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Report ties government subsidies to overfishing, urges stronger fisheries management

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

OECD report warns government subsidies risk driving overfishing, calling for targeted funding to strengthen fisheries management

Governments need to rethink how they support the fisheries sector, as nearly 65 percent of current subsidies could be driving overfishing and illegal fishing, a new **OECD** (<https://www.oecd.org/en.html>) report warns.

The study, which looked at 41 countries and territories, found that much of this support lacks the fisheries management safeguards needed to protect fish stocks. With millions of people relying on fisheries for food and jobs, the report calls for better-targeted support and policies to keep the industry productive and resilient.

The OECD Review of Fisheries 2025 (https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-review-of-fisheries-2025_560cd8fc-en.html) offers an updated assessment of the state of global fisheries and aquaculture, examining industry trends and government policies from 2020 to 2022. During this period,



OECD says governments need to rethink how they support the fisheries sector, as subsidies could be driving overfishing and illegal fishing. Photo by drB drB (<https://www.pexels.com/photo/fishing-boat-navigating-seagull-filled-waters-30450130/>).

the sector's value nearly tripled compared to 2005, reaching \$381 billion.

According to the report, governments provided an average of \$10.7 billion annually in fisheries support across 41 countries and territories, representing 79 percent of global fish production in that period. Just six economies accounted for the bulk of this spending, with China (36.1 percent) leading the way, followed by Japan (12.4 percent), the United States (11 percent), Canada (10.7 percent), the European Union (8 percent) and Brazil (6.4 percent).

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“Sound fisheries and aquaculture management, including through policies tackling illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, are fundamental for protecting local livelihoods, global food security and ocean ecosystems,” said OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann. “Better targeted fisheries support and better management are essential to improving the profitability and resilience of the sector.”

The report highlights the critical role of strong fisheries management in maintaining healthy fish stocks for future generations. The findings come as global leaders prepare for the Third UN Oceans Conference (UNOC3), where sustainable ocean policies will take center stage.

To make fisheries more resilient, the report calls for a shift in government subsidies. Instead of funding fuel, vessel construction and operations, governments should invest in activities that promote long-term sustainability – such as research on fish stocks, enforcing fishing laws and time-bound income support for fishers affected by crises like marine heatwaves.

Better-targeted funding could also help combat illegal fishing, which threatens marine ecosystems, fair competition and tax revenues. By investing in effective fisheries monitoring and management, governments can protect both the environment and the livelihoods that depend on it.

[Read the full report \(https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/policy-issues/fisheries-and-aquaculture.html\)](https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/policy-issues/fisheries-and-aquaculture.html).

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