7 reasons why we need to act now to #SaveOurOcean

The oceans have it all: from microscopic life to the largest animal that has ever lived on Earth, from the colourless to the shimmering, from the frozen to the boiling and from the sunlit to the mysterious dark of the deepest parts of the planet.

Oceans are an essential component of the Earth's ecosystem -- a source of biodiversity, food, and life. According to FAO, over 40 percent of the world's population lives within 100 kilometers of the coast. Better management of the ocean resources is thus crucial to ensuring global food security.

We are never too young to start learning about the many benefits our oceans provide. Without them, life could not exist. Although the list is almost endless, here are seven to start off with:

1. Fisheries and aquaculture currently **employs directly 56 million people**. In addition, many more are employed in follow-up activities, such as handling, processing and distribution. Altogether, fishing and fish farming support the livelihoods and families of some 660 to 880 million people, that’s 12 percent of the world’s population.

2. Oceans are an important source of food. They h**ost 80 percent of the planet’s biodiversity**, and are the largest ecosystem on Earth.  Fish provide 20 percent of animal protein to about 3 billion people. Only ten species provide about 30 percent of marine capture fisheries and ten species provide about 50 percent of aquaculture production.

3. Oceans **provide vital renewable energy**. Devices are being developed to generate electricity from waves and tides, as well as offshore wind farms.

4. Oceans **regulate our climate**. Did you know that the oceans absorb a quarter of all the carbon dioxide that humans put into the atmosphere? This makes them a ‘carbon sink’, but its ability to absorb even more carbon is limited. Over 90% of the additional heat caused by global warming is stored in the Oceans. Without this service, and the heating and cooling effects of ocean currents, world temperatures would be too unstable to support life.

5. Oceans **affect our weather**. As the oceans are heated by the sun’s rays, water from its surface evaporates and then condenses to form clouds as part of the water cycle. This is how we get our rain and therefore our drinking water. It also contributes to wind, thunderstorms and hurricanes, and helps produce the monsoon rains that millions of people in South Asia rely on.

6. Scientists have discovered that many **marine invertebrates produce antibiotic, anti-cancer and anti-inflammatory substances**. Horseshoe crabs, seaweeds and marine bacteria have also been found to have useful medical properties.

7. Oceans **influence our health and well-being**. Water is known to calm and reduce anxiety in people and being near blue spaces, such as the ocean, is thought to have positive effects on our mental health.

Unfortunately, different human activities are putting our oceans under threat. Overfishing is reducing fish populations, threatening the supply of nutritious food and changing marine food webs. Approximately 80 percent of the pollution in the oceans comes from land, and coastal zones are especially vulnerable to pollutants. Plastics are also particularly problematic with enormous floating rubbish patches forming in the oceans. Climate change and its related impacts, such as ocean acidification, are affecting the survival of some marine species. Coastal development is destroying and degrading important coastal marine ecosystems such as coral reef, seagrass meadows and mangroves.

We need clean and healthy oceans to support our own health and survival, even if we don’t live anywhere near them. Each and every one of us can make a difference, it’s time to take action! Think about which threats to the oceans concern you the most or think about which ocean plants, animal species, habitats or ecosystems you want to **conserve, protect and restore** locally and globally. Here are just a few actions you can undertake:

1. **Conserve:** campaign to prevent the pollution of a local coastal environment or reduce use of plastics so that less of it ends up in our oceans.

2. **Protect:** help protect an ecosystem or species by campaigning to have it protected by your government’s laws or international policies.

3. **Restore:** take part in beach clean-ups, and involve others, including the [youth.](https://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/7b658598-6e27-43a8-b0f8-2aaa06ae78a8)

Do you have a project or idea on how to protect the ocean? Share it on twitter with the hashtag #SaveOurOcean