



REBUILDING THE WORLD'S FISHERIES

In our lifetimes we can create thriving oceans that provide more fish in the water, more food for a growing population, and more prosperous fishing communities worldwide.

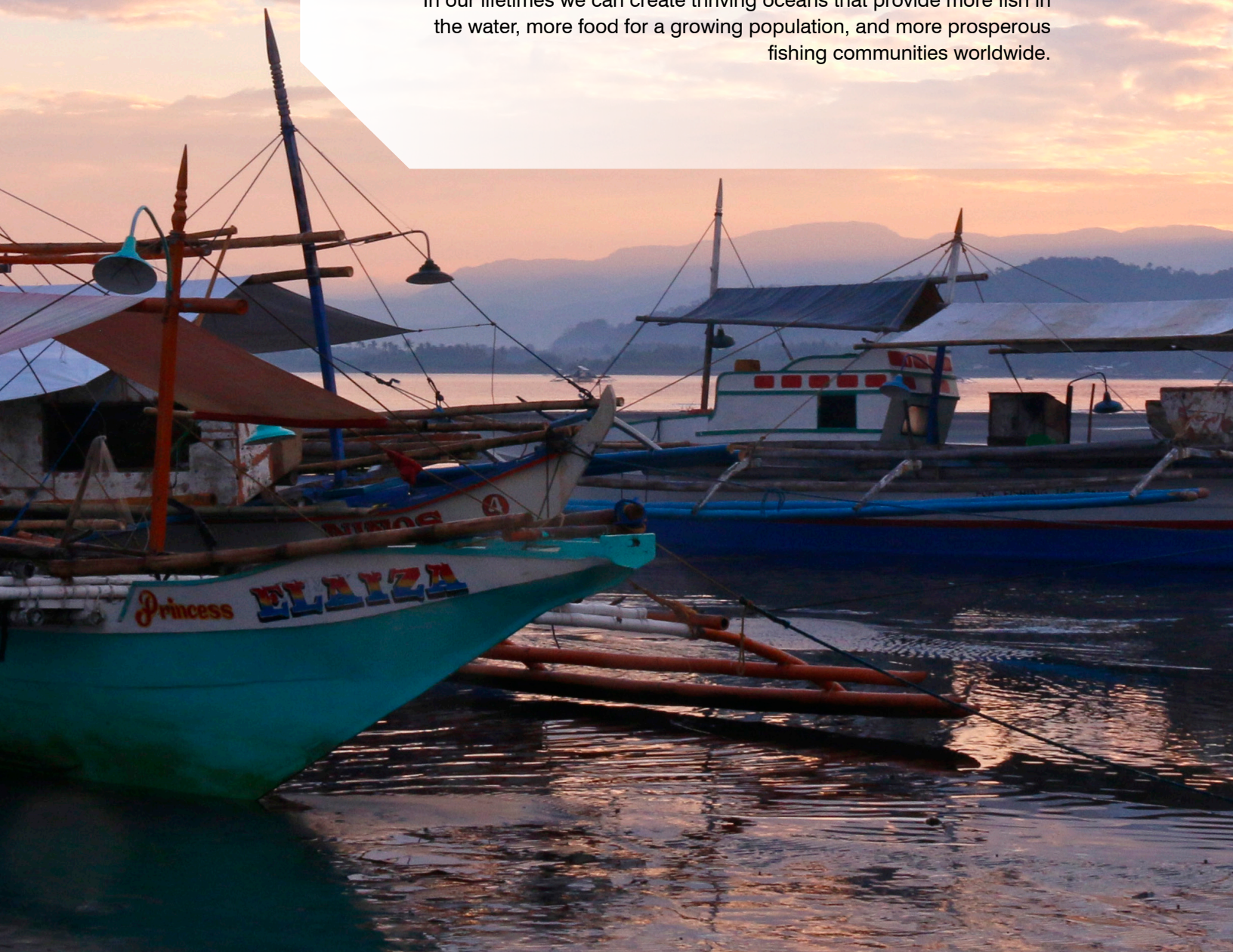




Photo Credit: Kaia Joye Moyer

FISHERIES IN TROUBLE

Globally, nearly a third of fish stocks are in trouble, and half produce less food, employment, economic value, and biodiversity than they could. Three billion people worldwide rely on seafood as a key source of protein, and nearly 260 million people work in ocean fishing and related jobs, many in developing countries.

Today, fisheries provide just a fraction of their potential food and income. Overfishing, perpetuated by poor management of our fisheries, is the top culprit.

A NEW HOPE FOR OUR OCEAN

New scientific research shows the potential of the world’s ocean fisheries to recover may be far greater than previously estimated.

Groundbreaking new research shows that if oceans were managed sustainably, within 10 years profits could annually grow 115 percent to 51 billion USD over today. However, if fishery reforms are not adopted and status quo remains, the health of the oceans will continue to decline.

Compared to this “business-as-usual” scenario, the benefits of sustainable fishing appear even more striking: globally fisheries could annually yield 17 million metric tonnes (23 percent) more wild fish, generate 90 billion USD (315 percent) more profits, and boost the amount of fish left in the water for conservation by 112 percent.

The research shows that fisheries can be made healthy again relatively quickly — even while fishing continues. For example, the typical fishery could recover in just nine years. What’s more, the percentage of fisheries in the world that are considered biologically healthy would grow from around 45 percent today to 79 percent within 10 years. The vast majority (around 98 percent) of fisheries would be around biologically healthy levels by mid-century, and in a strong position to supply

food and greater prosperity for a growing world.

These powerful conclusions are the preliminary results of research by scientists and economists from the University of California Santa Barbara, Environmental Defense Fund, and the University of Washington. The team created a new “upside” bio-economic model that gives the most holistic view to date of the potential benefits to be gained from the oceans, if sustainable fishing becomes the norm. The model uses a massive database of 4,373 fisheries that represent 77 percent of the ocean’s catch—far more precise and granular than previous analyses—to estimate options, benefits and timing of recovery for individual fisheries, nations, ecosystems and the world.

Our results are preliminary, yet they suggest that there is great promise for the world’s oceans and those who rely on them: healthy oceans can provide more fish in the water, more food on the plate, and more prosperity for fishing communities around the world. Our final research will be published this summer.



Photo Credit: Rahel Marsie-Hazen

A BETTER WAY TO REBUILD FISHERIES

Our theory of change hinges on designing solutions that meet the needs of policymakers, the fishing industry, fishermen and others who will help make global ocean recovery possible.

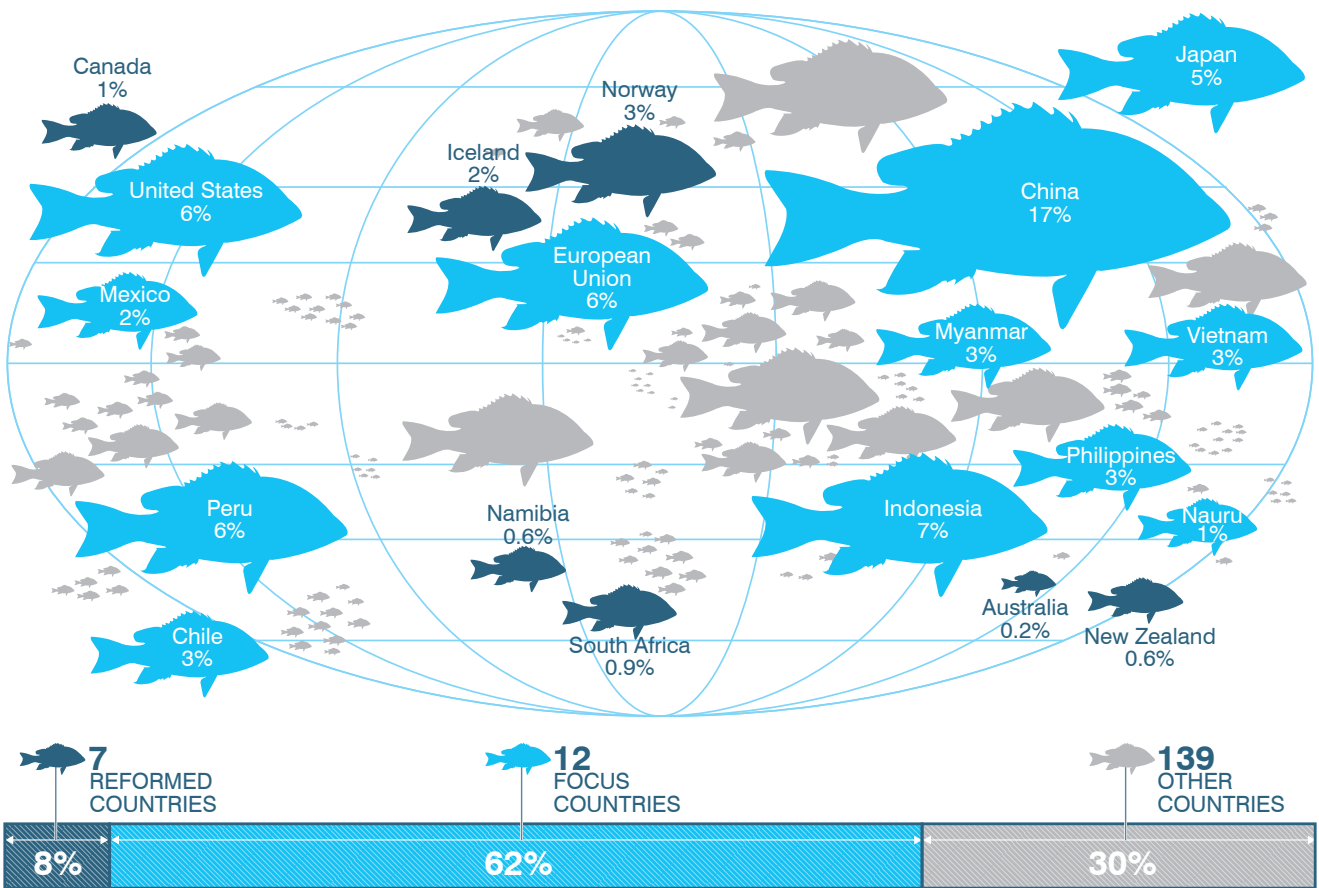
By sharing knowledge, tools and experience with one another, we can help bring about needed change.

EDF's approach to fisheries reform centers on working with governments to grant fishermen long-term, secure rights to fish under a clear set of rules. This realigns fishermen's incentives, so that conservation pays. EDF has been a leader in advancing this system of rights, responsibilities and

rewards, which is known in the United States as catch shares. Because fishermen and fishing communities benefit financially as the fishery grows, they take ownership of recovery efforts.

Today, this pragmatic fishing solution is slowing and reversing overfishing, reviving coastal communities, and bringing the oceans back to life all around the world.

WORLD CATCH BY COUNTRY PERCENT OF GLOBAL TOTAL IN 2012



*Seven countries, shown in dark blue and representing 8% of global catch, already have transformed their policies and practices to sustainable fishing. EDF will focus on 12 additional governments, shown in light blue and representing 62% of the catch, to catalyze similar reforms. (Note: Nauru refers to the Parties to the Nauru Agreement governing tuna fishing: Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.)

Already there are signs that the tide is turning. Countries including Australia, Belize, Chile, Denmark, Namibia, Norway, and the United States are reversing overfishing, reviving coastal communities and bringing the oceans back to life.

For the past two decades, EDF has been working to strengthen fisheries management in the United States. In 2015, the U.S. government announced that overfishing is at an all-time low, following adoption of secure fishing rights, or “catch shares” for most of the nation’s biggest commercial fisheries. Today, fish populations are rebounding, the number of fishing jobs has increased 23 percent and fishing revenues are up 30 percent. Even fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico, hard hit by the BP oil disaster, are doing better. Since 2007, when catch shares were

first implemented for the popular red snapper fishery, catches have more than doubled, revenues have increased by 108 percent, and today there are three times more red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico.

EDF is already working on the ground in places like the European Union, Mexico and Belize, where reforms are taking hold, as well as in Indonesia, Philippines, Cuba and others.

Our goal is to catalyze reforms in fisheries managed by 12 governments that together control 62 percent of the world’s catch. Reforms at this scale, when combined with the eight percent of fisheries already fully reformed, could tip the entire global fishing economy so that sustainable fishing takes hold worldwide.



EDF’s approach to fisheries reform centers on working with governments to grant fishermen long-term, secure rights to fisheries under a clear set of rules.



Photo Credit: Jason Houston

Today, the government is in the process of implementing the fishing rights program nationwide, after 3,000 Belizean fishermen demanded it.

BELIZE

We have witnessed remarkable success in Belize, which is becoming a global model for self-enforcement of sustainable fishing.

Along the Belize Barrier Reef, mangroves, corals, seagrass and cayes host populations of conch, lobster, and reef fish on which some 15,000 people directly depend. However, as is common in many developing fishing nations, open access and illegal fishing have been major threats to the preservation of the barrier reef, the livelihoods of local families, and food security for Belizeans.

Prior to reforms, Belizean fisheries were being sorely depleted. Some fishermen reported spiny lobster catches plunging from 200 to 20 per day and fish populations declined by a third. With fishing rights,

fishermen's incentives flipped from catching as much as possible today to stewarding the fishery for the long-term. Illegal fishing dropped 60 percent in the first two years. Fishermen, long opponents of nearby no-fishing areas, became advocates for their expansion. Fish populations began to rebound. Success spread up the coast and brought hope back to the people of Belize. Today, the government is in the process of implementing the fishing rights program nationwide, after nearly 3,000 Belizean fishermen demanded it.



Photo Credit: Alexis Rife



Photo Credit: Kara Joye Moyer



Photo Credit: Rahel Marsie-Hazen



Photo Credit: Pam Ruiter

A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Science and experience from around the world demonstrate that the oceans are resilient and can rebound when fishing is sustainable. Sustainable fishing is achievable and wild capture fisheries can be an engine of prosperity, providing lasting value and abundance for all.



Photo Credit: Rahel Marsie-Hazen

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