

# FISHING HURTS FISH

Based on a review of over 500 research papers, biologists reported in the August 2003 issue of *Fish & Fisheries* that fish are highly intelligent and socially sophisticated: they can recognize individual shoal mates, learn from each other, employ long-term memory, and even use tools.



Other scientific studies confirm that fish have a complex nervous system and can feel physical pain<sup>(5)</sup>. Fishing causes unnecessary suffering by either violently removing fish from their natural habitat or raising them in unnatural and unhealthy conditions; in either case, their lives are taken so that a human can eat their flesh.

Some argue that “fish eat other fish — they’re going to die anyway, so we may as well eat them!” However:

- Ecologically, “fish eating other fish” does not cause species to go extinct — pollution and overfishing do.
- Fish suffer more from being caught in nets or on hooks than by other fish. While being eaten by a predator is a relatively quick process lasting minutes if not seconds, fish can survive for several hours after being caught in nets or on hooks.

#### REFERENCES:

1. What You Need to Know About Mercury in Fish and Shellfish - 2004 EPA and FDA Advice For Women Who Might Become Pregnant, Women Who are Pregnant, Nursing Mothers, Young Children (March 2004).
2. American Heart Association. Heart and Stroke Statistical Update: 2004 Update. Dallas: American Heart Association.
3. Amounts of aquatic animals caught/discarded/raised every year world-wide - [www.yannarthusbertrand.com/us/clterre/part8/chap5/clt01.htm](http://www.yannarthusbertrand.com/us/clterre/part8/chap5/clt01.htm)
4. Worm, B., et al. Impacts of Biodiversity Loss on Ocean Ecosystem Services. *Science*, 3 Nov 2006: 787 - 790.
5. Rose, J. The Neurobehavioral Nature of Fishes and the Question of Awareness and Pain. *Reviews in Fisheries Science*, 101-38 (2003).

# FISHLESS FOOD

Humans don’t need to eat sea creatures to survive, but certain aquatic predator species do. In fact, we don’t need to eat animals at all to live long and healthy lives.



Not only are there plenty of delectable options among the fruits, vegetables, grains, beans and nuts of the world, but you can also find veggie “fish” made of soy or other non-animal ingredients at most health food stores and on the menus of many vegetarian restaurants. You can also make foods on your own that taste like fish.

If you still eat fish, please think about the information in this brochure and consider reducing the amount of fish you eat. Better yet, you can become a vegetarian, improving your own health and conserving natural resources while reducing the amount of suffering in the world every time you eat.



3010 Kerner Blvd. San Rafael, CA 94901  
Tel: 415. 388. 9641 [www.idausa.org](http://www.idausa.org)

# FISH HAVE FEELINGS TOO!



**When people eat fish, they take the lives of animals who are intelligent and aware, as shown by recent scientific studies.**

But because they seem so different from us and live in a world so unlike our own, many people think of fish only as cold, unfeeling alien creatures with whom we share nothing in common. Thus, humans continue to see fish as mere food, taking their lives without concern.

Since anyone can be perfectly healthy eating a diet that doesn’t include fish, how can we justify causing pain and suffering to animals for nothing more than the momentary pleasure of tasting their flesh? In addition to the ethical arguments for taking up a fishless diet, there are compelling environmental and health reasons to do so, as well. Please read on to learn more about why eating fish is harmful to animals, the oceans, and our health, and how you can eat more sustainably today.



*“Fish are sensitive, they have personalities, they hurt when they’re wounded.”*

*~ Dr. Sylvia Earle, former chief scientist of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration*

albacore tuna — some of the most widely consumed fish. The FDA and EPA now warn pregnant women and nursing mothers that eating too much of these fish puts their unborn children at risk for neurological damage<sup>(1)</sup>.

“Farmed” fish are no healthier to eat, since they swim in filthy water and are so sick they must be fed massive doses of antibiotics to be kept alive. People consume these chemicals when they eat farmed fish.



## PLUNDERING THE OCEANS

Over the last half century, the fishing industry has developed technological “advances” to increase its catch, which now exceeds 100 million tons per year<sup>(3)</sup>.

Fisheries use sonar and satellite-tracking equipment to locate schools of fish, and cover miles of ocean with

gigantic driftnets that lay waste to complex deep-sea ecosystems. Another common technique is “longline fishing,” in which a fishing line up to 60 miles long is embedded with thousands of hooks and trailed behind a single boat. These indiscriminate methods are to the ocean what clear-cutting is to forests, or what strip-mining for minerals is to the earth.

Species that are not economically valuable (such as sea turtles, dolphins, and sea lions) are discarded: over 27 million tons of aquatic animals are thrown, dead or dying, back into the ocean every year<sup>(3)</sup>.



Due to these and similar practices, overfishing has decimated marine ecosystems to the point where many species are declining rapidly and some even face imminent extinction. A recent study that analyzed more than 50 years of accumulated data reports that 90% of each of the world’s large ocean species (including cod, halibut, tuna, swordfish and marlin) has disappeared from the world’s oceans in recent decades. The researchers warn that global fisheries will run dry by the year 2048 if this trend continues<sup>(4)</sup>.

Aquaculture (intensive breeding of fish on “farms”), touted as the solution to chronically depleted stocks, produces about 36 million tons of fish per year<sup>(3)</sup>. Crowded into caged enclosures, “farmed” fish live in water that is infested with bacteria which forms from a surplus of excrement. This can trigger algal blooms that suffocate or poison the fish. The fecal waste and the chemicals used to treat the water then contaminate fragile coastal estuaries where aquaculture operations are often built.

## UNSAFE TO EAT

Living in a thick liquid atmosphere, fish readily absorb the pollution in the world’s waterways.

Research shows that fish can accumulate up to nine million times the concentration of toxins (like PCBs and DDT) from the waters in which they live. When people eat fish, they ingest these deadly poisons and store them in their fat cells.

Fish also absorb mercury that is released as toxic emissions from coal-burning power plants. The most dangerous concentrations accumulate in the flesh of large predators like shark, swordfish and

Nutritionally, fish is lower in fat than other types of meat, but it also packs about twice the cholesterol per calorie as pork or beef. (Plant foods, by contrast, contain no cholesterol.) Cholesterol buildup in the arteries is the main cause of cardiovascular disease, the number one killer in the U.S., taking more lives than the five next most common causes of death combined<sup>(2)</sup>. Omega-3, an essential fatty acid that regulates body tissue functioning, is present in both fish and some plant foods. For example, flax is a rich plant-based source of Omega-3 that can be found in health food stores or purchased inexpensively on the internet.