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US fishing subsidies to American Samoa and others contributing to overfishing

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Researchers have found that 56 per cent of fishing industry direct subsidies in the United States, including those which goes to Pacific territories, could be considered harmful to fisheries.

The study by Renée Sharp and Dr Rashid Sumaila found 713 million US dollars per year of financial support, goes to the US fishing industry, roughly half of which could contribute to overfishing.

One example was that commercial fishermen are exempt from federal and state fuel taxes, which largely provide money for transportation and infrastructure costs.

The authors also found that of the subsidies given to specific geographic regions, most went to Alaska and the Western Pacific with Hawaii and American Samoa receiving the most.

Renee Sharp, of the Environmental Working Group, says they were shocked about what they found.

“That more than half the subsidies are probably leading to or least contributing to overfishing and over capitalisation.”

Renne Sharp says not all of the fishing subsidies are bad, but governments and fishing management do need to look more closely at the range of support provided to see what is appropriate.

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