

# STIMSON

## Casting A Wider Net: Fact Sheet

- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UNFAO) estimates that nearly 90 percent are fully exploited or overexploited and depleted, while demand for seafood continues to increase.
  - IUU fishing hinders a government's ability to effectively manage fish stocks, which contributes to depleted fisheries, and therefore lost livelihoods, depressed local economies, and food insecurity.
- The profits from illegal and unreported fishing are valued at an estimated \$15.5 to \$36.4 billion a year.<sup>i</sup>
- 17 percent of the world's population relies on fish as their main source of animal protein.<sup>ii</sup>
- In small island countries, as well as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ghana, Indonesia, Sierra Leone, and Sri Lanka, fish comprises 50 percent or more of total animal protein intake per person.<sup>iii</sup>
- In the developing world, the UNFAO estimates that small-scale fisheries contribute roughly 50 percent of the global catch, and employs about 90 percent of the world's capture fishers.<sup>iv</sup>
- In the United States over 80 percent of the seafood consumed is imported (this includes domestic catch that is exported for processing and returned to the United States as a processed import.) Source NOAA Fish Watch<sup>v</sup>
- Government subsidies often come in the form of fuel or ship construction subsidies, as well as tax breaks.<sup>vi</sup> In 2016, experts estimated global fisheries subsidies at about USD \$35 billion.<sup>vii</sup>
- The perpetrators of IUU include:
  - foreign vessels fishing illegally in another nation's sovereign waters;
  - criminal networks that participate in a variety of illicit activities, including trafficking in drugs, arms, and humans, as well as utilizing shell companies to launder money and slaves to carry out their operations; and
  - fishers catching more than their quota allows.
- Geographies of particular concern:
  - In the South China Sea, IUU fishing has emerged as an additional, complicated threat, in an area where tensions are already high over maritime boundary disputes. For example Indonesia has blown up over 350 foreign fishing vessels deemed to be fishing illegally in their waters

- Distant Water Fishing fleets and IUU fishing is connected with an increase in piracy off West Africa where there has been an increase from 54 incidents to 95 incidents of piracy
- Central and South America – Narco traffickers are known to use fishing vessels to transport their drugs, and exploit out of work fishers to facilitate the drug trade.
- Forced labor is common aboard IUU fishing vessels, and is frequently referred to as modern slavery. Those aboard vessels often spend months, even years, at a time away from the shore. For example, the European Union has delivered a yellow-card to Thailand for its abusive labor practices, while the International Labor Organization has urged Thailand to improve its fishing operations after evidence revealed that “migrant workers endured 20-hour working days, physical abuse, and non-payment of wages.”<sup>viii, ix</sup>
- Ninety percent of the seafood sold in the United States is imported.
- Arms traffickers have also been known to use fishing vessels to smuggle their product. For example, in 2016 an Australian naval ship interdicted a dhow off the coast of Yemen smuggling a whole host of weapons.<sup>x, xi</sup>
- Since December 2017, 50 nations plus the EU have ratified the Port State Measures Agreement. Four of the world’s top 10 exporters of fish products, (including China, Vietnam, India, and Canada) have yet to ratify the PSMA. The PSMA requires catch documentation and helps enforce against IUU fish entering the market.

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<sup>i</sup> Global Financial Integrity, “Transnational Crime and the Developing World,” Channing May, (Global Financial Integrity, 2017), 115, accessed December 8, 2017: [http://www.gfintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Transnational\\_Crime-final.pdf](http://www.gfintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Transnational_Crime-final.pdf).

<sup>ii</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UNFAO), “The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2016: Contributing to food security and nutrition for all,” (Rome: United Nations, 2016), 4, accessed December 8, 2017: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5555e.pdf>.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> “Small-Scale Fisheries,” UNFAO, accessed December 8, 2017, <http://www.fao.org/3/a-au832e.pdf>.

<sup>v</sup> “FishWatch,” The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), accessed February 5, 2018. <https://www.fishwatch.gov/sustainable-seafood/faqs>

<sup>vi</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UNFAO), “Report of the Expert Consultation on Identifying, Assessing and Reporting on Subsidies in the Fishing Industry,” (Rome: United Nations, 2003), accessed January 9, 2018, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4446e/y4446e0l.htm#TopOfPage>.

<sup>vii</sup> U. Rashid Sumaila et al., “Global fisheries subsidies: An updated estimate,” *Marine Policy* 69, (January 29, 2016): 189, accessed December 8, 2017, <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2015.12.026>.

<sup>viii</sup> “Thailand: Forced Labor, Trafficking Persist in Fishing Fleets,” Human Rights Watch, January 23, 2018, accessed February 5, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/23/thailand-forced-labor-trafficking-persist-fishing-fleets>.

<sup>ix</sup> Felicity Lawrence and Kate Hodal, “Thailand accused of failing to stamp out murder and slavery in fishing industry,” *The Guardian*, March 30, 2017, accessed February 5, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/mar/30/thailand-failing-to-stamp-out-murder-slavery-fishing-industry-starvation-forced-labour-trafficking>.

<sup>x</sup> Dhows are used throughout the Arabian Sea to transport goods, participate in fishing, and much more. Though it is unclear if this dhow was specifically used for fishing, reports have documented fishing dhows being used to hide illicit commodities, such as drugs, in the past.

<sup>xi</sup> C. J. Chivers and Eric Schmitt, “Arms Seized Off Coast of Yemen Appear to Have Been Made in Iran,” *New York Times*, January 10, 2017, accessed December 8, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/10/world/middleeast/yemen-iran-weapons-houthis.html>.