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Public urged to eat smaller fish

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EAT more sardines and less cod and tuna! That's the advice from a group of Canadian research scientists who say that the marine-eco balance has been reversed by poor fishing practices over the last 100 years.



Large white fish species such as cod and halibut are becoming scarcer, but the world's oceans are still full of smaller fish such as sardines and anchovies, it is being claimed.

Professor Villy Christensen, of the University of British Columbia Fisheries Centre, who leads the team said: "Overfishing has absolutely had a 'when the cat's away, the mice will play' effect on our oceans. By removing the large, predatory species from the ocean, small forage fish have been left to thrive. The ocean is now like the Serengeti without the lions."

The scientists surveyed more than 200 marine ecosystem models from around the world and extracted more than 68,000 estimates of fish biomass going right back to the 1880s, the university said in a weekend press release.

They presented the findings today at the American Association for the Advancement of Science Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. They found that 54 per cent of the decline in predatory fish population took place in the last 40 years.

Professor Christiansen said that although there were more smaller fish in the seas, he warned that they were more vulnerable to environmental changes. He also cautioned against the practice of using smaller fish like anchovies for fish meal and fish oil or to produce feed for aquaculture, because it would eventually damage the wild oceans of the world.

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