



New scientific study highlights the environmental importance of capture fisheries as a low-carbon protein source

- For immediate release -

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Europêche, the representative body for the European fishing industry, welcomes the publication of a new peer-reviewed scientific study examining the environmental consequences of replacing wild-caught seafood with land-based animal protein. The research¹ analyses how shifting protein supply away from capture fisheries could affect biodiversity, land use and environmental pressures. The findings reinforce the crucial role that sustainable fisheries play in delivering nutritious food with comparatively low environmental impact.

According to the study, replacing wild fish with terrestrial animal protein would require substantial additional land and could significantly increase biodiversity risks due to land conversion and agricultural expansion. The authors estimate that replacing current marine capture fisheries production could require almost 5 million of hectares of additional land to produce equivalent amounts of animal protein. The research indicates that this area is larger than the extent of intact rainforest in Brazil.

For Europêche, the findings underline an often-overlooked fact: wild capture fisheries provide one of the most efficient and climate-friendly animal protein sources available today. *‘Seafood harvested from responsibly managed fisheries delivers high-quality nutrition with minimal land and water use and low carbon emissions,’* said Javier Garat, President of Europeche. *‘This study highlights that removing fisheries from the food system would not reduce environmental pressure — it would shift it elsewhere with larger environmental impacts. This is particularly important as global demand for food continues to grow.’*

The authors also emphasise that food production systems involve complex trade-offs and that policy decisions should consider biodiversity impacts across the entire food system rather than focusing on individual sectors in isolation. Europêche agrees that both fisheries and agriculture have important roles to play in feeding the world sustainably.

Europe’s fisheries are among the most strictly regulated in the world and have made significant progress in sustainability in recent decades. Europêche believes that well-managed fisheries can continue to provide nutritious food while contributing to climate and biodiversity objectives.

At the same time, Europêche stresses that EU policy measures must be firmly grounded in sound science and evidence. Politically driven restrictions — such as blanket bans on fishing gears or large-scale closures introduced without clear scientific justification — undermines

¹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23308249.2025.2585414#abstract>

sustainable EU seafood production while delivering little measurable benefit for the environment. Instead, such measures simply export environmental pressures to other regions, shifting the burden onto third countries and placing additional strain on their food systems.

'This research reminds us that sustainable fisheries are part of the solution,' added Mr Garat. *'We encourage EU policymakers to take a holistic view of food sustainability that acknowledges the role of low-impact marine proteins in supporting healthy diets, biodiversity conservation and climate objectives.'*

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