



iFish

Fishing for the Future

Recent Européche research found 51% of people believe European fish stocks are in serious decline. Just 8% thought our stocks were in a healthy state.

This comes despite scientific evidence showing fish stocks in European waters are on a sustainable footing. Plus, strict regulation enforced by governments ensures fishing remains one of the most sustainable methods of food production.

Sustainability – what does it really mean?

The word sustainability is often used by politicians and scientists and it can sometimes not be very clear what they actually mean. In simple terms, sustainability means the ability for something to endure. So, when we talk about sustainable fishing, we simply mean fishing in a way, whether with large or small vessels, which ensures there will be fish in our seas today, tomorrow and in generations to come.

Just how sustainable is fishing?

- European waters are amongst the most well managed and regulated in the world
- In fact, the number of fish stocks judged to be within safe biological limits has almost doubled in the last decade
- Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) is one measure of how healthy a stock is
 - o In 2003, there were just two stocks fished at MSY
 - o Last year there were 27 fish stocks being harvested at this level
 - o Europe now has 36 stocks being fished at this sustainable level
- It's no secret that fish stocks in Europe were once dangerously overfished. The North Sea in particular was heavily exploited – but that has all changed
 - o 91% of stocks in the North Sea are now at full reproductive capacity
 - o Western UK waters are at 72%
- The industry is still providing a valuable food source
- The number of fish stocks within safe biological limits has gone from 12 in 2003 to 21 in 2014.

Does it damage the environment?

- o Fishing is actually one of the least harmful forms of food production in terms of environmental impact, especially compared to meat production
- o As we have developed larger vessels that can go further out to sea, this impact has decreased even further:
 - Just one trip on a large fishing vessel provides over eight million meals and is a more efficient and environmentally friendly way to provide this many meals than for many trips on smaller boats
 - Big boats don't have to go port as many times, which uses less fuel

- o Did you know, many people mistake the size of a vessel for its catching capacity? Actually, about 80% of a large boat is used for sorting, processing and freezing fish, rather than solely for storing huge amounts of fish

How is fishing kept in check?

- o Because fish stocks were once overly exploited, it is important that regulations are there to ensure future sustainability. Nowadays fishermen, scientists and policy makers work together for healthy fish stocks that are both sustainable and support an economically viable industry
- o The quota system uses scientific advice and economic principles to let fishermen know just how much of each stock they are allowed to catch
- o This is regulated through checks during landing, electronic and manual logbooks filled in by fishermen, aerial surveillance and sometimes by boarding vessels while out at sea
- o Some Européche vessels also voluntarily operate within fully documented fisheries schemes meaning cameras are installed on the boats so authorities can check fishermen are following the rules
- o Vessel Monitoring Systems show where boats are at all times. This stops any fishing in areas where it isn't allowed, such as in a marine reserve.

How has technology improved fishing?

- o In many ways fishing is done in the same way today as it was centuries ago, however, technology has developed so that fishermen can increase efficiency and be more targeted with the fish they catch
- o Sonar allows fishermen to close in on schools of fish and sometimes identify the species
 - This reduces fuel used to find fish
 - Reduces bycatch of fish they didn't want to land