



WWF *for a living planet*[®]

WWF EUROPEAN POLICY OFFICE
168 Avenue de Tervuren - Box 20
1150 Brussels
Belgium

Media Statement

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WILD WEST FISHING IN DISTANT WATERS:

Reform needed to prevent EU fleet from overfishing the world's oceans

Brussels, Belgium - A new WWF commissioned study published today strongly suggests that fisheries access agreements with developing countries and fuel subsidies have led to a 'slash and burn' attitude by European Union (EU) vessels fishing overseas.

The report entitled 'Spatial expansion of EU and non-EU fishing fleets into the global ocean 1950 to the present' [1] shows that European fleets have been more mobile than most global fleets and better able to be the first to exploit new fishing grounds since 1980. The report identifies the negotiation of access agreements with developing countries, the practice of re-flagging (whereby EU vessels evade EU rules by adopting a non-EU country's flag), and fuel subsidies as the most likely enabling factors for this trend.

As part of its campaign to see ambitious reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), WWF is calling on the EU and Member States to ensure that this fishing zeal is matched by the accountability to ensure its fleets fish sustainably, and to champion sustainable fisheries management on the international stage. WWF also asks that the € 1 billion in earmarked EU budget for distant water fleet operations and management are in no way used to fund destructive or unsustainable fishing practices.

"The reform of its Common Fisheries Policy is a unique opportunity for the EU to ensure all EU vessels, wherever they operate in the world, fish sustainably and to promote sustainability principles internationally. We need to save fisheries worldwide from decline and bankruptcy and reverse marine degradation. If the EU fails to take a leadership role in global fisheries management and ocean protection, it will further contribute to the global fisheries crisis and jeopardise global food security in the long run," said WWF Netherlands Head of Marine Programme Carel Drijver.

The new WWF study has for the first time transposed data about the global expansion of fishing activity, from 1950 to the present, to an animated map. It shows that European vessels are now traveling to the furthest corners of the world to exploit fish stocks. Declining domestic catches and efforts to reduce the number of vessels fishing in European waters have resulted in much of the European tuna and other pelagic fleets concentrating their fishing efforts overseas.

Even if the EU is a member of the 17 Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) tasked with managing globally important fisheries, the European Commission tends to take part with weak negotiating mandates and with little ambition to reform these RFMOs into modern fisheries management bodies. WWF urges the EU to take a leadership role in eliminating illegal fishing, regulating fishing activities and promoting sustainable fishing practices globally.

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[1] Sea Around Us project, University of British Columbia, 2011. Spatial expansion of EU and non-EU fishing fleets into the global ocean, 1950 to present. Click [here](#) for the full report.



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Further information

Anouk Delafortrie

Campaign manager

Marine & Fisheries Policy

+32 476 735 602

+32 2 761 04 25

adelafortrie@wwf.eu

All related materials including an interactive map are available at:

www.wwf.eu/cfp_external_dimension

Notes to the editor

Officially, the EU external fleet is comprised of 718 vessels which represents 25% of the EU fleet in terms of gross tonnage. 59% operate under a Spanish flag, 14% under a French, and 10% under a Portuguese flag. See:

http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/studies/study_external_fleet/external_fleet_2008_en.pdf

Around 8 % of EU catches (2004-06) are made under Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs) with coastal countries. The EU spends around € 160 million per year on fisheries agreements. Another 20 % of EU catches are taken on the high seas, mainly in regions under the care of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs). See: http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/international/index_en.htm

The EU consumes 25% of the world's fish. It currently imports 65% of the fisheries products available on its internal markets. See:

http://www.charlottetindall.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Executive-Report_CFP-external_pdf.pdf