



GREENPEACE

Defending **Our** Mediterranean

"Greenpeace is committed to defending the health of the world's oceans and the plants, animals and people that depend upon them."

The Mediterranean Sea:

Threats and Solutions





The Mediterranean Sea: Threats and Solutions

The Mediterranean Sea is the world's largest inland sea, a beautiful, but troubled body of water stretching for 2.5 million km² between the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. Threats such as destructive and over fishing, climate change and pollution are all taking their toll, while trade and tourism are adding further pressure on coastal areas and the delicate balance of marine life

Threats

The scale of the problem is shocking. As many as 85% of the fish stocks are in trouble. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, half are already fully exploited and more than a third are depleted or overexploited. The Mediterranean has a number of commercially important species, including bluefin tuna, swordfish, marlin, hake and sea bream.

It's not surprising when the scale of fishing is considered. Fishermen are taking double what they could catch fifty years ago. It is not just the scale of the catch that is the problem. As fishermen find fewer and fewer fish, they are taking smaller and younger ones to feed the demand, leaving wild stocks with less chance to reproduce and sustain their population. Selective fishing also means that much of what is snared in nets and on lines is thrown back into the sea, dead or dying, as by-catch. Trawlers throw away from 20 - 70% of what comes up in their nets.

Other means of fishing are equally destructive. Driftnets in the Mediterranean, often 10-12 kilometres in length, have significant by-catch, including whales and dolphins. In the Alboran Sea, driftnets are threatening the last healthy population of common dolphins in the Mediterranean. Driftnets have been banned from the Mediterranean, yet their use still continues.

Aquaculture is often presented by the industry as a solution to over-fishing. However, far from easing the problem, it is making it worse. Tuna ranching is the practice of catching wild fish, often juveniles that have not had the chance to breed, caging them and then artificially fattening them with more wild caught fish. It can take up to 20 kilograms of small fish to produce one kilogram of tuna. Not only does the wild stock continue to fall, but also the pollution from waste food and faeces and the risk of bringing disease from fish brought in from outside the Mediterranean to feed the caged tuna all add up to an environmental nightmare.

While many fisheries are ignoring the regulations on the size of fish and catch, pirate fishing vessels ignore all the rules. Termed 'IUU' fishing - illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing - pirate boats are responsible for 20% of the global catch, worth as much as US\$9 billion per year. The Mediterranean is not spared the ravages of pirate fishing fleets.

Solutions

Properly enforced marine reserves will give the oceans time to recover from this relentless exploitation. Greenpeace is campaigning for a global network of marine reserves covering 40% of the world's oceans - including 40% of the Mediterranean Sea. Large-scale reserves on the high seas that include areas where fishing, mining and pollution are banned are key to maintaining healthy oceans. They have also been proven to generate more productive oceans, where the increasing marine populations inside the reserves, spill over into the remaining fishing grounds. These ocean parks, much like those on land, will help ensure the recovery of threatened species and the long-term viability of areas like the Mediterranean. A series of marine reserves in Egypt's Red Sea were established in 1995, and in just five years showed a 60% improvement in the surrounding fishery. Coastal marine reserves, created in conjunction with local communities and supporting well managed small scale local fishing industries will also bring additional benefit to the Mediterranean. As well as the benefits to marine species and fisheries by protecting important habitats and areas such as breeding and feeding grounds, marine reserves also

bring a range of other benefits including education, research, leisure and tourism. Zoning parts of the ocean as marine reserves is only the first step. In order to give comprehensive protection to our seas and oceans, governments need to adopt a series of measures - which are outlined in the Greenpeace report "Freedom for the Seas" (<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/press/reports/freedom-for-seas>). These include requirements to adopt an ecosystem approach to management instead of managing species by species, enforcing the precautionary principle, the elimination of pollution, destructive fishing methods such as bottom trawling, pirate fishing and the reduction of fishing capacity.

Until substantial measures are taken to address the global oceans crisis, vital areas like the Mediterranean Sea will continue to be under threat. With a network of marine reserves and good management of fisheries and other marine activities, we can protect them for now and for the future.

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Greenpeace is an independent, campaigning organisation, which uses non-violent, creative confrontation to expose global environmental problems, and to force solutions essential to a green and peaceful future