

Seafood Increasingly Popular and Scarce

Abstract

People around the world ate about 156 million tons of seafood in 2004, the last year for which there are data.¹ This is a relatively large jump from the preceding year—almost 9 million tons—about half of which was satisfied by a rebound in certain wild fish populations, with the other half representing continued rapid growth in fish farming.² (See Figure 1.) (Since seafood is generally consumed fresh or within a few months of being caught, statistics on consumption and production are nearly identical.)

Since 1950, seafood consumption has jumped almost eight times.³ This rise in global consumption comes even as seafood becomes scarcer. In 2006, scientists tracking historical changes in the world's major fish populations estimated that all major fish stocks could be commercially extinct—less than 90 percent of their historic levels—by the middle of this century if current trends continue.⁴

Includes the following charts and graphs

World Fish Harvest, 1950-2004

World Fish Harvest Per Person, 1950-2004

Seafood Consumption in Top Four Countries or Region, 1961 and 2003