

Farmed Fish Production Overtakes Beef

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There was a time when aquaculture was seen as a minor adjunct to the production from the wild fisheries. That has changed dramatically in recent decades. According to the Earth Policy Institute, in 2011 for the first time in modern history, world farmed fish production topped beef production. The gap widened in 2012, with output from fish farming—also called aquaculture—reaching a record 66 million tons, compared with production of beef at 63 million tons. And 2013 may well be the first year that people eat more fish raised on farms than caught in the wild.

But is this increase in aquaculture production sustainable? Farmed fish like salmon and shrimp are carnivorous species that eat fishmeal or fish oil produced from forage fish from the wild. Yet most forage fish stocks (think anchovies, herrings, and sardines), which typically make up about a third of the world oceanic fish catch, are

[dangerously overharvested](#)

. In the rush to meet world demand, the share of farmed fish being fed has increased because they can reach market size quickly. Norway, the world's top farmed salmon producer, now imports more fish oil than any other country. China, the world's leading shrimp producer, takes in some 30 percent of the fishmeal traded each year.

If aquaculture is to be sustainable we need to reduce the dependence on forage fish and fish oil. Readmore on this issue at: http://www.earth-policy.org/plan_b_updates/2013/update114

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