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Fisheries of Turkey, Ukraine and Georgia in the Black Sea

The Black sea's ecosystem is severely threatened by overfishing, invasive species and pollution

Facts

The Black Sea is home to **9 critically endangered species**ⁱ

Ecosystems in the Black sea have come under dramatic pressure in recent decades. Their rapid degradation has been strongly linked to the overuse of the marine system in just half a century. **Pollution, alien species, incidental catches of marine mammals, illegal unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing and overfishing** all pose threats, not only to the Black Sea ecosystems, but also to the economic well-being of the coastal states, three of which are classified as developing countries. Adding to the increasing pressure on the marine environment, the governance system has some key challenges that need to be overcome to reinstate the resilience of the marine environment. The political situation between the coastal countries is dynamic and controversial. Major coastal areas are disputed territories – Crimea and Abkhazia – and the data from their fisheries is not available. **Fish stocks in the region are considered shared** and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) is the regional fisheries management organization responsible for the conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources in the Mediterranean and in the Black Sea. An **estimated 85% of fish stocks** in the Black Sea area are fished at **unsustainable levels**^v. There is a clear and urgent need for adequate and up-to-date information, assessments of fish stocks and adaptive management of fisheries in the entire Black Sea basin.

The country most active in collecting such data in recent decades has been **Turkey, which also dominates the wild catch in the Black Sea area**^{vi}. Turkey is also the main fishing partner of the other developing countries in the region, fishing in both Ukrainian and Georgian waters. **73% of the Turkish marine catches were of small pelagic fish, mostly caught in the Black sea.**

The **catches are mostly used for the development of aquaculture**, namely for the production of fishmeal. Turkey's aquaculture is growing steadily, increasing in volume and in terms of exports, with increasing revenue and employment in the sector.

The **majority of high value aquaculture species are exported to the EU**. This gives the EU unique power to push the production towards more sustainability. **WWF's sustainable seafood guides** provide EU consumers with the tool to recognize and choose sustainable fish.

This publication has been produced with the financial contribution of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of WWF and can in no way be taken to represent the views of the European Union.

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Possibly **18,000**
dolphins and
porpoises die every
year as **bycatch**ⁱⁱ

Turkish exports of fish
products to the EU
were estimated at
**€424 million for
2015**ⁱⁱⁱ

The stocks of red
mullet, hake, turbot,
and anchovy are
considered
overfished^{iv}

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Recommendations

Similarly to the Mediterranean, the Black Sea would benefit greatly from aligned management frameworks of both EU and non-EU countries, according to an Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) approach, to **restore productive ecosystems and endure food security and thriving coastal livelihoods for the region.**

1. Systematic and consistent assessment of the stocks is essential, supported by dedicated resources and investment in fisheries data collection and assessment. Reliable fisheries data are essential to deliver sustainably managed fisheries for both fishers and society.

Prioritizing efforts by all implementing authorities to **end illegal unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing**, which is currently estimated to account for the majority of the Black Sea catches, could yield significant results. WWF recommends that monitor and control system is enhanced for all fleets and vessels in the region, regardless their specific characteristics. Trans-border cooperation has proved successful in tackling such issues elsewhere and should be implemented in the Black Sea.

2. Promotion of responsible and sustainable fishing is of vital importance for the region. This can be achieved through the application of the following approaches:

- Limiting the number of vessels at sea per day;
- Limiting the number of days at sea per vessel (encouraging sustainable practices and gears);
- Spatial and temporal closures (particularly in nursery areas);
- Co-management of fish stocks;
- Catch limits.

3. Adoption of technical measures to avoid fish being caught below their size at first maturity. To ensure healthy stocks, **minimum conservation reference size** based on sexual maturity and according to the best scientific advice, should be adopted in the Black Sea for all commercial species.

4. Elimination of wasteful practices such as the **discarding of unwanted fish** by promoting measures that support fish selectivity at sea, including technical modifications of nets to include fish exclusion devices (eg. grids, panels, turtle exclusion devices) as well as **avoidance of critical and sensitive areas**, particularly during seasonal migrations.

5. Establishing measures to mitigate the bycatch of cetaceans and establishment of an adequate monitoring programme on the impact of bycatch on cetacean population in the Black Sea.

Learn more about the project, sustainable seafood and WWF's recommendations at www.fishforward.eu

ⁱ Hammond, P.S. et al. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. 2008.

ⁱⁱ Birkun, A. et al. Studies for Carrying Out the Common Fisheries Policy: Adverse Fisheries Impacts on Cetacean Populations in the Black Sea. Final report to the European Commission, 2014, p. 313.

ⁱⁱⁱ European Commission 2016. European Union, Trade in goods with Turkey.
http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113456.pdf

^{iv} FAO. The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture. Rome: FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS, 2016.
^v FAO; General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries. Rome: FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS, 2016.

^{vi} FAO; General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries. Rome: FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS, 2016 p. 25.