Fisheries of the United States, 2011

A Statistical Snapshot of 2011 Fish Landings

NOAA FISHERIES

NOAA Fisheries releases its annual summary report on U.S. recreational and commercial fishery landings.

U.S. Fisheries Facts

- U.S. commercial fishermen landed over 10 billion pounds of seafood valued at more than $5 billion.
- Dutch Harbor-Unalaska, Alaska and New Bedford, Massachusetts remain the top commercial fishing ports.
- Approximately 10 million saltwater recreational anglers took 69 million trips and caught 345 million fish, nearly 60 percent of which were released.

About the Report

Each year NOAA Fisheries compiles key fisheries statistics from the previous year into an annual snapshot documenting fishing's importance to the nation. The 2011 report provides landings totals for both domestic recreational and commercial fisheries by species and allows us to track important indicators such as annual seafood consumption and the productivity of top fishing ports. These statistics provide valuable insights, but to fully understand the overall condition of our fisheries, they must be looked at in combination with other biological, social, and economic factors of ecosystem and ocean health.

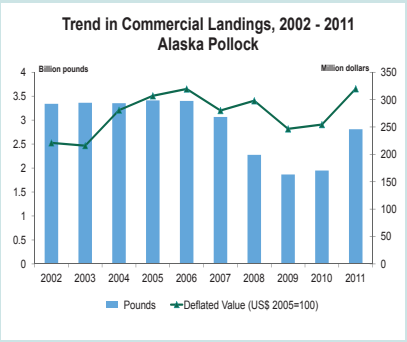
Sustainable Fisheries, Jobs, and the Economy

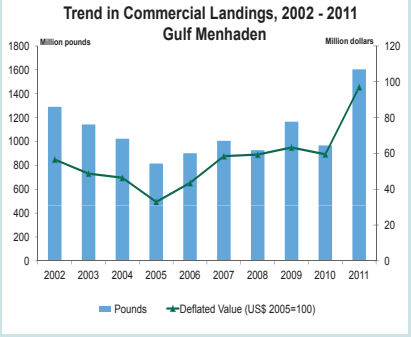
Fisheries, whether for commerce or recreation, play an enormous role in the U.S. economy. In 2011, U.S. commercial fishermen landed 10.1 billion pounds of seafood valued at $5.3 billion. Fish processors, icehouses, restaurants, grocery stores, bait and tackle shops, fuel stations, and a multitude of other businesses benefit from healthy commercial and recreational fishing. These businesses generate billions of dollars and support over a million full- and part-time jobs.

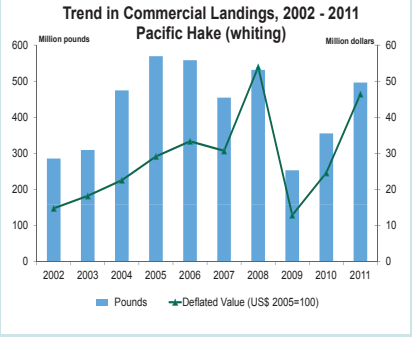
Healthy Stocks Mean Healthy Economies

The increase in commerical fish landings and their value is good news for fishermen, fishing communities, and for the Americans who want sustainable, healthy U.S. seafood. We are seeing that responsible management is helping us "turn the corner" towards more sustainable and profitable commerical fisheries. The United States' implementation of annual catch limits in all its fisheries locks into place a robust science-based management process that prevents, monitors, and responds to overfishing. U.S. fishermen and businesses have played a critical role in this monumental achievement and the stewardship practices that have come to define U.S. fisheries.

Trends Among Commercially Important Species



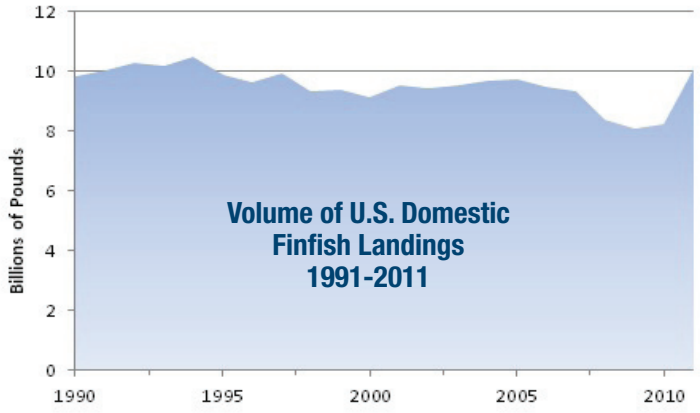


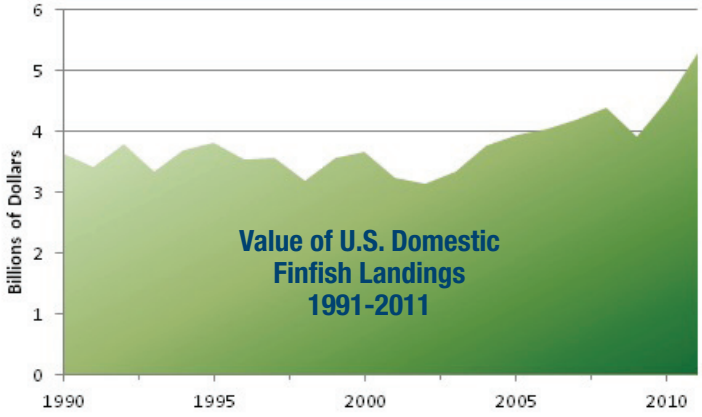


By the Numbers

Commercial Fisheries Landings

U.S. commercial fishermen landed 10.1 billion pounds of seafood in 2011, valued at $5.3 billion -- an increase of 1.9 billion pounds and $784 million in value over 2010. This growth is driven largely by increases in landings of Gulf of Mexico menhaden, Alaska pollock, and Pacific hake and represents the highest overall landings totals since 1994.





Regional Breakdown

All regions of the country saw increases in commercial landings and value as compared to 2010. The Gulf of Mexico posted the largest change, with a 55 percent increase in landings volume and 26 percent increase in value over the previous year. The Pacific Coast had a 21 percent increase in landings and a 20 percent increase in value. New England landings grew 8 percent with an associated value increase of 17 percent.

Recreational Fisheries Landings

Recreational anglers took 69 million trips and caught 345 million fish in 2011. Nearly 60 percent of these fish were released alive. The estimated total weight of landed catch (almost 140 million fish) was over 200 million pounds. These figures are down slightly from 2010 totals. Spotted seatrout remains the top catch among saltwater anglers, with more than 41 million fish caught in 2011. Atlantic croaker, spot, kingfish, and red drum were among the other most commonly caught species in 2011.

What's behind some of the changes?

The Alaska pollock fishery is one the largest, most valuable fisheries in the world and widely considered to be among the best managed. Every year, managers adjust the amount fishermen can catch according to pollock population levels and other factors, such as the overall limit on groundfish catch for the eastern Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands regions. Scientists found the population had grown above target levels, allowing managers to raise the amount of pollock fishermen could catch in 2011. As a result, the commercial catch increased by 864 million pounds this past year.

Also in 2010, fishing throughout the Gulf of Mexico was curtailed due to the devastating Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The report indicates both recreational and commercial catches rebounded in 2011. With the benefit of a full fishing season, commercial landings for Gulf menhaden were up 350 million pounds this past year.

Top U.S. Commercial Fishing Ports

For the 15th consecutive year, Dutch Harbor-Unalaska, Alaska, led the nation as the port with the highest volume of seafood landed. For the 12th year in a row, New Bedford, Massachusetts, had the highest-valued catch, due in large part to the sea scallop fishery. New Bedford fishermen saw a 24 percent increase in ex-vessel price for scallops.

Dutch Harbor, AK
706 million pounds
$207 million

New Bedford, MA
117 million pounds
$369 million

Empire-Venice, LA
532 million pounds
$99 million

Intracoastal City, LA
327 million pounds
$34 million

Akutan, AK
431 million pounds
$114 million

Reedville, VA
414 million pounds
$36 million

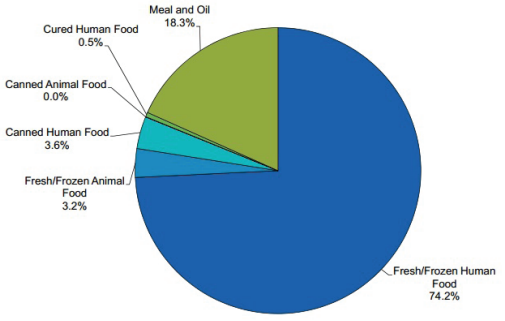
Kodiak, AK
372 million pounds
$168 million

Sustainable Seafood

Americans consumed 4.7 billion pounds of seafood in 2011, slightly less than the 4.9 billion pounds the previous year. The United States has surpassed Japan and is now second only to China in seafood consumption.

The average American ate 15.0 pounds of fish and shellfish in 2011, a decline from the 2010 figure of 15.8 pounds. Even though there was a large increase in landings in 2011, this increase was offset by a larger increase in exported fish, resulting in a decrease in the calculated per capita consumption.

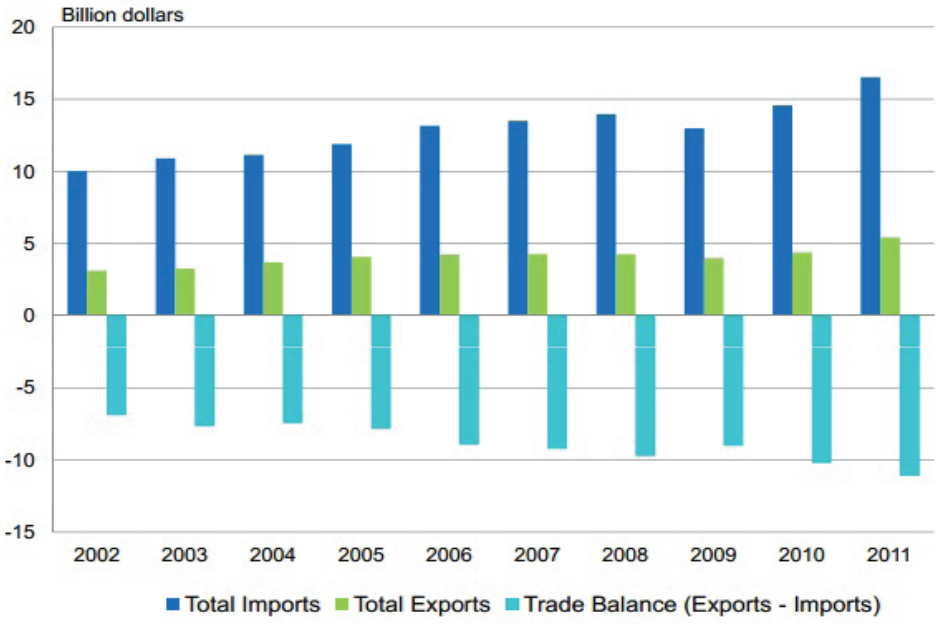
While most fish caught in the United States is consumed as seafood, about 22 percent of the 2011 catch was used for industrial products such as lubricants and fertilizer.



Fresh Facts, Smart Seafood

When consumers go to the market for seafood, they can be assured that if the species is caught in the United States, it has been caught responsibly. NOAA Fisheries redesigned FishWatch.gov in March 2012 to provide the public with easy-to-understand, science-based facts to help them make smart, sustainable seafood choices. FishWatch delivers regularly updated information on how U.S. seafood is harvested under regulations that keep the environment healthy, fish populations thriving, and our seafood industry on the job.

Imports and Exports



To meet consumer demand, the United States continues to be a major importer of seafood. About 91 percent of the seafood consumed in the United States is imported, measured by edible weight, up 5 percent from 2010. However, a significant portion of this imported seafood is caught by American fishermen, exported overseas for processing, and then re-imported to the United States.

Almost half of imported seafood comes from aquaculture, i.e. farmed seafood. Aquaculture outside the United States has expanded dramatically in the past three decades and now supplies the world with half its seafood demand, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. America's aquaculture industry currently meets less than 5 percent of U.S. seafood demand, producing primarily oysters, clams, mussels, and some finfish, including salmon.

Collecting Reliable Data

The collection and analysis of recreational and commercial catches provide scientists and managers with important information they need to make informed decisions. We use a number of different methods -- including surveys, catch cards, and logbooks -- to gather recreational and commercial fishing landings data. Fishermen's landings combined with other sources of fishery-independent data give us a good understanding of the health and productivity of the resource.

Improvements to Recreational Fishing Data

The Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP, is the new way NOAA Fisheries is counting and reporting marine recreational catch and effort. MRIP replaces the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey, or MRFSS, which has been in place since the 1970s. In 2011, NOAA Fisheries developed an improved methodology for generating catch estimates along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. Those new catch figures are used in this report. Additional improvements are underway, including new recreational data collection methods planned for implementation in 2013.

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