



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies *in a nutshell*

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FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE SECTOR

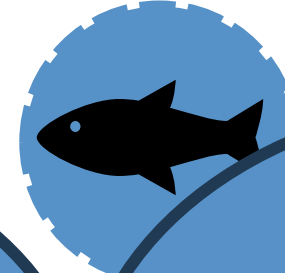
Key Statistics on Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector in 2022



223.2 MN
tonnes in 2022,
fisheries and
aquaculture
production
reached an all-
time high.



\$472 BN
Record value of trade
in fisheries and
aquaculture shows
its global economic
impact.



20.7 Kg
average annual
availability of aquatic
animal foods per
capita indicates its
global dietary
importance



62 MN persons
employed globally in
primary production alone

Aquatic products continue to be one of the most traded food commodities, involving over 230 countries and territories

FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE SECTOR

There are various significant achievements in terms of production, employment, per capita consumption, etc.

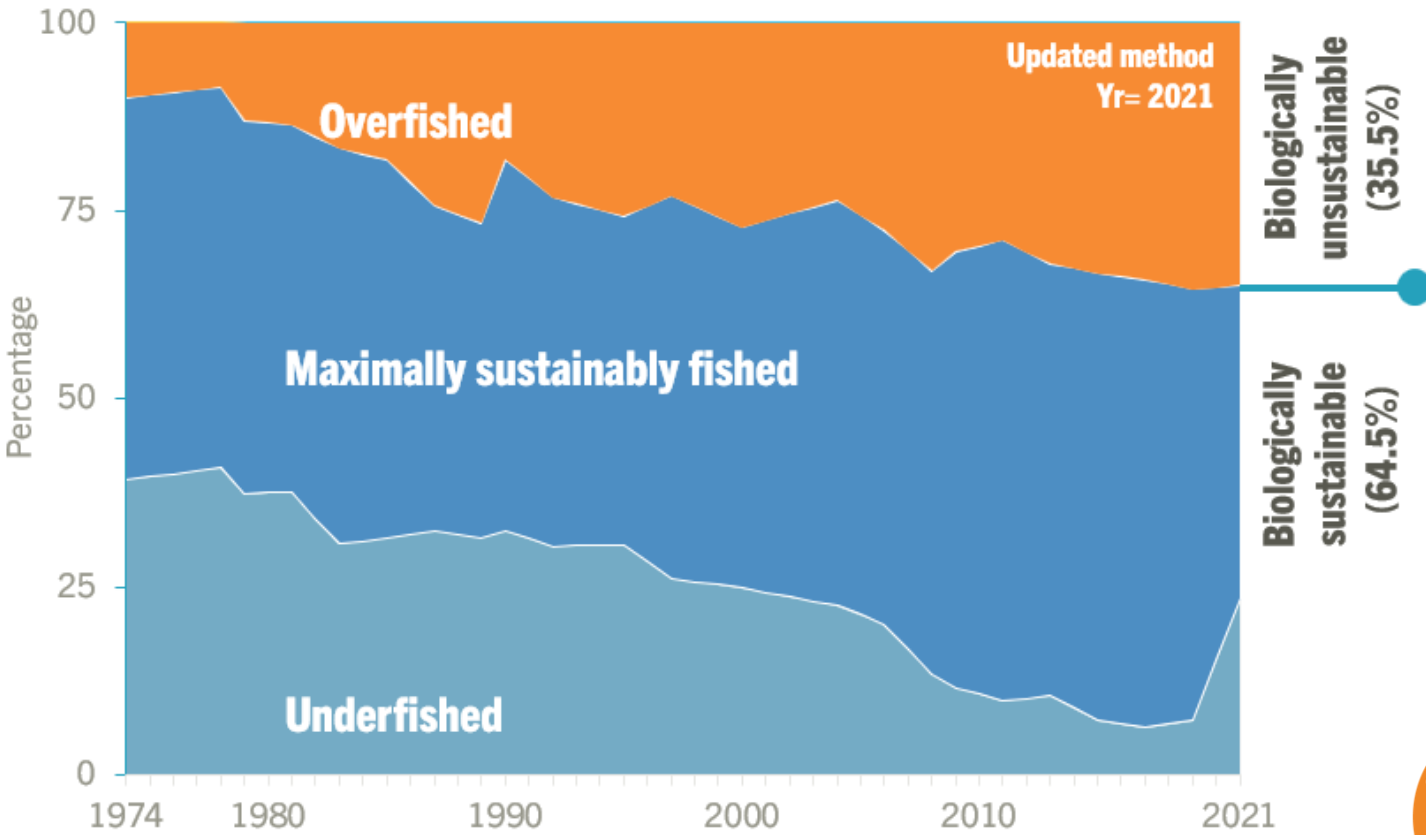
However, the sector faces major challenges.....

- ✓ climate change and disasters,
- ✓ water scarcity,
- ✓ pollution,
- ✓ biodiversity loss

We need to accelerate efforts.....

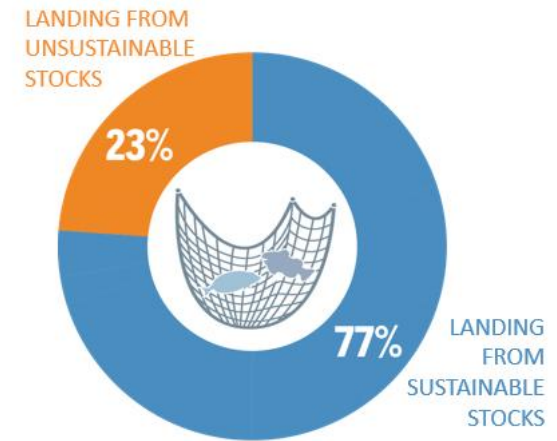
- ✓ to ensure fishery stocks are placed under **effective management**,
- ✓ to reverse **unsustainable practices**,
- ✓ combat **illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing**, and
- ✓ reduce **overfishing**.

GLOBAL TRENDS IN THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S MARINE FISH STOCKS (1974-2021)

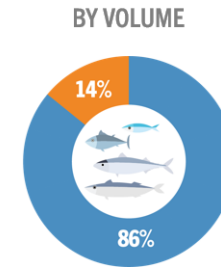
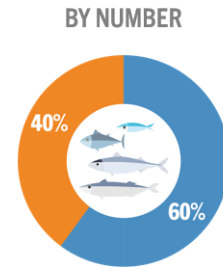


Source: FAO

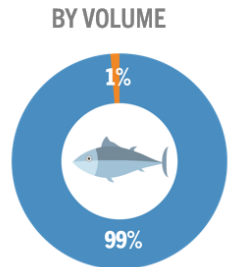
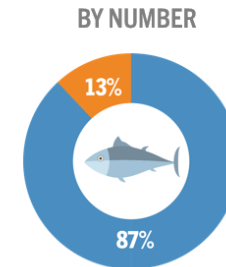
BY VOLUME



TOP-10 SPECIES

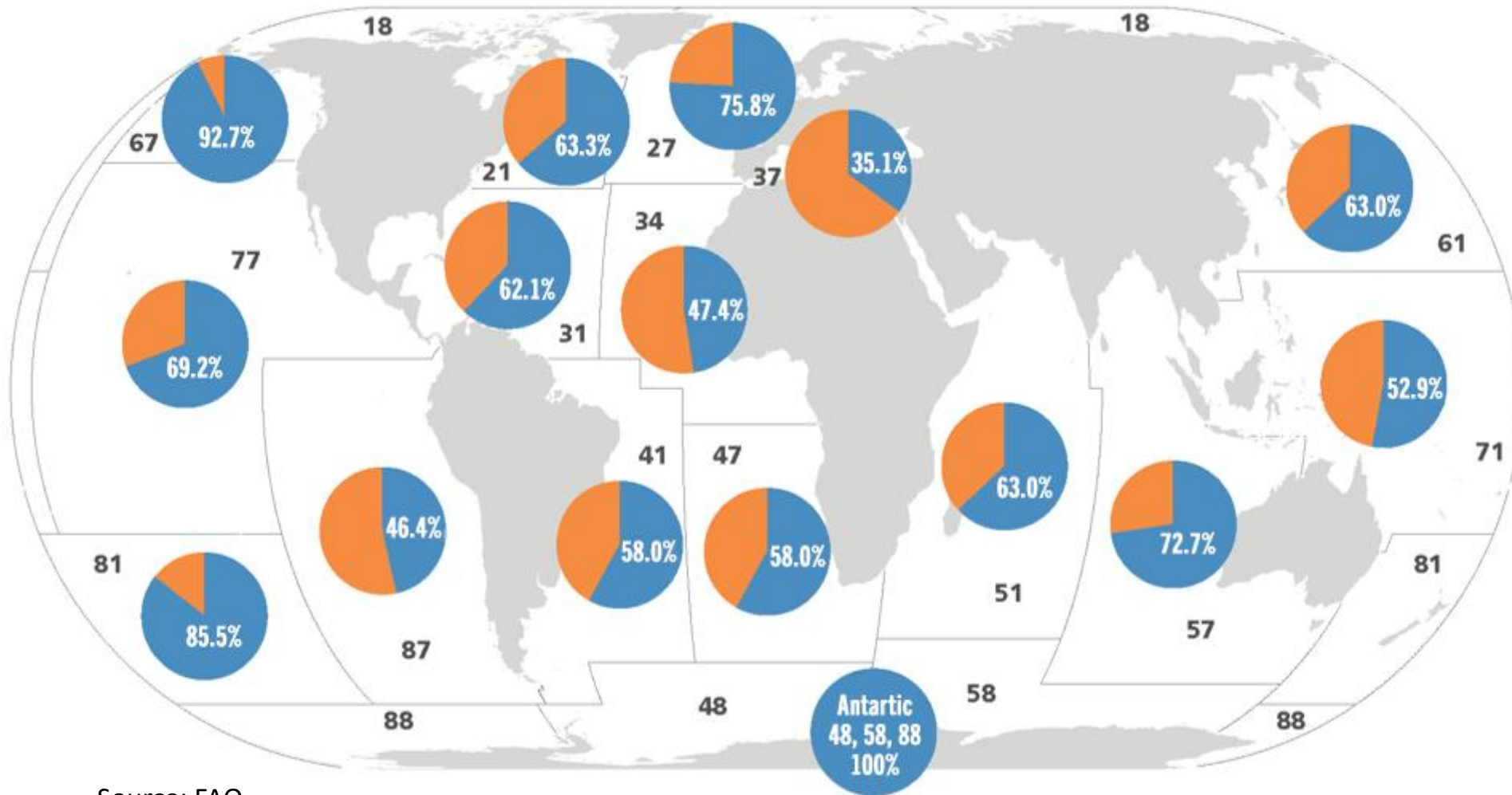


TOP COMERCIAL TUNAS



Stock status: ■ Biologically sustainable ■ Biologically unsustainable

Stock Status across Regions



Stock status:

- Biologically sustainable
- Biologically unsustainable

Source: FAO



The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2024 (SOFIA)



Fisheries Governance and International Framework

Global Framework

- UNCLOS
- UN Fish Stocks Agreement
- CITES
- **WTO Agreement in Fisheries Subsidies**
(entered into force on **15 September 2025**)
- BBNJ (entered into force on **17 January 2026**)

Basic FAO Instruments

- Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries
- *Compliance Agreement*
- *PSMA*
- IPOA-IUU
- IPOA-Capacity
- Voluntary Guidelines for Small Scale Fisheries
- Voluntary Guidelines for Flag State Performance
- Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes
- Voluntary Guidelines on Marking of fishing Gear
- Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment
- Global Record of Fishing Vessels

WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies- *General Context*

- ✓ Adopted at the 12th Ministerial Conference on 17 June 2022 and entered into force on 15 September 2025



120 WTO members
formally accepted the
Agreement

Source: WTO

A comprehensive list of WTO Members that have accepted the Agreement can be found [here](#).

WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies- *General Context*

The Agreement represents a historic achievement because:

- ✓ It delivers on the mandate of **SDG Target 14.6**;
- ✓ It is the first SDG target to be addressed through a multilateral agreement;
- ✓ It is the first WTO agreement to focus on the environment; and
- ✓ It is binding and enforceable through the WTO's dispute settlement system.

SDG Target 14.6:

By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation`

Why fisheries at the WTO?

Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (ASCM) and fisheries subsidies



ASCM disciplines **trade-distortive effects** of subsidies

- › **Prohibition** of export subsidies and import substitution subsidies (presumed trade distortive)
- › **Adverse trade effects** disciplines on other specific subsidies (trade distortion proved based on evidence)



Subsidies' negative **effects on sustainability of natural resources**

- › **Not addressed** (by ASCM or other WTO rules)

WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies- *Agreement in a nutshell*

Scope



marine wild capture fishing and fishing related activities at sea



~~aquaculture and inland fisheries~~

Main disciplines

✓ The Agreement establishes **new rules** related to fisheries subsidies and **prohibits**:

- subsidies contributing to **illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing**
- subsidies regarding **overfished stocks**
- subsidies provided to fishing in the **unregulated areas of high seas** (*outside the jurisdiction of a coastal state and outside the competence of a Regional Fisheries Management Organization/Arrangement (RFMO/A)*)

WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies- *Agreement in a nutshell*

Other disciplines

special care and due restraint when granting subsidies:

- ✓ to the vessels **not flying that Member`s flag**
- ✓ to fishing when **the status of the stocks is unknown.**

Special and differential treatment

- ✓ for the **developing and least developed** country members
- ✓ no dispute settlement for prohibited subsidies to IUU fishing and overfished stocks for 2 years (**peace clause**)
- ✓ **due restraint** when raising issues concerning the least developed country members
- ✓ **longer notification timeline** for developing members including the least developed country members with a share of global fish catch less than 0.8 percent (every 4 years instead of 2 years)

WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies- *Agreement in a nutshell*

Cross-Cutting Elements

Institutional Arrangements

- ✓ establishment of a **Committee on Fisheries Subsidies**
- ✓ possible **evolution of the Agreement through a review** (*five years after entry into force, and every three years thereafter*)

Notifications and Transparency

- ✓ **type or kind of fishing activity** for which the subsidy is provided
- ✓ to the extent possible: the **status of fish stocks** in question, **catch data**, **fisheries management measures**, **fleet capacity**, **name and identification number of fishing vessels**
- ✓ List of **vessels engaged in IUU fishing**
- ✓ **Membership to any RFMO/As**
- ✓ Description of **fisheries regimes**

Technical Assistance

- ✓ **Targeted technical assistance and capacity building** for the developing country members including the least developed country (**WTO voluntary funding mechanism-WTO Fish Fund**)

- ✓ The Agreement has also a provision setting up a **maximum period of four years to complete a comprehensive agreement.**

What is the WTO Fish Fund?



- ✓ The Fish Fund was established in 2022.
- ✓ It will provide grants to support technical assistance and capacity-building activities for implementing the Agreement.
- ✓ Who are eligible? **Developing and least developed country members who have accepted the Agreement**
- ✓ Who can apply? **National governments** (ministries, agencies or public entities)
- ✓ What should be the content?
 - ✓ **Inland and aquaculture** are excluded from the scope of the Agreement
 - ✓ The proposals should be related to **the implementation of the Agreement**

WTO Fish Fund- Call for Proposals

- ✓ **Two categories of grants** will be offered:

Category 1:

- up to USD 50'000
- project preparation grants:
 - *Studies,*
 - *Needs assessments*
 - *Preparation of larger projects...*

Category 2:

- up to USD 300'000
- grants for more *complex, programmatic interventions related to the implementation:*
 - *Analytical support*
 - *Data*
 - *Fisheries management.....*

- ✓ Further information on the WTO Fish Fund is accessible [here](#).

FAO and the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies

Compliance with the Agreement requires effective fisheries management, FAO, the only international organization specialized in fisheries management.

The Agreement emphasizes **collaboration with FAO** in several key areas, ensuring that FAO's expertise is fully utilized to achieve the Agreement's objectives.

Explicit references of FAO's role in implementing the Agreement:

Article 3	Article 7	Article 8	Article 9
Definition of IUU fishing based on International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate IUU Fishing (<i>IOA-IUU,2001</i>)	Calls for coordination with FAO on technical assistance and capacity building .	References using FAO data for calculating global marine capture production per country	Requires the WTO Committee on Fisheries Subsidies to maintain close contact with the FAO

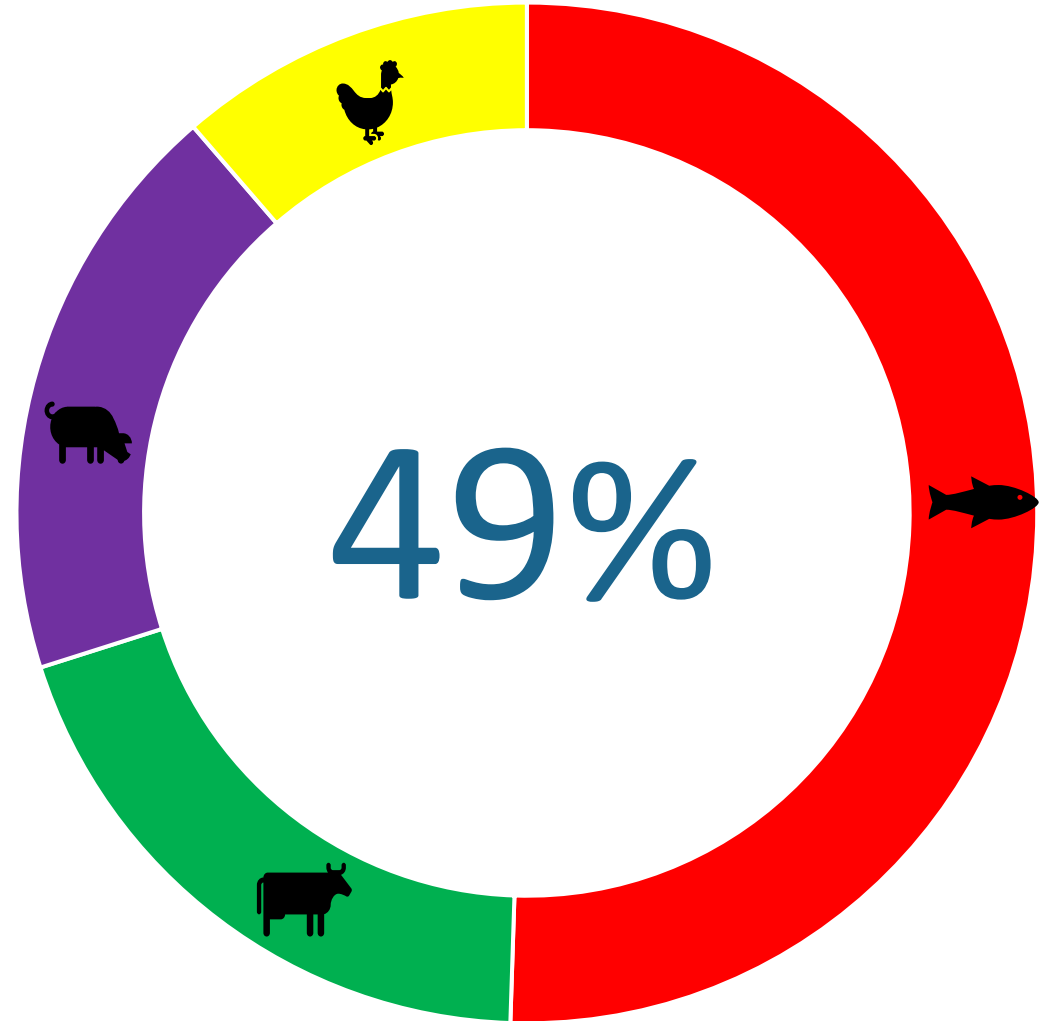
The Agreement also reinforces **the role of RFMO/As** as mechanisms in promoting cooperation and joint efforts in conserving and managing fisheries.

Summary and Key Messages

- ✓ While the recent reports (SOFIA 2024, The Review of the state of world marine fishery resources – 2025, and SoMFI) confirm sustainability challenges, they also acknowledge **the gains where effective fisheries management** is in place.
- ✓ The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, joining **other existing instruments with a new angle**, will further promote the responsible and sustainable management of aquatic resources and will contribute to the existing efforts at regional and global level.
- ✓ As a core partner recognized in the Agreement, **FAO is committed to work with its Members and partners** for the effective implementation of the Agreement, through our existing instruments and tools as well as in the context of the WTO Fish Fund.

Comparing Trade of Aquatic Products (Global Exports in USD) with other Animals

Trade in Aquatic Products comprises 49% of the total traded animals



Thank you

