

FAO's Review of World Marine Fishery Resources 2025: Urgent Call for Sustainable Action

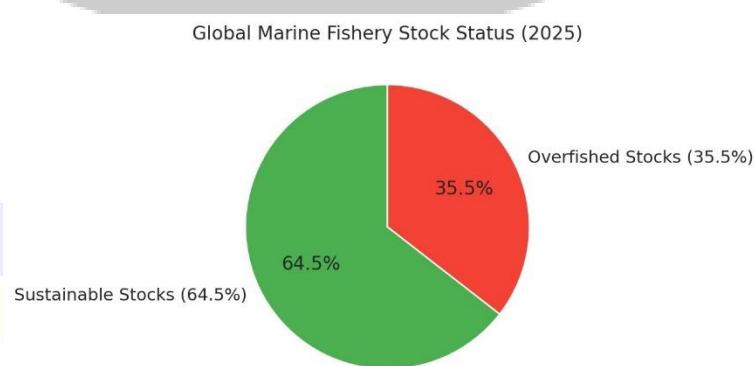
Introduction

The 2025 FAO report offers a comprehensive review of the global status of marine fishery resources. With assessments of over 2,500 fish stocks and contributions from 650 experts across 92 countries, the report highlights both progress and persistent challenges in the pursuit of sustainable fisheries. It identifies biological sustainability, regional disparities, and the impacts of IUU (Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated) fishing as key areas of concern.

Key Findings

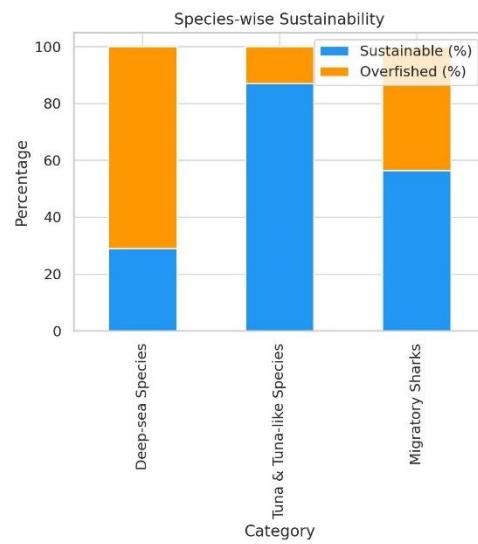
1. Global Sustainability Status

- **64.5%** of global marine fishery stocks are within biologically sustainable limits.
- **35.5%** are overfished, though this marks a slight global improvement.



2. Deep-Sea Species Crisis

- Only **29%** of deep-sea fish stocks are sustainably fished.
- Vulnerabilities include **slow growth, late maturity, and low reproductive rates**.



3. Tuna as a Success Model

- **87%** of tuna and tuna-like species assessed are sustainably fished.
- Effective oversight by **Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs)** is credited for this success.

4. Migratory Sharks Under Threat

- **43.5%** of assessed migratory shark stocks are overfished.
- High bycatch rates, especially in the **tropical Indo-Pacific**, exacerbate the problem.

5. Regional Disparities

- High sustainability in **Northeast and Southwest Pacific**.

- Alarmingly low sustainability (**35.1%**) in **Mediterranean and Black Seas** due to weak controls and unregulated artisanal fishing.

6. Data Deficiency in Key Areas

- Regions like the **Eastern Indian Ocean** show promising sustainability (**72.7%**), but poor species-specific data casts doubt on accuracy.

Analysis: Positives and Negatives

Positives

- **Scientific Rigor:** Participation from over 600 experts enhances the report's credibility.
- **Effective Models:** RFMOs and high-seas observer programs demonstrate what success looks like.
- **Policy Focus:** Provides actionable insights on vulnerable stocks like **sharks and rays**.
- **Methodological Improvements:** Expands stock assessments to include more regions and species.

Negatives

- **Deep-Sea Overfishing:** Insufficient protection for fragile species like **Orange Roughy**.
- **Shark Stock Depletion:** Major issue due to unregulated bycatch in tuna fisheries.
- **Data Gaps:** Hinder conservation planning in regions such as Southeast Asia and African coasts.
- **Weak Governance in Some Seas:** Lack of control measures in areas like the **Mediterranean**.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen RFMOs

- Enhance mandates for monitoring, onboard observers, and data transparency.

2. Promote Ecosystem-Based Management

- Incorporate **climate adaptation** and **biodiversity conservation** into national fisheries policy.

3. Improve Data Collection

- Build capacity in under-resourced regions with support from **FAO, World Bank, and regional forums**.

4. Reform Subsidies

- Enforce **WTO's agreement to eliminate harmful subsidies**, especially for IUU fishing and overfished stocks.

5. Empower Coastal Communities

- Enable **co-management**, strengthen **marine protected areas (MPAs)**, and raise **awareness of sustainable practices**.

Way Ahead

- **International Collaboration:** Strengthen global governance of high seas and transboundary stocks.
- **Real-Time Monitoring:** Leverage satellite and digital tracking systems.
- **Legal Reforms:** Nations must align their policies with **WTO rules** and global **biodiversity goals**.
- **Education and Tools for Fishers:** Enable small-scale fisheries to adopt sustainable and profitable practices.

Conclusion

The FAO's 2025 report is a timely reminder that while global marine fisheries are seeing partial gains in sustainability, critical gaps remain—especially for deep-sea species and migratory sharks. Stronger global governance, enhanced regional cooperation, data transparency, and the removal of harmful subsidies are imperative to secure the health and productivity of our oceans for future generations.

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