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Animal Feed Is Fishy

A third of all commercially harvested seafood goes to animals, which could undermine the entire oceanic food web. Adam Hinterthuer reports

[The following is an exact transcript of this podcast.]

It sure is a pig-eat-anchovy world out there. While that may sound like a joke, the results of a newly released study say it's no laughing matter. Farmers are fattening up their animals with anchovies and sardines at an alarming rate. In fact, one-third of the world's commercially harvested seafood now is used to feed pigs, chickens and farm-raised fish.

Researchers from the University of British Columbia and Stony Brook University spent nine years compiling data on how humans caught, processed and consumed seafood. They report that 37 percent of all the fish caught are small forage fish like sardines and anchovies. And 90 percent of that catch ends up as fishmeal or fish oil, used primarily in animal feed. Forage fish are popular because they can be caught in massive quantities and sold at cheap prices. But, researchers say, these fish support the marine food web, and they're nutritious staples for coastal-dwelling people in developing countries. So it might be time to rethink the menu. If you feed a pig a fish, it'll eat for a day. But if you feed fish to millions of pigs, well, you might just run out of fish.

—Adam Hinterthuer

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