Global Fishing Watch

About us

Global Fishing Watch is an international non-profit organisation set up through a collaboration between three partners: Oceana, an international organisation dedicated to protecting and restoring the ocean; SkyTruth, experts in using satellite technology to protect the environment; and Google, who provide the tools for processing big data.

Our mission is to advance ocean sustainability through increased transparency. We're revolutionizing the ability to monitor the global commercial fishing fleet by offering near real-time tracking of more than 65,000 fishing vessels via our public map. Anyone can use our map to track fishing vessels and download data about their past and present activities. Our platform is helping enable scientific research, advocate for better policies and marine protection, and improve the way fishing is managed.

Within the next 10 years, we aim to track all large-scale fishing – some 300,000 vessels responsible for about three-quarters of the global marine catch – and increase our ability to track small-scale fishing vessels.

Our Transparency Program

Transparency is crucial for good stewardship of our global ocean - to fight illegal fishing, to protect fish stocks and livelihoods, and to increase the safety and well-being of fishers. If countries publicly share their fishing vessel monitoring data then we can create a more complete and connected picture of global fishing activity. Law-abiding fishers are tracked easily and openly, demonstrating their compliance. Rogue operators stand out due to their patchy track record or suspicious behaviour. Compliant fishers can be rewarded through faster, more efficient port entry and landings. Unauthorised vessels, and those that have a history of non-compliance, can be prioritised for inspection or even denied port entry.

By embracing transparency, nations have a more cost effective way of monitoring vessels that puts the burden on fishers to demonstrate compliance rather than on the country to prove illegality. Transparency can incentivise, recognise and reward honest fishers, while exposing, penalising, and ultimately putting out of business, those who act outside the law.

Countries commit to make their fishing fleet visible to the world

We're working with governments to publish their vessel monitoring system (VMS) to our platform to strengthen monitoring and support enforcement. In 2017, Indonesia became the first nation to make its proprietary VMS data available via Global Fishing Watch, instantly putting 5,000 smaller commercial fishing vessels that don't use AIS on our

map. Global Fishing Watch uses publicly broadcast automatic identification system (AIS) data to track fishing vessel movements. While AIS is required for the largest vessels that catch a disproportionately large amount of seafood, adding VMS data, which is required by many governments, to the Global Fishing Watch map provides an even clearer view of global fishing activity. In October 2018, Peru also published its data to our platform, and a growing number of countries have committed to taking steps towards publicly sharing their vessel tracking data, including Costa Rica, Namibia and Panama.

Global Fishing Watch is committed to bringing 20 countries into our Transparency Program by 2022 to advance responsible fisheries management.

Global Fishing Watch is also working to include more data on small-scale fishing activity, and has conducted pilot programmes to ensure our platform remains open to new tracking systems. Additionally, we're including data from infrared imaging, that is capable of detecting light emitted by vessels fishing at night, and radar systems, that use radio waves to image the Earth's surface. Imaging-based systems can detect vessels that have no tracking device or that may try to hide by turning off their tracking. We're also open to including emerging technologies such as radio-frequency detections and full-motion video from satellites. Integrating this information will enable us to build up an even more accurate and comprehensive picture of global fishing activity.

A global call for greater transparency

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 calls for the sustainable management of ocean resources, ending Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and harmful subsidies, science-based fisheries management, and the conservation of at least 10% of the world's coastal and marine areas by 2020. A global system based on transparency should underpin this ambition: it can drive success by making clear who is complying and who is not.

Monitoring fishing activity across the ocean's vast expanses is a huge challenge for one government alone, but together, we can work towards more transparency and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 14. The oceans connect all of us. Here more than anywhere international cooperation is the key to success.

Find out more at globalfishingwatch.org

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