



Fisheries Subsidies harm poorer countries: New Study

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New Oceana-supported research, published in *Marine Policy*, finds harmful fisheries subsidies from wealthy nations like China, Spain, and the United States are disproportionately impacting poorer nations like Guinea-Bissau, Somalia, and Namibia that depend on fish for food security and livelihoods.

The paper, which expands on analyses prepared for Oceana's Transparent Oceans Initiative, reveals that 20-37 per cent of all harmful fisheries subsidies support distant-water fishing in other countries' waters or on the high seas. That equates to about \$5.3 billion each year.

More than 40 per cent of the harmful subsidies that support fishing in very poor nations, as measured by the Human Development Index, originate from the wealthiest fishing nations.

“Harmful fisheries subsidies, initially designed to boost economic growth by reducing fishing costs, can actually deepen inequity and threaten marine biodiversity,” said Dr Daniel Skerritt, Oceana’s Senior Analyst, and lead author of the paper. “This subsidised overfishing is damaging poorer nations’ fisheries at a time when climate change has already placed billions of people at risk of food and economic insecurity.”

The study comes as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) restarts negotiations to curb the provision of harmful fisheries subsidies. Although a deal was struck by Members last June, Oceana says important issues were left unresolved, including prohibiting subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing.

Dr Rashid Sumaila, Co-author, Director of the University of British Columbia’s Fisheries Economics Research Unit, and Oceana Board Member said, “It is vital that WTO Members come together to take bold steps to eliminate subsidies that lead to overcapacity and overfishing, whether in their own waters or the waters of other nations. It is essential to address these longstanding power imbalances to ensure our ocean remains healthy and productive for future generations.”

The authors encourage the nations most impacted by subsidised fishing to strengthen and enforce rules of access to their waters. This could be achieved through an improved WTO Agreement, bilateral access agreements, or other country-to-country negotiations.