



Fish are vitally important, providing billions of people with food, jobs and livelihoods. They also form a critical part of ocean food webs. Falling fish numbers affect other species that depend on them, like sea birds, and could lead to whole ecosystems (natural systems that support life) being badly damaged. So eating fish the sustainable way really matters.

Fish are a great source of protein and have health benefits. The Department of Health and the NHS recommends that we eat fish as part of a balanced healthy diet.

Many people want to buy more sustainable fish to make sure that we don't reduce the number of fish for the future. There are many ways you can eat fish while still helping to protect fish stocks. By choosing to eat fish from sustainable stocks you'll be reducing the pressure on overfished stocks and can also help encourage fishermen to fish more sustainably.

Sustainable fish

Sustainable fish are caught in a way that doesn't cause unnecessary damage to marine animals and plants and allows fish stocks to replenish.

You can buy sustainable fish by:

Looking for food labels like Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified.

Choosing fish recommended by sustainability guides, like the Marine Conservation Society's fish to eat guide.

Eating more seasonally; it's better to eat certain fish in certain seasons, to give them time to mature and reproduce. See Defra's fish of the month suggestion

Try eating other fish

Eating less popular fish is one way that you could help take the pressure off the popular ones. In Great Britain, 65% of all seafood sold belongs to just five types: salmon, tuna, prawns, cod and haddock. Less well-known fish are generally less valuable and are more likely to be thrown back in the sea (discarded) when caught. But alternative species can be less expensive and just as tasty.

Find out more about what fish are bought to shore by UK fishermen: [MMO](#)

Find out more about sales of fish in the UK: [Seafish](#)

Fishing for the Markets project

In England and Wales an estimated 54% of discarded fish are caused because of weak or absent markets (2008 estimate). Species being unpopular for sale often means that these fish are discarded and fishing effort is focused on a narrow range of popular species, some of which are being overfished.

In December 2010 Defra started the Fishing for the Markets project to understand the ways that the UK fishing industry could help to bring a greater range of sustainable unpopular species, caught in our fisheries, to the market. The project aims to;

- help us improve the use of all fish catches (i.e. use a broader range of species)

- help fishers get more value from poor valued species they catch

- decrease our reliance on popular overfished/pressured fish stocks

- reduce discards and the waste of wild fish resources

- support our fishing communities and the supply chain to make the most of catches.

To achieve these aims, we will be working in partnership with the fishing industry to assess what is currently stopping these fish being brought to market and to improve the consumption and use of underutilized catches, many of which are currently discarded due to weak or absent markets. The project will also help reduce fish discards, boost the effectiveness of domestic and CFP reform through identifying and encouraging markets for sustainably caught fish, while supporting industry to take full advantage of available market opportunities.

We are currently reviewing the recommendations from the Fishing for the Markets report and considering how they can be taken forward in partnership with members of the seafood industry and are keen to take forward work on the actions it identified.