

Fishing for Feed

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Executive Summary: the production of fish meal and fish oil (FMFO) leads to the overexploitation of fish stocks. This wasteful industry must be phased out for the food security and livelihood of fishers .



Photo: Zakir Hossain Chowdhury

The dangers of FMFO fishing in India

The Problem with Aquafeed

Nearly a quarter of the world's annual catch is dried, pressed, and ground into fish meal and fish oil (FMFO) for aquaculture every year. In 2006, this amounted to 23.8 million tonnes of fish¹.

While aquaculture is often framed as a solution to unsustainable fishing, reduction fisheries like FMFO can cause far more damage than conventional fishing because it incentivizes harmful, non-selective fishing, involving the capture of juveniles and fish that were traditionally caught for human consumption. This poses a significant threat to the marine ecosystem and food security. Fishing communities in India predict that unsustainable fishing driven by the FMFO industry will cause an end to fisheries soon². There is an urgent need to relieve the growing pressure on industrial feed fisheries in India for long-term socioeconomic and ecosystem stability.

India's aquafeed market is valued at 1.20 billion USD yet there are no laws to regulate FMFO²



"If we are grinding up fish that people could be eating, to sell as feed for fish to wealthier people, that will never be sustainable"

-Dr. Daniel Pauly

Feasible Solutions Exist

Aquafeed Industry



- Shift fishing effort from the FMFO fishing to sustainable and selectively-fished stocks
- Provide employment through the production of fishmeal alternatives

FMFO Policy

- Implement stricter regulations on fish size to prevent juvenile and non-selective catch
- Phase-out FMFO fishing
- Develop guidelines for sustainable feed ingredients



Recommendations



Aquaculture Industry



- Prioritize cultivating species that do not require fish feed
- Invest in researchers and companies for fishmeal alternatives like food waste or insects

Certification Schemes

- Remove MSC, ASC, and IFFO certification of reduction fisheries, fish that is not used for direct human consumption, and farmed fish reliant on FMFO feed



Success with Aquafeed Alternatives

Enterra, a Vancouver based insect-protein company, has successfully reared Arctic Char with flies³. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates that insects could replace anywhere from 25-100% of the remaining fish meal in the diets of farmed fish with no adverse effects. Promising research also suggests that turning discarded food into fishmeal could create jobs for fishing communities, eliminate food waste, and reduce pressure on the aquafeed industry⁴.

It is your responsibility to act.

Urgent action with concrete measures must be taken to reduce the intensity of FMFO fishing in India to environmentally sustainable levels and ensure that it meets the food security and livelihood needs of local populations and fishing communities.

References
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