



NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
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NOAA to work with 10 nations to address illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and stem the bycatch of protected species

Six previously identified nations take corrective actions

As part of its overall efforts to ensure that the U.S. fishing industry isn't undermined by unsustainable or illegal activities, NOAA today submitted a Congressionally mandated report identifying 10 nations whose fishing vessels engaged in illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in 2011 or 2012, or had ineffective measures to prevent the unintended catch of protected species in 2012.

IUU fishing undermines international efforts to sustainably manage and rebuild fisheries and creates unfair market competition for fishermen who adhere to strict conservation measures, like those in the United States. IUU fishing can devastate fish populations and their productive marine habitats, threatening food security and economic stability. Independent experts have estimated economic losses worldwide from IUU fishing to be between \$10 billion and \$23 billion annually.

"NOAA's international fisheries work is critical to the economic viability of U.S. fishing communities and the protection of U.S. jobs," said Russell Smith, NOAA deputy assistant secretary for international fisheries. "This is about leveling the playing field for fishermen around the world, and IUU fishing represents one of the biggest threats to the U.S. fishing industry. Seafood is a global business, and U.S. fishermen following the rules should not have to compete with those using illegal or unsustainable fishing practices."

The U.S. will soon start consultations with each of the 10 nations—Colombia, Ecuador, Ghana, Italy, Mexico, Panama, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Tanzania, and Venezuela—to encourage them to take action to address IUU fishing and bycatch by their fishermen.

All 10 nations identified in this year's report had vessels that did not comply in 2011 and/or 2012 with conservation and management measures required under a regional fishery management organization to which the United States is a party. Mexico was also identified for ineffective management of the bycatch of North Pacific loggerhead sea turtles, which travel between Japan and Mexico through Hawaiian waters, and are endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

"As one of the largest importers of seafood in the world, the United States has a global responsibility and an economic duty to ensure the fish we import is caught sustainably and legally," said Sam Rauch, deputy assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "We look forward to working with these nations to encourage their compliance, and we will continue to work with our partners to detect and combat illegal practices."

All six of the nations identified in the previous 2011 Biennial Report to Congress (Colombia, Ecuador, Italy, Panama, Portugal, and Venezuela) have addressed the instances by taking strong actions like sanctioning vessels, adopting or amending laws and regulations, or improving monitoring and enforcement. Each of these six nations now has a positive certification for their 2011 identified activities. However, a nation positively certified for action taken since the last report may be listed again as engaged in IUU fishing if new issues are identified, as is the case in this report.

If a nation fails to take appropriate action to address the instances of illegal fishing or bycatch activities described in the report, that nation's fishing vessels may be denied entry into U.S. ports, and imports of certain fish or fish products from that nation into the United States may be prohibited. The United States is second only to China in the amount of seafood it imports. NOAA's latest figures showed that 91 percent of the 4.7 billion pounds of seafood consumed in the United States in 2011 was imported.

Today's report is a requirement of the High Seas Driftnet Fishing Moratorium Protection Act, as amended by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act and the Shark Conservation Act. To read the report, go to <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ia/>.

The report is prepared by NOAA Fisheries' Office of International Affairs, which also works with the nations identified to resolve IUU issues. In addition, NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement works with foreign law enforcement and fisheries officials to investigate illegal trafficking, illegal imports, and IUU fishing, and it routinely partners with U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Coast Guard. NOAA Law Enforcement and the Coast Guard also work together to ensure that U.S.-flagged vessels are complying with the law.

Today, NOAA also issued final regulations to implement the international provisions of the Shark Conservation Act. These regulations specify the procedures for identifying and certifying nations whose vessels catch sharks on the high seas. They also amend the definition of IUU fishing to help ensure a comprehensive approach to addressing unsustainable fisheries activities of greatest concern to the United States.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on Facebook, Twitter and our other social media channels at <http://www.noaa.gov/socialmedia>.

On the web:

2013 Biennial Report to Congress on IUU fishing: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ia/>

Shark Conservation Act final regulations: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ia/iuu/msra_page/msra.html