# NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE



IUU fishing vessel *Taruman*, carrying 143 tons of illegally harvested Patagonian toothfish (Chilean sea bass). Photo credit: Australian Customs Service

*To learn more about the detrimental effects of IUU fishing and what NOAA is doing to combat it, visit us at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/iuu/ or scan this code with your smartphone.*



# Efforts to Combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing

### What is IUU fishing?

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing generally refers to fishing conducted in violation of national laws or internationally agreed conservation and management measures in place around the world.

### What are some examples of IUU fishing activities?

IUU fishing can include fishing without a license or quota for certain species, unauthorized transshipments to cargo vessels, failing to report catches or making false reports, keeping undersized fish or fish that are otherwise protected by regulations, fishing in closed areas or during closed seasons, and using prohibited fishing gear.



### Who is most affected by IUU fishing?

Seafood is a significant source of protein for nearly three billion people globally and contributes to the livelihoods of more than 540 million people (more than eight percent of the world's population). IUU fishing poses a direct threat to food security and socio-economic stability in many parts of the world. Developing countries are most at risk from IUU fishing. For instance, IUU catch in West Africa is estimated to be over one third the total catches in that region. Fishermen who operate in accordance with all regulatory requirements can also be affected by reduced availability of target stocks due to poaching by IUU fishing operators and reduced revenues as a result of competition with lower-priced IUU product.

### What are the economic losses due to IUU fishing?

Experts estimate the global value of economic losses from IUU fishing to range between $10 billion and $23.5 billion annually.

### How does IUU fishing affect the seafood industry and U.S. consumers?

By ignoring conservation and management measures, IUU fishing operators can often increase their catch while lowering their operating costs. As a result, their IUU products provide unfair competition for law-abiding fishermen in the marketplace and reduce the value of legally harvested fisheries products. While consumers may benefit from lower prices, they may not know they are purchasing IUU fish, which could negatively affect the sustainability of ocean resources and distort the market. In addition, IUU fishing can adversely impact ecosystems through bycatch of protected species and damage to habitat.

### What is NOAA doing to address the problem of IUU fishing?

Since the United States imports more than 80 percent of its seafood, we must ensure that this demand does not create incentives for illegal activity. Careful monitoring of imports is a key component of our efforts to prevent IUU fish from entering the U.S. market, allowing consumers to have confidence that the seafood they purchase was harvested legally. We work with other fishing nations to strengthen enforcement and data collection programs around the world. We have put measures in place to restrict port entry and access to port services to vessels included on the IUU lists of regional fishery management organizations of which the United States is a member.

We also have legislation that allows us to take action on our own. Under the High Seas Driftnet Fishing Moratorium Protection Act, the Secretary of Commerce identifies countries that have fishing vessels engaged in IUU activities. Once a nation has been identified as having vessels engaged in IUU fishing, we consult with the nation to encourage appropriate corrective action. If the identified nation does not take the recommended action, we can impose trade restrictions on that nation. The Lacey Act also provides the United States with the authority to impose significant sanctions against individuals and companies engaged in trafficking illegally taken fish and wildlife.