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Overfishing

Fishing is not a threat if it is done in a sustainable way taking into account marine environment and resources. However, fishing has been developing since the 70's and now, most of the fish stocks are declining. One considers that a species is overfished when fisheries threaten the resurgence of marine resources. Today, 1/3 of the fish stocks in the world are not fished in a viable way, it is three times more than in 1970.

What causes overfishing?

In 2014, 31.4% of commercial fishes stocks were over-exploited. Over-exploitation concerns more than 59% of Mediterranean species. To answer a growing demand, boats are equipped with destructive materials. For example, the electric fishing consists in sending electric shocks to the seabed what makes fishes go up and easier to catch. This technic does not spare any living organism and strongly reduces fishes stocks on the long-term. Deep trawling remains the most destructive technic of fishing since it involves scrapping the seabed with the fishnets. No selection is made in the species fished and a lot of bycatch is destroyed.

Overfishing is strongly linked to bycatch. The fishes caught that cannot be marketed are thrown back into water after they died. About 38.5 million tons of fishes are lost every year what represents more than what the European Union consumes every year. It is 8% of the catches that are thrown back and could be avoid with sustainable fishing methods.

What are the impacts on the human being and marine ecosystems?

Some species are close from extinctions such as whales, cod or red tuna. A striking example is the Terre Neuve cod in Canada. It has been intensively fished until the 90's and even if it has been banned for 20 years, stocks still did not reconstitute. It is more than 1% of the marine species that are now declining worldwide.

Overfishing have a negative impact on men, especially fishermen. 50 million of people live from fisheries worldwide. If species do not have enough time to renew, their decline could lead to a lack of protein. Indeed, in Asia fish is the first protein source and it could bring a food crisis.