



NEWSCLIP

Client: WWF

Date: 9-Mar-07

P.C4

Publication: South China Morning Post 南華早報

Circulation: 104,552

# Fishing curb may net HK\$2.6b: study

## WWF report shows options for limiting or halting trawling in favour of ecotourism

**Olga Wong**

The city would enjoy economic benefits of HK\$2.6 billion over 25 years if the government changes the way it manages fisheries, a study shows.

The study by the Fisheries Centre of the University of British Columbia (UBC) shows that banning fishing in marine parks and fisheries protection areas in Port Shelter, Tolo Harbour and Long Harbour would produce economic benefits of more than HK\$1 billion from ecotourism and sustainable fishing over the next 25 years.

If trawling were banned altogether in Hong Kong waters, the net economic benefit would be HK\$2.6 billion over 25 years.

The study was commissioned by conservation body WWF's Hong Kong branch.

It evaluates the costs and benefits of different fisheries management options, and finds the government's own proposals would generate economic benefits of HK\$260 million over 25 years. The government is proposing a two-month annual moratorium on fishing, licensing boats and a ban on trawling in fisheries protection areas.

UBC postdoctoral fellow William Cheung Wai-lung, who co-authored the study, said the net benefits exclude the costs of measures to limit fishing, such as monitoring no-fishing zones, buying trawlers back from owners, and compensation and retraining for fishermen.

Ussif Rashid Sumaila, director of UBC's fisheries economic research unit and a co-author of the report, said: "I am surprised to see Hong Kong does not even have a licensing system."

A survey carried out by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department in the 1990s showed 12

of 17 commercial fish species in Hong Kong waters were being over-exploited. Dr Sumaila said fishermen now needed seven times as long as they did in the 1950s to catch the same amount of fish.

Dr Sumaila said a trawling ban would hit some fishermen in the first five years, but better management of fisheries would make local fish stocks more sustainable in the long run.

However, there would be a long-term impact on shrimp fishermen, since their fishing grounds would shrink and there would be more fish competing with them for shrimp.

 **TALKBACK**

**What more should be done to rebuild fisheries?**

Send your comments to [talkback@scmp.com](mailto:talkback@scmp.com)

Please include name, address and phone number

Thirty fishermen's representatives were interviewed for the study. Three-quarters told researchers they would be willing to take part in a buy-back scheme for vessels providing the compensation was adequate.

"More than half were willing to shift jobs from fishing. That is good news," Dr Sumaila said.

WWF (Hong Kong) chairman

Markus Shaw said if nothing was done, this century would be the last in which people would eat wild seafood.

"Hong Kong has a budget surplus, we can afford to resolve the problem now," he said.

An agriculture department spokesman would not comment on the UBC report.

He said the department had set up a committee on sustainable fisheries three months ago to formulate long-term strategy for the sector. The committee, comprising representatives from the department and experts in economics and marine sciences, would submit recommendations by the end of next year.