

The potential of EU fisheries to contribute to sustainable food and nutrition security

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Abstract

The role of fisheries and seafood production for food and nutrition security is often overlooked and fisheries are often treated as a separate industry sector rather than the starting point of a nutritious food supply chain. Seafood has many advantages, in particular over terrestrial animal-sourced foods, both in terms of sustainability and nutritional content and can, when originating in sustainable fisheries, give important contributions to food production and human nutrition.

Here we quantify the potential of sustainably managed EU fisheries of 100 stocks of 16 species fished in the Northeast Atlantic to contribute to food production and nutrition. We translate sustainable catches into food production by studying current and potential utilization of catches and further into nutrition by applying a nutrition density score. We demonstrate that even though catches need to be reduced on the short term to comply with management goals, food production from EU fisheries could increase already on the short term (2020), and even more on the long term (2030). This requires that stocks are managed sustainably (here defined as fished at $0,8 \cdot F_{MSY}$) and that all catches considered “food grade” are re-directed towards utilization as food. We show that food production and nutrition from the studied stocks/species could be close to double compared to 2016. Pelagic species, currently mainly used for feed production, hold a very important position in this future scenario intended to inspire discussion about management priorities and consumption patterns. Challenges related to the implementation of this scenario will be discussed.

Keywords:

EU, Fisheries, Food, Management, MSY, Nutrition

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