

GREENPEACE

Principles For Ecologically Responsible, Low-Impact Fisheries

1. INTRODUCTION: OCEANS, FISH, AND FISHERIES THREATENED

1. Humanity depends for its survival on the healthy functioning of the planet's ecosystems. The oceans are the origin of life on earth and are home to much of the earth's rich evolutionary heritage of life forms and species.
2. Oceans provide many essential services such as regulating climate and cycling nutrients. They are vital sources of food, medicines and livelihood, and of cultural and spiritual values which give meaning to human societies.
3. The oceans sustain us, but we are not sustaining them. The diversity of life in the world's oceans is being dramatically altered by the excessive exploitation of fish, and other marine

species. Most commercially targeted fish populations and many associated marine species are in decline or even threatened by extinction. In addition, marine and coastal ecosystems, including habitats vitally important for fish breeding and rearing, are being rapidly degraded.

4. Not only is marine biodiversity at risk, but also the millions of people who depend on the sea for food and livelihoods. Industrial societies need to redefine their relationship with the oceans. A swift and fundamental transition to ecologically responsible, low impact fishing is urgently needed. Adjustments in consumption patterns may also be required.

5. Greenpeace supports ecologically responsible fishing. Indeed, Greenpeace believes that the principles expressed here are achievable and, that if they are applied, there will be enormous benefits, both for the environment and fishing communities. But to achieve this, sweeping institutional, social and economic reforms are required. Ecologically responsible fishing levels must be set in a precautionary way that takes into account our incomplete understanding about the workings of complex ecosystems.

6. Governments have the responsibility to act swiftly and decisively on the design and implementation of programs for the effective control and management of their fisheries. The fishing, fish processing, and trading industries share in this responsibility, and must demonstrate to the public that they can act responsibly to protect marine biodiversity. Processes established to achieve ecologically responsible fisheries must, above all, be genuinely transparent to the public and enable the full participation of public interest groups that have a genuine interest in protecting the health and integrity of marine ecosystems.

7. The complexity and scale of today's crisis in fisheries mean there is no simple panacea. Each fishery has unique characteristics related to the social, economic and political context, the species fished, the nature of the exploited environment, and the type of technology employed.

8. Thus, the Greenpeace Principles elaborate only the most significant, general areas of reform, while more specific measures must be tailored to meet each set of unique local or regional conditions.

2. PRINCIPLES FOR FISHERIES AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

2.1. - LOW IMPACT FISHERIES -

The objective of fisheries management should not be to maximise the short term yield but to minimise the environmental impact of fishing. Such low impact fisheries would enable the long term benefits of the marine ecosystem to be sustained. The following principles for managing low impact fisheries should apply:

1. In order to minimise the risk of irreversible damage or distortion, the intensity of fishing should not substantially alter the character of the ecosystem. To achieve this, target stocks should be maintained at a high proportion of the biomass that would occur in the absence of fishing.
2. A fishery must not jeopardise the ability of any species to withstand natural or human induced fluctuations in the environment.

3. A fishery must not endanger any species or population, nor inhibit the recovery of any that are threatened or endangered.
4. Fisheries should be prohibited in sensitive areas where there is concern that fishing activities pose a threat to the biodiversity, productivity or the characteristic structure and functioning of the marine ecosystems.
5. Indiscriminate and wasteful forms of fishing must be eliminated.
6. The catch of non-target species or undersized fish (bycatch) in fishing operations must be reduced to levels approaching zero. Any remaining bycatch should be returned to the sea alive and in a healthy condition, but when this is not possible it should be brought to shore, recorded, and used for human consumption purposes.
7. The destructive impacts of fishing activities on habitats and marine ecosystems must be eliminated (e.g. damage to coral reefs, seagrass beds, bottom substrate and benthic populations). Fisheries may not substantially alter any marine habitat or ecosystem nor inhibit the recovery of any that are damaged, threatened or endangered.
8. Fisheries management generally concerns the management of fishers and their activities, not the management of ecosystems. As such, attempts to augment fisheries production must not include: the culling of predator species or the fertilization of marine ecosystems. The intentional release or the unintentional spreading of alien species or genetically modified organisms must be prevented. The Precautionary Approach should apply to all stock enhancement or sea ranching of indigenous species to avoid any harm to the marine ecosystem.
9. Fisheries production and marketing processes must be conducted in accordance with "clean production" criteria; that is, the entire production cycle must be ecologically sound. Therefore toxic, persistent, or bio-accumulative substances must not be part of the production process. Compounds which are not hazardous, should be either recycled, reused or reprocessed, including packaging. Total energy consumption of the product cycle, including fisheries operations, transport, processing and distribution, must be minimised. CFCs, HCFCs, HFCs and other ozone depleting substances and refrigerants, as well as substances that contribute to global warming must be eliminated from the production cycle.

2.2. - THE PRECAUTIONARY APPROACH TO FISHERIES

MANAGEMENT -

To compensate for humanity's enormous lack of understanding of marine ecological processes, fisheries management must be based on the Precautionary Principle with emphasis on prevention of damage, as opposed to attempts to repair mistakes through mitigation or restoration measures (NB: In the context of recent, evolving fisheries management law, the term 'Precautionary Approach' has been substituted for the term 'Precautionary Principle').

1. The Precautionary Approach to fisheries management and conservation must operate within the broader context of overall protection for the marine environment from all

potentially harmful human activities. All human activities which may significantly affect the marine environment (including its watersheds) and marine biodiversity must be accounted through environmental impact assessments, and any adverse impacts must be eliminated.

2. The overriding objective of the Precautionary Approach is to conduct fisheries activities in a manner that ensures a high level of probability that marine species or ecosystems will not be seriously or irreversibly harmed.
3. The Precautionary Approach should apply at all times, even when stocks are abundant. To take precautionary action only when fish stocks are low, for instance, is a reactive response—the opposite of precaution.
4. Precautionary fisheries management regimes must take an ecosystem approach to assessing fisheries impacts; that is, they must be designed to address the specific effects of fisheries on the ecosystem as a whole, not just their effects on a target species.
5. Under precautionary management, those who seek to exploit marine ecosystems and those public institutions responsible for fisheries conservation and management have a fundamental duty of care and must bear the burden of proof to publicly demonstrate that there will be minimal risk of serious or irreversible harm.
6. No fishery shall be established or expanded until a verifiable, scientifically based, dynamic management procedure with clear objectives and precautionary reference points has been established. The performance of such management procedures should be demonstrated, by simulation or otherwise, to have a high probability of ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of fish stocks and the environment under a wide range of alternative assumptions and scenarios about the dynamics of the system.
7. Precaution should increase with decreasing certainty of scientific data. Where scientific data or other reliable forms of information are inadequate to determine the likely impact of fishing on the populations and the ecosystem of which they are a part, fishing effort should be restricted to an extremely low percentage of the lowest estimate of the unfished biomass, pending proper analysis. If there are no reliable estimates of the minimum size of the target species biomass whatsoever, no fishery shall be established.
8. Before introducing any new fishing practice or gear types into a fishery a scientifically based environmental impact assessment must demonstrate that such methods or gear will have no damaging impact on the target fish populations, other associated species, or their habitats. Existing gear and methods should also be subject to such assessments and damaging gears or methods should be phased out. Where a new gear or method is intended to replace an existing one, it must be shown to have a substantially less damaging effect.
9. In fisheries where overexploitation has severely reduced the spawning stock biomass, or substantially altered the ecosystem, moratoria should be imposed on the fishing of target stocks, and on other fisheries which cause mortality to the same stocks due to bycatch, to assist recovery.

2.3. - SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS -

Greenpeace seeks a substantial transformation from fisheries production dominated by large-scale, capital-intensive, destructive methods to smaller scale, community-based, labour-intensive fisheries using ecologically responsible, selective fishing technology and environmentally sound practices. Greenpeace believes that this transformation will be socially, economically and culturally beneficial. To achieve this, the following principles apply:

1. Within ecologically sound limits, fisheries must provide for the essential needs of traditionally dependent human communities for essential food and livelihoods. There should be a renewed emphasis on meeting such needs through reliance on regional and local fisheries. The export of a nation's fisheries production should not be at the expense of the environment, or domestic consumption needs, nor should it cause any significant adverse social or cultural impacts.
2. In consideration of the enormous impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems, and their important role for human food security, wasteful fishing practices and fishing done for wasteful purposes must be eliminated. Critical measures in this regard include: the elimination of bycatch/discards; the progressive transformation of dedicated industrial reduction fisheries to produce essential protein for direct human consumption, and restriction of fishmeal and oil production to the conversion of wastes from fish processing; an end to roe fisheries in which fish carcasses are discarded when they should be used instead to provide food for direct human consumption.
3. Every effort should be made to amalgamate scientifically acquired forms of knowledge with traditional, locally acquired knowledge systems. This approach will enable the development of locally appropriate fisheries management regimes, fishing technology and practices designed to meet the objectives of a reformed, low impact fishing industry while, at the same time, safeguarding the rights of traditionally dependent fishing communities to basic food and livelihoods.
4. Access rights to fisheries must be consistent with the cultural practices and economic needs of communities that have historically depended on local fisheries and that have consistently demonstrated the capacity to fish in a manner which maintains the integrity of the ecosystem, and in accord with the basic principles outlined in this document.
5. No new fishery should be started or an existing one expanded until an environmental impact assessment shows minimal risk of environmental harm, and a social impact assessment establishes that damaging social impacts and disruption will be avoided. Similarly, proposals to introduce new fishing practices or gear types into a fishery must be subjected to the same environmental and social impact assessments in order to avoid negative impacts.

3. GREENPEACE ADVOCATES URGENT GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY ACTION

3.1. - URGENT GOVERNMENT ACTION -

Governments must act urgently on behalf of the public's interests in protecting the marine environment and its biodiversity. Governments must begin immediately to develop precautionary

management procedures and supporting national laws with phased implementation over a decade-long period, by which time they should be fully operational worldwide. Some flexibility in the length of timeframe is envisaged for small scale, traditionally managed, local food fisheries which have been shown over a long period of time to be sustainable. In light of the principles outlined in the previous sections, Greenpeace advocates the following governmental actions:

1. Governments should adopt and implement the Precautionary Approach to fisheries and related criteria for ecologically responsible fisheries in national, regional and international management regimes. They should also ensure sufficient funds are available for research on marine environments, on fisheries impacts, and on fishing gear selectivity.
2. As virtually all major commercial fisheries today are being fished at or beyond the limits of sustainability, governments must move urgently to reduce fishing capacity and the deployed fishing effort to levels that are in balance with the limited fisheries resources, to allow low impact fisheries.
3. Particular emphasis must be placed on ensuring that in government efforts to address the problem of excess fishing capacity large scale industrialized fishing fleets are not allowed to move to areas of the world where their activities will be detrimental to fish stocks, marine biodiversity and local communities.
4. Governments must eliminate subsidies and other aid that support the expansion of fishing capacity, the over-capitalization or the migration of their fishing fleets to distant waters. Governments should fund compensation to help fishers and fishworkers who become displaced by fishing capacity reductions or who are affected by fishing moratoria or other forms of area closures.
5. Effective mechanisms must be established to regulate the activities of both domestic and international fishing vessels, their captains and observers, as well as to ensure that all fishing nations enter into and comply with international fisheries conservation agreements and laws. Governments should deny reflagging of their national fishing fleets, and prohibit the landing and/or any transshipments occurring in their economic zones of fish caught by ships flying a flag of convenience, unless those fleets and vessels comply fully with international agreements and other measures prescribed for the conservation and management of fisheries.
6. Governments must ensure accurate recording and reporting of all species captured by all means (including recreational fisheries, artisanal fisheries, and discarded fish), not just the nominal amount of commercially targeted species that are recorded from landings. Independent, comprehensive observation and inspection programmes are vital if true fishing related mortalities are to be measured and management measures complied with.
7. National government funding and inter-governmental lending and assistance made available for fisheries in the "developing countries" must be redirected only to promote the development or maintenance of ecologically responsible, low-impact fisheries.
8. Eco-taxation of the fishing industry and other levies should be instituted to reflect the level of environmental impacts. Additionally, economic incentives aimed at protecting biological diversity through the adoption of non-destructive, selective gear types and the reduction of fishing capacity should be established to complement precautionary management regimes.

9. In order to protect society's common natural heritage, access to fishing and control of ocean areas should not be privatised. In addition, fishing operations should be subject to liability regimes, including the requirement to pay compensation in respect of any deliberately caused damages.

10. With respect to international laws and agreements, at a minimum governments must ratify and effectively implement the 1995 UN Agreement for the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, the 1995 FAO Compliance Agreement, and implement the 1995 UN FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

3.2. - URGENT MARKET ACTION -

In response to the principles outlined in the previous sections, Greenpeace advocates the following market-based actions:

1. The fish trading, processing and retailing industry should use these principles as benchmarks when reviewing their purchasing policies related to the production and marketing of seafood products.
2. All levels of industry that profit from fisheries should invest some part of their revenues into monitoring, enforcement, smooth transition and conversion to environmentally sound fishing technologies and practices, including compensation for fishermen impacted by such recovery measures.
3. As consumers can only exercise their choice on the basis of adequate information regarding the impact of their consumption, the fish trading, processing and retailing industry must provide direct access to information. This can be done, for example, through detailed product labelling or point-of-purchase and other forms of information directly accessible by consumers.