2055, with Norway, Greenland, Alaska and the east coast of Russia seeing the biggest rises. This is because fish will migrate north as the oceans warm, to go to suitable cooler waters.

So even though the overall amount of fish will stay about the same, the sharp falls in fish in tropical regions could seriously harm the poorest of the world. In much of Africa and south-east Asia, people depend on fish and seafood for protein. "It is devastating," said Daniel Pauly, a marine biologist at the University of British Columbia who worked on the study. "Basically you have lots of people living at the edge of the sea. They depend on fisheries. So income-wise and consumption-wise they are affected directly by the decline in catch."

The study, by the Sea Around Us project at the University of British Columbia, analyzed 1,066 species ranging from krill to sharks that make up roughly 70 per cent of the world's catch. It is published in the journal, *Global Change Biology*.

By Hayley Jarvis for SOS Children

Relevant Countries: [Indonesia](#).



[... more about our charity work in Indonesia](#)

[Sponsor a child in Indonesia](#)