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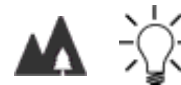
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Technology News - February 22, 2002

Fish food facts



Beef feedlots are the only animal food source that is less energy-efficient than fish caught in the ocean, claims Reg Watson of the University of British Columbia (UBC). As part of the Sea Around Us project funded by the Pew Charitable Trust, the UBC researchers have calculated “energy recovery” rates for ocean fish by comparing the amount of fuel needed to catch them with their edible protein content. “As fishers go into deeper water and use more extreme methods, the amount of energy [they must use] has increased substantially,” Watson says. “We’re not only burning more fuel, we’re pursuing resources that are more thinly dispersed,” explains Peter Tyedmers, an ecological economist at Dalhousie University also involved with the Sea Around Us project. Tyedmers estimates that the amount of energy recovered from ocean fish has plummeted by a factor of 5-10 over the past 40 years. The energy calculations were presented in mid-February as part of the first comprehensive study of fisheries in the North Atlantic ocean, which show that fish food catches have dropped by half despite tripled fishing efforts, and predict that the entire ocean’s fish stocks are headed for collapse. To see Tyedmers’ energy recovery chart, go to <ftp://www.fisheries.ubc.ca/reg/energy.jpg>. For more information about the overall study, go to www.seaweb.org/AAAS2002. —KELLYN BETTS

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