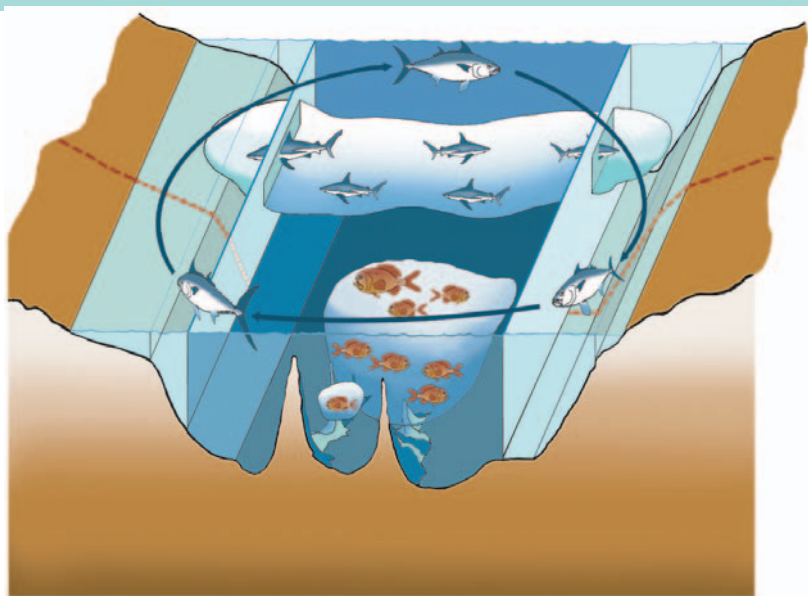


The state of world highly migratory, straddling and other high seas fishery resources and associated species



Cover:
Illustration by Emanuela D'Antoni.

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Preparation of this document

This document has been prepared under the direct guidance of the Marine Resources Service, Fishery Resources Division (FIR), FAO Fisheries Department, as part of its regular programme activities and a partial fulfilment of the Organization's role with regards to the monitoring and reporting on global marine fishery resources and relevant environmental and ecological changes. The main objective of this review is to provide the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) and more generally, policy-makers, civil society and those who derive their livelihood from fisheries and/or have a direct interest in the conservation and management of world fishery resources with a comprehensive, neutral and global review of the state of the world highly migratory fish stocks, straddling fish stocks, stocks of other high seas fishery resources and stocks of associated species considered in relation to the 1995 United Nations (UN) Fish Stocks Agreement. This document is a revised, expanded and updated version of a technical document provided in November 2005 to the UN Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) as one of FAO's contribution to the preparation of the report of the UN Secretary General to the Review Conference on the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, New York, 22–26 May 2006, in accordance with paragraph 17 of the General Assembly resolution 59/25, to assist the Review Conference to implement its mandate under paragraph 2, article 36 of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement (UN General Assembly document A/Conf.210/2006/1). This document is also intended to supplement the information contained in the report to the above-mentioned Review Conference.

Main sections of this document have been drafted and edited by J.-J. Maguire and M. Sissenwine (FAO Consultants), and by J. Csirke, R. Grainger and S. Garcia of the FAO Fisheries Department, with contributions from a number of FAO colleagues and collaborators, including K. Cochrane, L. Garibaldi, J. Leonart, J. Majkowski, J.F. Pulvenis de Séligny, R. Shotton and M. Tandstad. F. Carocci and M. Lamboeuf assisted with the processing of tables, maps and figures, R. Sola assisted with the typing and formatting and E. D'Antoni illustrated the cover page and some inside drawings.

The information on the state of stocks summarized in this document, unless otherwise stated, are essentially drawn from the last issue of the *Review of the state of world marine fishery resources* (FAO, 2005a) which should be consulted for more detailed references.

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Abstract

This document describes highly migratory fish stocks, straddling fish stocks, and stocks of other high seas fishery resources and the fisheries for them, including information on their state of exploitation. About 200 species have been identified as being fished on the high seas either as highly migratory, straddling or other high seas fishery resources and this paper reports on around 230 species (or species group) statistical area combinations. Fisheries for highly migratory species are important in all oceans and semi-enclosed seas, except for polar regions. Fisheries for straddling fish stocks are much more localized, primarily occurring in a few regions where continental shelves extend beyond the 200 miles exclusive economic zone (EEZ) limit or where the high productivity of the coastal area favour a more expanded distribution of coastal stocks into the high seas, or attracts high seas resources into the EEZ. Most fisheries for other high seas fishery resources are deep-water fisheries (being conducted at depths of the order of 1 000 m, or more).

Formal assessments are lacking for most of the stocks examined. Nevertheless, the compilation of available assessments and FAO's analyses indicate that about 30 percent of the stocks of highly migratory tuna and tuna-like species, more than 50 percent of the highly migratory oceanic sharks and nearly two-thirds of the straddling stocks and the stocks of other high seas fishery resources are overexploited or depleted. The stocks concerned represent only a small fraction of the world fishery resources upon which millions of people are critically dependant for food and livelihood, but these fish stocks are key indicators of the state of an overwhelming part of the ocean ecosystem which appears to be more overexploited than EEZs.

The adoption of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (FSA) in 1995 and its entering into force in 2001 has led to the implementation of measures that are expected to be beneficial in the medium to long term to species fished on the high seas. The scarcity of the information available and the short time elapsed since the entering into force of the FSA does not allow for a realistic assessment of the impact the FSA may have had on the state of the various fish stocks being exploited in the high seas. The slow recovery of several straddling fish stocks in the northwest Atlantic after more than 10 years of very stringent fishery limitations illustrates the intergenerational nature of the rebuilding process and the potential importance of ecosystem changes.

While the performance of the Agreement cannot yet be evaluated directly from the response of fisheries and fishery resources, it is possible to identify the issues upon which the success of the FSA is predicated and about which decisive progress must be achieved. In particular, improvements are needed regarding: (i) the information on fisheries, resources and ecosystems; (ii) the implementation of the precautionary approach and the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF); and (iii) the reduction and control of fishing capacity to levels commensurate with resources productivity. Another issue is the applicability of the FSA to fisheries in the high seas for resources other than straddling stocks and highly migratory species. While this document does not take any position on this issue, it does discuss some options to improve governance in areas where it is deemed to be inadequate. In concluding it is also stressed that deteriorating public opinion about the state of fisheries is a threat even to well-managed fisheries and that it is urgent to both improve fisheries management, and communication.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ACFM	Advisory Committee on Fisheries Management
AICDP	Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program
APFIC	Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission
ASFIS	Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Information System
BRDs	Bycatch Reduction Devices
CCAMLR	Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
CCSBT	Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
COFI	FAO Committee on Fisheries
CWP	Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics
DOALOS	UN Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea
EAF	Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FADs	Fish-Aggregating Devices
FIGIS	Fisheries Global Information System
FSA	United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement
GFCM	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
IATTC	Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission
ICCAT	International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
ICES	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
IPHC	International Pacific Halibut Commission
IPOA	International Plan of Action
IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated
IWC	International Whaling Commission
MHLC	Multilateral High Level Conferences on South Pacific Tuna Fisheries
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MSY	Maximum Sustainable Yield
NAFO	Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization
NASCO	North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization
NEAFC	Northeast Atlantic Fisheries Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RFB	Regional Fishery Bodies
RFMOs	Regional Fisheries Management Organizations
SEAFO	Southeast Atlantic Fisheries Organization
SIDP	FAO Species Identification and Data Programme
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
TURF	Territorial Use Rights in Fisheries
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCLOS	The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
WECAF	Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission
WTPSO	World Tuna Purse-Seine Organization