

Overfish ? I'm OVER it!

An Informational Guide on Sustainable Practices to Prevent Overfishing

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Recap



This past Maymester, I had the amazing opportunity to travel to South Korea with the Terry College of Business, where we traveled to Seoul and Busan. There I learned multiple business practices, culture, and visited many landmarks, but my favorite part was Busan, as they are known for their seafood. It made me curious about the fishing practices and how the possibility of overfishing and pollution affects countries.

The Problem: Overfishing & Pollution

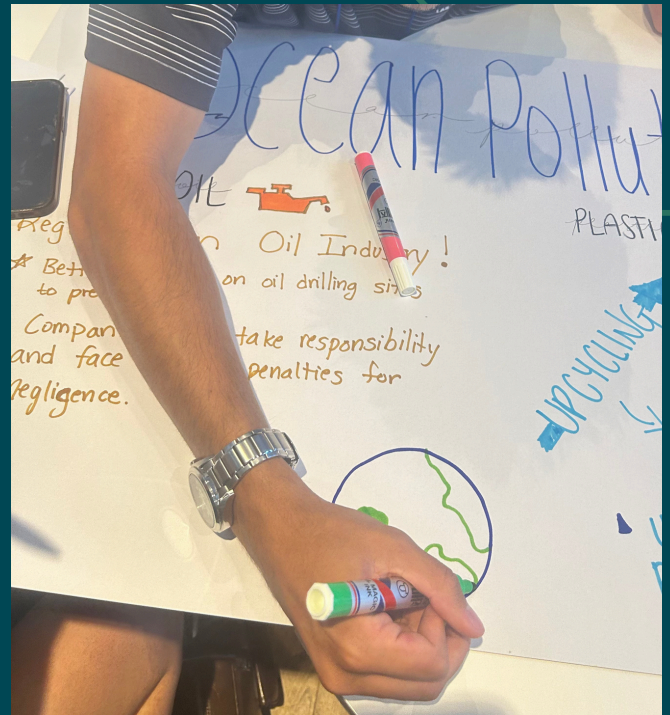


Seafood is a significant part of the South Korean Diet. In fact, Seoul and Busan are home to two of the largest fish markets in South Korea, but with this large consumption comes the risk of overfishing.

What Is Overfishing, and how does it affect us?

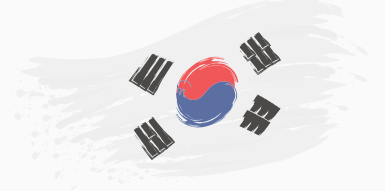
Well, overfishing is the diminishing of a stock of fish by fishing too much. It affects us by causing fewer fish in the waters, affecting our food supply. It also affects the biodiversity in the water and disrupts the ocean's carbon cycle.

The United States also has an overfishing problem with 47 stocks or 18% known fish stocks being overfished. According to the NDRC, this is unsustainable for long-term fishing. Another issue that arises is the pollution that occurs from fishing, as 640,000 tons of fishing waste are left in our oceans.



The question becomes, how has South Korea combated this issue, and should the United States implement these practices as well? Additionally, what are ways that we can lessen the waste caused by fishing in our oceans?

Current Practices: South Korea



Laws

- **Distant Waters Fisheries Development Act (2007; last updated 2024)**
 - This act was created to improve and foster sustainable growth in distant waters industry while also supporting the Korean economy. It aims to have those who use fishing resources responsibly, even in international waters.
 - The latest update in 2024 is one of the most important, as there have been changes to the Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS).
 - The changes include wanting to meet the recommended Key Data Elements (KDE) from the previous 35% to 100%. This change allows for better traceability and transparency for Seafood products.
- **Fisheries Act (2013; updated 2022)**
 - This act mandates a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) that is tracked by the Fisheries Monitoring Center(FMC). This center tracks the movements of fishing vessels via satellite, making it difficult for people to participate in illegal fishing.
 - This act sets a catch limit through the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) system. It also protects endangered/vulnerable species.
 - This act assists in regulating licenses and access to fisheries and monitors the gear being used. If gear is improperly discarded, the government will conduct a survey and assign responsibility to those who are found guilty.
- **Marine Environment Management Act (2007)**
 - This act assists in the retrieval and removal of “ghost gear” in the waters. Ghost gear are fishing products such as nets, ropes, and traps that are left in the waters. Additionally, this act prohibits the discharge of oil and other harmful liquid substances in the water from ships or other vessels.

Enforcement

Violators of these acts are typically met with enforcement by the Korean Coast Guard, which is under the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF) or the Fisheries Management Service. Penalties for violating these acts can be imprisonment, fines, license and vessel revocation, seizure of equipment/gear, and business restrictions.

Current Practices: United States



Laws

- **Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (1976)**
 - This act has been amended many times and serves as the primary act when it comes to sustainable fishing practices. This includes preventing overfishing and rebuilding fish stocks.
 - The jurisdiction of this act is 200 nautical miles from any U.S. coast and sets an Annual Catch limit as of 2006. This catch limit is science-based from recommendations by scientific committees
- **Sustainable Fisheries Act (1996)**
 - This act is an amendment under the MSFCMA and serves to improve the MSFCMA as well. It requires fishers to create management plans that determine if a stock is overfished or not.
 - This act also requires people to minimize bycatch. Bycatch is the accidental capturing of a species of fish while wanting to capture another species. This is typical for commercial fishing.
- **Save Our Seas Act (2018)**
 - This act's purpose is to help regulate and relieve the debris that is in our waters. This can be due to natural disasters or even just waste in general.
- **Marine Plastic Pollution Research and Control Act (1987)**
 - This act made it illegal for vessels to discard plastics (including fishing gear) into U.S. waters.

Enforcement

Violators of the MSFCMA and the Marine Plastic Pollution Research and Control Act can face punishments of fines per offense, the revocation of permits, property seizures, and even criminal penalties. These are enforced by the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Law Enforcement.

What Can We Do ?

After comparing the two approaches to fishing for the two countries, it is important to notice areas we as Americans can improve on to continue to prevent over fishing and pollution.

It is also important to recognize how both countries are actively working towards rebuilding their fish stocks. South Korea has implemented the Fish Stock Rebuilding Plan, and the United States implements it through the regions covered in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

1

Stricter Enforcement

Although the United States does have a somewhat strict enforcement policy, it's important to recognize that quite a few of them are civil. In civil cases, the outcome is typically to pay a certain sum of money. That is valuable, but when it comes to big corporations, these may be easier to pay. Stricter enforcement including possible time away may deter those from continuously violating these laws regarding pollution and overfishing.

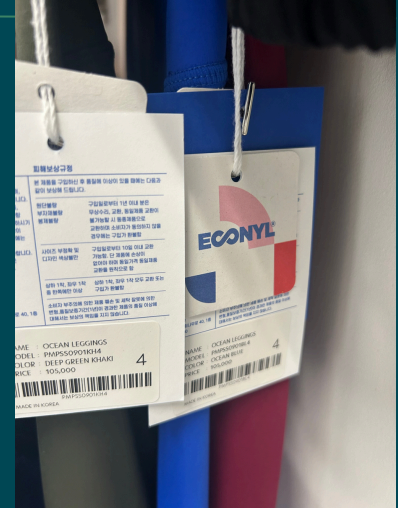
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Tracking & Traceability

After conducting research, I found that the United States does have great tracking, but it is not required for all domestic vessels. Requiring this will allow for better accountability if needed. Additionally, the United States could become more transparent in the seafood supply chain industry as South Korea is actively working towards that with the CDS.

Sustainable Initiatives → PositiveMe

While in South Korea, we had the amazing opportunity of visiting Korea's first sustainable activewear brand. The CEO, Hana Kim, sat down with us and explained her reasoning for starting the brand, and the material the brand uses to create their products.



The materials used to create the activewear are discarded plastics and nets made for fishing as well as other recycled materials.

It's important to highlight sustainable brands like these as they can provide an active solution to the issue. With the increasing popularity of running groups and those wanting to live a healthier lifestyle, this brand introduces the opportunity not only to be stylish in doing so, but to do good for the environment below sea and on land as well.



Link to the website: <https://positiveme.kr/>

Ask Yourself

Reflection

As a person who loves seafood, I was unaware of how overfishing not only impacts our waters but also economies as well. It is important to recognize that there is a problem and should continuously look towards finding solutions rather than being stagnant in our old ways. It is refreshing to see that South Korea and the United States are actively installing prevention methods and funding into research. Though I do not live near the water, I want to support these efforts as best as I can to increase the chances for a more sustainable life below sea.



Busan, South Korea

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