

Sustainable Fisheries UW

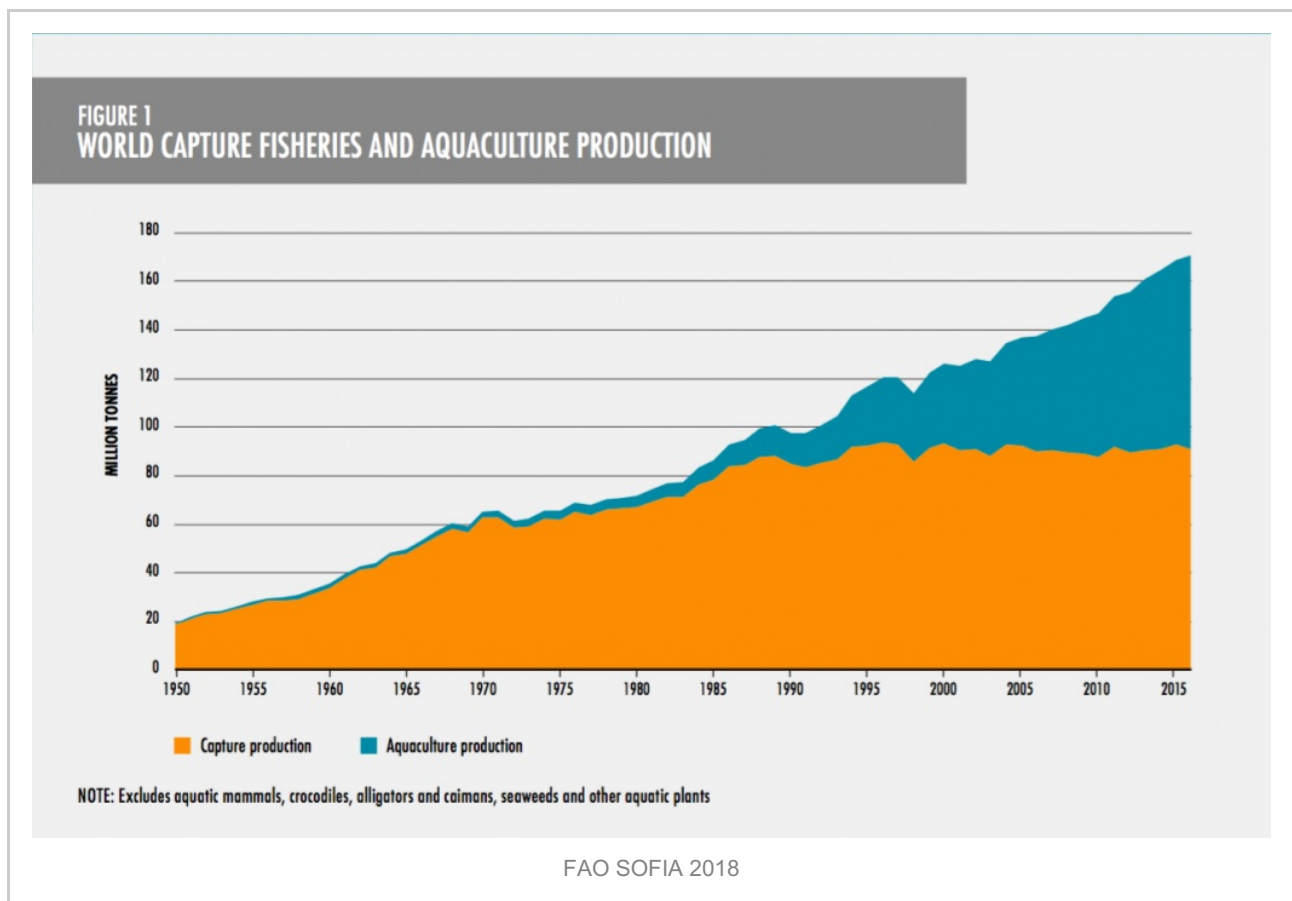
sustainablefisheries-uw.org/state-of-world-fisheries-and-aquaculture-2018/

July 10, 2018

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) released their biennial State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture report this week. FAO keeps the most complete record of fisheries landings and aquaculture production; this report summarizes it. It is probably the most important recurring report on fisheries—much of our Sustainable Seafood 101 guide draws from the report. It is also a very long report. It will take several hours to read through (time well spent!), so here is a shorter blog to give you some highlights.

How much seafood are we eating?

Capture fishery production has remained about the same. Roughly 90 million metric tons have been produced annually for the past 20 years or so. The latest data show 91 million tons of produced in 2016.



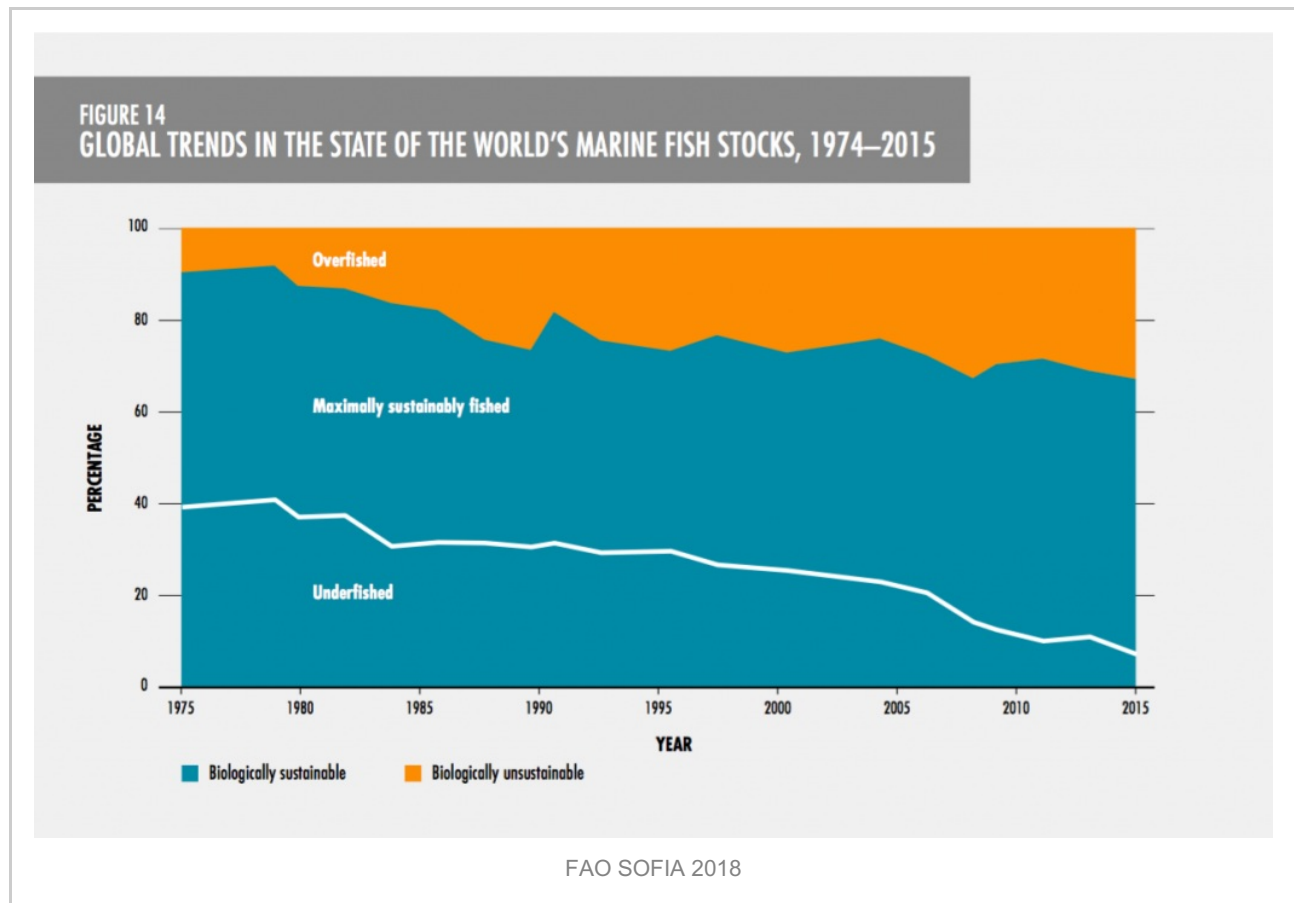
Aquaculture remains on an upward trajectory. In 2016, 80 million metric tons of farmed fish were produced: 54.1 million tons of finfish, 17.1 million tons of mollusks, 7.9 million tons of crustaceans and just under a million tons of other aquatic animals. There were also over 30 million tons of sea vegetables farmed. Soon there will be more farmed fish eaten than total

wild-caught, though counting sea vegetables, there is already much more farmed seafood than wild-caught. The pace of aquaculture growth has kept up with world population increases as well: per-capita seafood consumption continues to rise and now stands at 20.3 kg per year.

In our [Sustainable Seafood 101](#) section we go more in-depth into [fish as food around the world](#), though much of it is based on FAO's 2016 report (we'll spend the next few weeks updating it with numbers from the current report).

Sustainability words

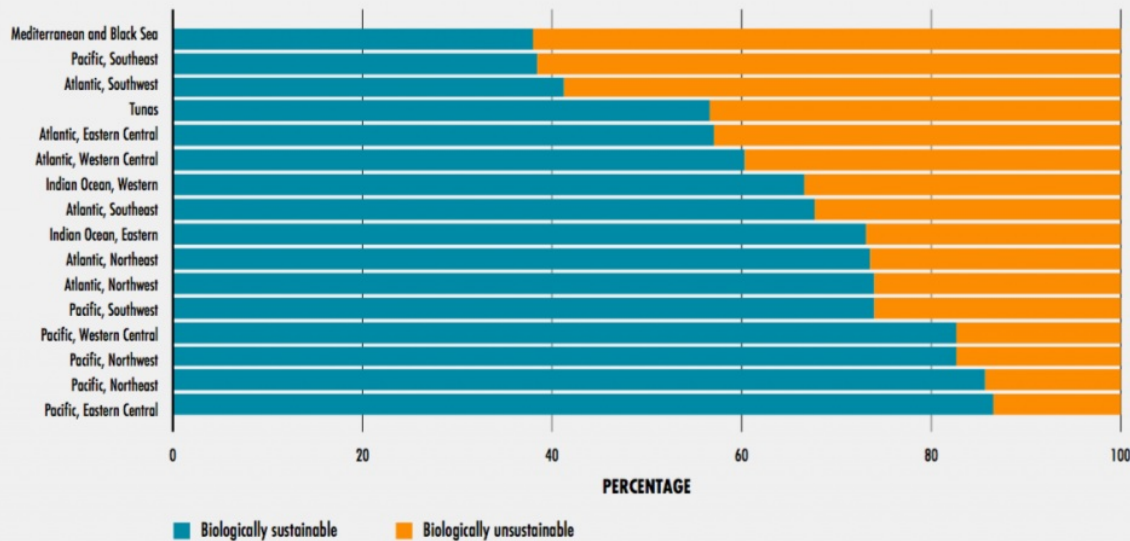
The FAO has also changed the way they describe the sustainability of fisheries. Previously, they had called fisheries that were fished to MSY, 'fully-exploited' or 'fully-fished.' This caused a lot of confusion and [misrepresentation in media](#). Now, those fisheries will be called 'maximally sustainably fished' which is a mouthful, but much clearer in its meaning. FAO also added this figure to drive home the point.



The number of overfished fisheries has slowly crept up and now sits at 33%. Here's a look at stock sustainability by region. You'll notice that areas with good fishery management have healthier stocks; e.g. many of the U.S.'s stocks are in the Northeast Pacific and Northwest Atlantic.

In [Sustainable Seafood 101](#), we explain in much greater detail [how fishery management works](#) and [why it determines stock sustainability](#) (spoiler: it's capacity).

FIGURE 15
PERCENTAGES OF STOCKS FISHED AT BIOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE AND UNSUSTAINABLE LEVELS
BY FAO STATISTICAL AREA, 2015



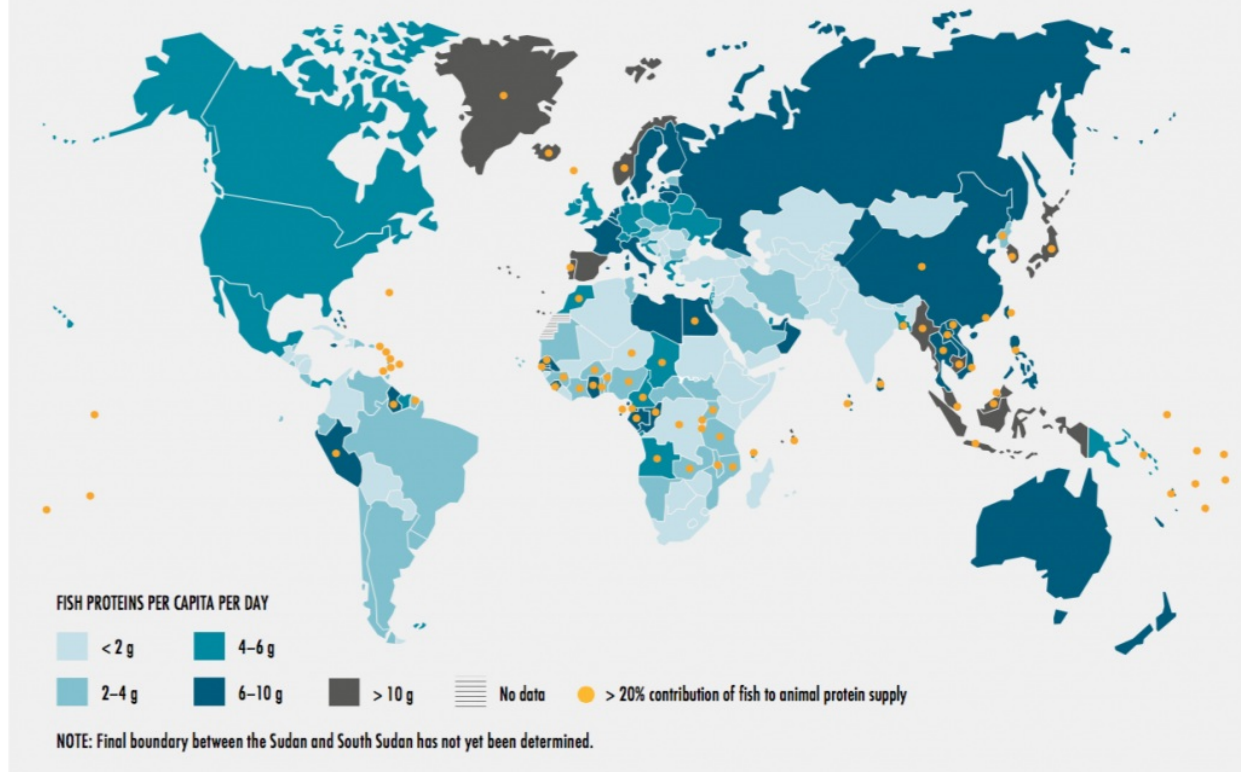
NOTE: Tuna stocks are singled out as they are largely migratory and straddling across statistical areas.

FAO SOFIA 2018

Fish is really important!

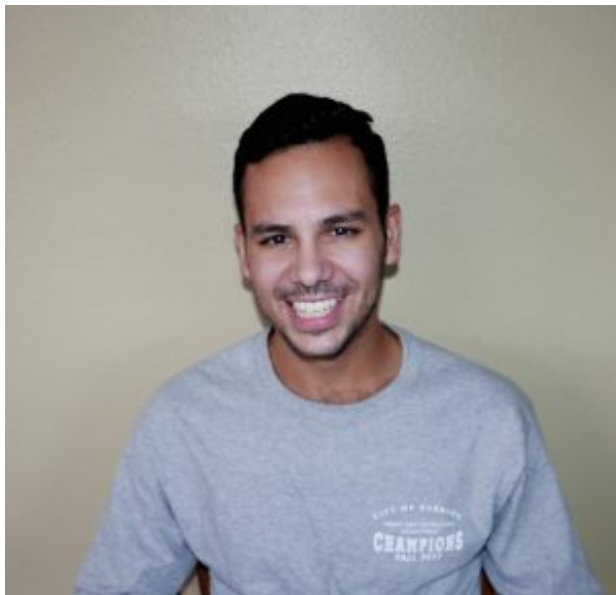
Fisheries & aquaculture are worth USD 362 billion. FAO estimates roughly 60 million people around the world are directly employed by fisheries or aquaculture with *several hundred million* more indirectly employed. Seafood also plays an outsized nutritional role in several developing countries. Take a look at how many places rely on fish for more than 20% of their daily protein:

FIGURE 29
CONTRIBUTION OF FISH TO ANIMAL PROTEIN SUPPLY, AVERAGE 2013–2015



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The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture is the best document available to understand the global scope of seafood; you can read the latest report [here](#) (in several different languages). I would also encourage you to check out [Sustainable Seafood 101](#), our layman's guide to understanding the science behind fisheries and sustainability.



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