made by YOU for

OVERFISHING

A Fact File

As part of our MADE BY YOU series

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An overview of OVER-FISHING

You've probably heard a news reporter mention that “35.5% of the world's marine fish stocks are overfished”, or stumbled across an article packed with scientific terms like ‘Maximum Sustainable Yield’. But what does it actually mean?

Simply put, overfishing is catching fish faster than they can naturally reproduce, causing fish populations to decline over time.

Think of fish as a renewable resource. If they're harvested responsibly, populations can replenish themselves through reproduction, allowing us to continue fishing sustainably for generations. Unfortunately, when we catch fish faster than they can replace themselves, then that balance is broken. Fish populations begin to shrink, ecosystems become disrupted, and some species may eventually collapse altogether.

In other words, overfishing turns what should be a renewable resource into one that can no longer sustainable.

WHY is it a problem?

BIODIVERSITY loss

Fish are a lot more important than many people realise. Although they may just seem like just slimy creatures, they actually provide essential nutrients such as protein, omega-3 fatty acids, and vitamin D. Over 3.1 billion people rely on aquatic foods for at least 20% of their animal protein intake, meaning declining fish populations caused by overfishing could pose a serious threat to global food security.

Furthermore, many developing countries, such as the Philippines, rely on the fishing industry for food, income, and exports. Overfishing reduces fish stocks, damaging this important economic sector and potentially causing job losses and slowing economic development.

DISRUPTING ecosystems

However, the impacts of overfishing extend beyond humans. Fish play a vital role in maintaining the balance of marine ecosystems by supporting food chains. For example, plankton are consumed by smaller fish, which are then eaten by larger predator species. A stable ecosystem requires balance between these populations, allowing enough plankton to support fish populations and enough fish to support both predators and human consumption.

However, overfishing can disrupt this balance by removing key species from food chains. This can create trophic cascades where changes in one population affect many others. For example, changes in fish populations can alter plankton levels, potentially causing harmful algal blooms that reduce oxygen levels in the ocean and threaten marine life.

More than meets **THE EYE...**

There are so many different types of overfishing that you might have known a variation without even realising! Here are some examples:

BYCATCH

This is essentially when an unintended species is caught. For example capturing sharks when looking for tuna. The unintended species is often injured after being caught through fishing hooks and nets, and are often returned back to the sea with those injuries, causing the deaths of millions of marine animals

BOTTOM TRAWLING

Bottom Trawling - Large fishing industries often use large nets to 'swoop' the fish. Not only does this lead to by-catching, but the sea floor bed is often destroyed, with plants being uprooted, and corals destroyed, causing a reduction in biodiversity.

IUU FISHING

This is Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, in which fishing breaks the laws, for example exceeding quotas and reporting catches. IUU fishing makes it extremely difficult to conserve fish species, as techniques that may be successful are often not successful due to IUU.

Now, it's **OVER TO YOU**

There is a lot you can do to help reduce overfishing. These include:

CHOOSING SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD : Look for seafood certified by organisations such as the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) or the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC). These labels mean the seafood comes from fisheries or farms that meet sustainability standards.

REDUCE FOOD WASTE : Only buy the amount of fish you need. Around the world, a significant amount of seafood is wasted after it is caught or purchased. Reducing waste means fewer fish need to be harvested unnecessarily.

DIVERSIFY THE SEAFOOD YOU EAT : Many people repeatedly buy the same popular species (such as tuna or cod). Trying more abundant, sustainably managed species can reduce pressure on heavily fished populations and you may prefer the taste over tuna or cod!

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