

## The End of the Line: Fishing extinction?

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By Samantha Hayes

A documentary that premieres in Wellington next week claims fish will not be commercially available in less than 50 years.

But that is a myth according to the film's makers. The truth is that unchecked commercial fishing fleets are already big enough to catch four times as many fish as the law allows.

They are so big that even with the quota system, by the year 2048 the world's fish population will effectively be gone.

"These vessels are equipped with so much electronic equipment that the fish have absolutely no chance of escaping," explains Daniel Pauly from the University of British Columbia.

Auckland University marine biologist Steve O'Shea says the film is bang on.

"By 2048 I can quite believe that we're going to lose all commercial fisheries or all commercial fisheries will come to effective commercial extinction," says Mr O'Shea.

Does it sound scary and surprising? Well, *The End of the Line* author, Charles clover, says everyone has been taken by surprise.

"From about 1988 we now realise it was on the way down, and we only figured that out in 2002," states Mr Clover.

It is too late for species like the Canadian Cod – their numbers have never recovered despite a moratorium on fishing since 1992. Now it is the Bluefin Tuna's turn.

"This is a species which is as endangered as the white rhinoceros and yet it's being hunted to extinction in the Mediterranean," says Ben Bradshaw, the UK fisheries minister from 2003 to 2007.

The hunter's have a plan; the film claims Mitsubishi is stockpiling the fish and waiting for its extinction.

"If there's no more Bluefin Tuna caught, but you're sitting on 60-70,000 tonnes of it frozen, you name the price," explains former tuna farm diver Roberto Mielgo Bregazzi.

In the UK, increased public pressure generated by *The End of the Line* forced the government to support an international agreement to ban trade in northern Bluefin Tuna.

Our government will decide in March if it will also support the ban. In the meantime it is considering increasing the catch of the critically endangered Southern Bluefin Tuna.

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