

Food from the Oceans

1. Ladies and gentlemen, in the decades following the end of the Second World War supplies of food from the ocean grew enormously.
2. By the late 1980s capture fish landings had stagnated and the majority of fish stocks were recognised as over-fished.
3. At that time aquaculture provided less than 10% of fish for human consumption: today, we consume more farmed than wild fish.
4. Fisheries and aquaculture is a trillion dollar sector, employing some 57 million men and women and supporting the livelihoods of around 800 million people.
5. 170 million tonnes of fish and other aquatic foods were produced in 2015.
6. Over the past 50 years, global per capita consumption of fish has more than doubled, from 9 to 20 kg per year, despite a doubling in world population at the same time.
7. Foods from our oceans are highly diverse and include seaweeds, mussels, clams and oysters, sea urchins and sea cucumbers, shrimp and lobsters, fish, and frogs and reptiles.
8. Fish is a nutrient dense food, rich in high quality proteins, long chain omega-3 fats and micronutrients.
 - a. The long chain omega-3 fatty acids are important for optimal cognitive development in children and for the protection against coronary heart diseases.
 - b. Micronutrients such as iron, zinc, iodine, calcium, selenium and vitamin A can be obtained from fish, especially when eaten whole, as with sardines and anchovies.
9. Of the 30 countries most dependent on fish as a protein source, all but four are in the developing world.
10. In many of the least developed countries, fish accounts for more than half of the total animal protein intake.

11. Food security and nutrition has risen to the top of the global political agenda as encapsulated in Goal 2 of the global Sustainable Development Goals, to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture“.
12. At the 2nd International Conference on Nutrition, held at FAO in Rome in 2014, fish was recognized as having “... *a special role in nutrition and health*“.
13. But, ladies and gentlemen, how best to assure future supplies of food from the ocean?
14. Growth in supplies of aquatic foods has been reducing due to slow-downs in the growth of aquaculture.
15. This is because of increasing competition for land, water and other ecosystem services, saturation of markets, and concerns about the impacts of aquaculture.
16. However, in the coming decades it is from aquaculture that much of the future increases in fish supplies needed to meet growing demand must come.
17. **FAO’s Blue Growth Initiative** sets out to help countries maximise the potential of fisheries and aquaculture to meet their environmental, social and economic goals.
18. At the core of the **Blue Growth Initiative** is healthy oceans, without which we cannot derive sustainable benefits.
19. There are many concerns about our oceans, including the effects of climate change and pollution.
20. In securing future food supplies from our oceans fisheries and aquaculture must change.
21. We must reduce fishing pressure on the 30% of stocks that are overfished and, as discussed at XXXXXXXXXX in Norway last week, eliminate IUU.
22. Aquaculture must produce more with less and
 - a. improve biosecurity to stop the spread of fish diseases
 - b. develop and implement environmentally friendly disease treatments

- c. prevent fish escaping from farms,
- d. reduce the release of untreated aquaculture wastes

23. Aquaculture must also focus on maximising the nutrient value of farmed aquatic products, while at the same time reducing dependence on scarce feed ingredients such as fishmeal and fish oil.
24. And we can make more of what we take from the oceans.
25. Much fish is wasted along the value chain.
26. Nutrients and micronutrients discarded in processing wastes can be recovered and used for both human and animal consumption.
27. Fish, however, remains on the margins of global discussions on food security and nutrition.
28. To this end, FAO has recently established a working group on fish, food security and nutrition that is working across the organisation and with partners outside to mainstream fish into improving food security and nutrition outcomes.
29. Ladies and gentlemen, we must continue to work together to secure future supplies of food from the ocean and to ensure that those who need it most have access.

[680 words, excluding title, key messages and numbers].

Key messages

- Food from the ocean – which, in the present context, includes freshwater - comes from capture fisheries and aquaculture. In the four decades following the end of the Second World War, supplies grew tremendously, the result of massive investments in fishing fleets and technologies that helped us more effectively find, catch and preserve fishes caught at sea.
- However, by the late 1980s it had become apparent that the huge amounts of fish being taken from our oceans was too much: fish landings had stagnated and the majority of fish stocks were found to be over-fished.
- Fish is a nutrient dense food, high in quality proteins, polyunsaturated fatty acids and micronutrients. Despite this, it is only very recently that fish has been recognised as important, especially in the diets of the poor.
- The role of food from the oceans in food security and nutrition needs to be better understood and mainstreamed into policy dialogue. To this end, FAO has begun to work across departments and with colleagues in the CGIAR and elsewhere to ensure it can contribute
- Future supplies of food from the ocean are under myriad threats, not least from climate change and pollution and we must continue to tackle
- But fishing and aquaculture must change too. We need to stop over-fishing and rebuild stocks and eliminate IUU fishing. In aquaculture, we need to develop a global system of biosecurity to stop the spread of disease, improve disease treatment methods, minimise escapes of wild fish from aquaculture farms and the release of fish farm wastes into the environment.