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Fewer big fish, more small fry in ocean:study

THE CANADIAN PRESS 

Published: February 19, 2011 8:46 p.m.

Last modified: February 19, 2011 8:52 p.m.

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VANCOUVER - Scientists say predatory fish such as cod and tuna have declined by two-thirds in the last century while small forage fish including sardine and anchovy have more than doubled during that period.

A team of University of B.C. researchers say they used more than 200 marine ecosystem models from around the world and data from 1880 to 2007 to show that humans are "fishing down the food web."

Prof. Villy Christensen of UBC's Fisheries Centre says overfishing has removed large, predatory species from the oceans and left small fish to thrive.

He says forage fish are turned into fishmeal and fish oil and used as feeds for the aquaculture industry, which is becoming increasingly reliant on the feed source.

He says that if the current fishing trend continues the world's oceans may one day become merely a farm for the aquaculture industry.

The findings have been presented at the American Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting in Washington, DC.

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