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Under reporting of fish catches in Pacific

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Update: 12:55PM A preliminary result from a study by Canadian scientists has shown that islands of the Pacific are under-reporting their catches of fish annually.

The reports states that between 1950 to 2004, total catch figures in 15 of the 20 Pacific Island countries were at least two times higher than those reported to the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO).

Dr Dirk Zeller, one of the scientists who is responsible for the study, spoke with [islandsbusiness.com](#) and journalists covering the 11th International Coral Reef Symposium underway in the US city.

We expect the figure to increase once we do a follow up study in the Pacific, he said.

Dr Zeller is a marine scientist with the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and the recent study was done with colleagues Dr Daniel Pauly and Jennifer Jacquet.

Ms Jacquet not only looked at annual catch figures in Fiji and Solomon Islands but she also toured East Africa with the countries of Mozambique and Tanzania.

Dr Zeller did add that Fiji, out of all the countries in the Pacific, was an exception as it includes coral reef fishery catches in the total catch figure it submits to FAO.

He said the island nation made the change as a result of at least two studies done in the early 1990s and again in 2000.

According to Dr Zeller, the problem is the non-inclusion of catches from subsistence fishery, which is the source of livelihood for many of the people in the Pacific.

He said because such fishing is for domestic use, many government planners exclude subsistence or coral reef fishery from the total catch data they send the United Nations FAO each year.

This, he said, is compounded by the current practice of having Foreign Affairs ministries or Customs dispatch the figures to the UN agency, and not the Fisheries ministry.

Governments, the scientists say, must also be aware of the implications of subsistence fishery to food security.

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