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TITLE: Global marine fisheries discards: A synthesis of reconstructed data

AUTHOR: ['Dirk Zeller', 'Tim Cashion', 'Maria Lourdes D. Palomares', 'Daniel Pauly']

ABSTRACT:

Abstract As part of the global marine fisheries catch reconstruction project conducted by the Sea Around Us over the last decade, estimates were derived for discards in all major fisheries in the world. The reconstruction process derives conservative but non-zero time-series estimates for every fisheries component known to exist, and relies on a wide variety of data and information sources and on conservative assumptions to ensure comprehensive and complete time-series coverage. Globally, estimated discards increased from under 5 million t/year ($t = 1,000$ kg) in the early 1950s to a peak of 18.8 million t in 1989, and gradually declined thereafter to levels of the late 1950s of less than 10 million t/year. Thus, estimated discards represented between 10% and 20% of total reconstructed catches (reported landings + unreported landings + unreported discards) per year up to the year 2000, after which estimated discards accounted for slightly less than 10% of total annual catches. Most discards were generated by industrial (i.e. large-scale) fisheries. Discarding occurred predominantly in northern Atlantic waters in the earlier decades (1950s–1980s), after which discarding off the West Coast of Africa dominated. More recently, fleets operating in Northwest Pacific and Western Central Pacific waters generated the most discards. In most areas, discards consist essentially of marketable taxa, suggesting a combination of poor fishing practices and poor management procedures is largely responsible for the waste discarding represents. This is important in an era of increasing food security and human nutritional health concerns, especially in developing countries.

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