

The role and impact of harmful fisheries subsidies

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**Fisheries Subsidies' Contribution to Overcapacity
and Overfishing Meeting**
July 7th 2026



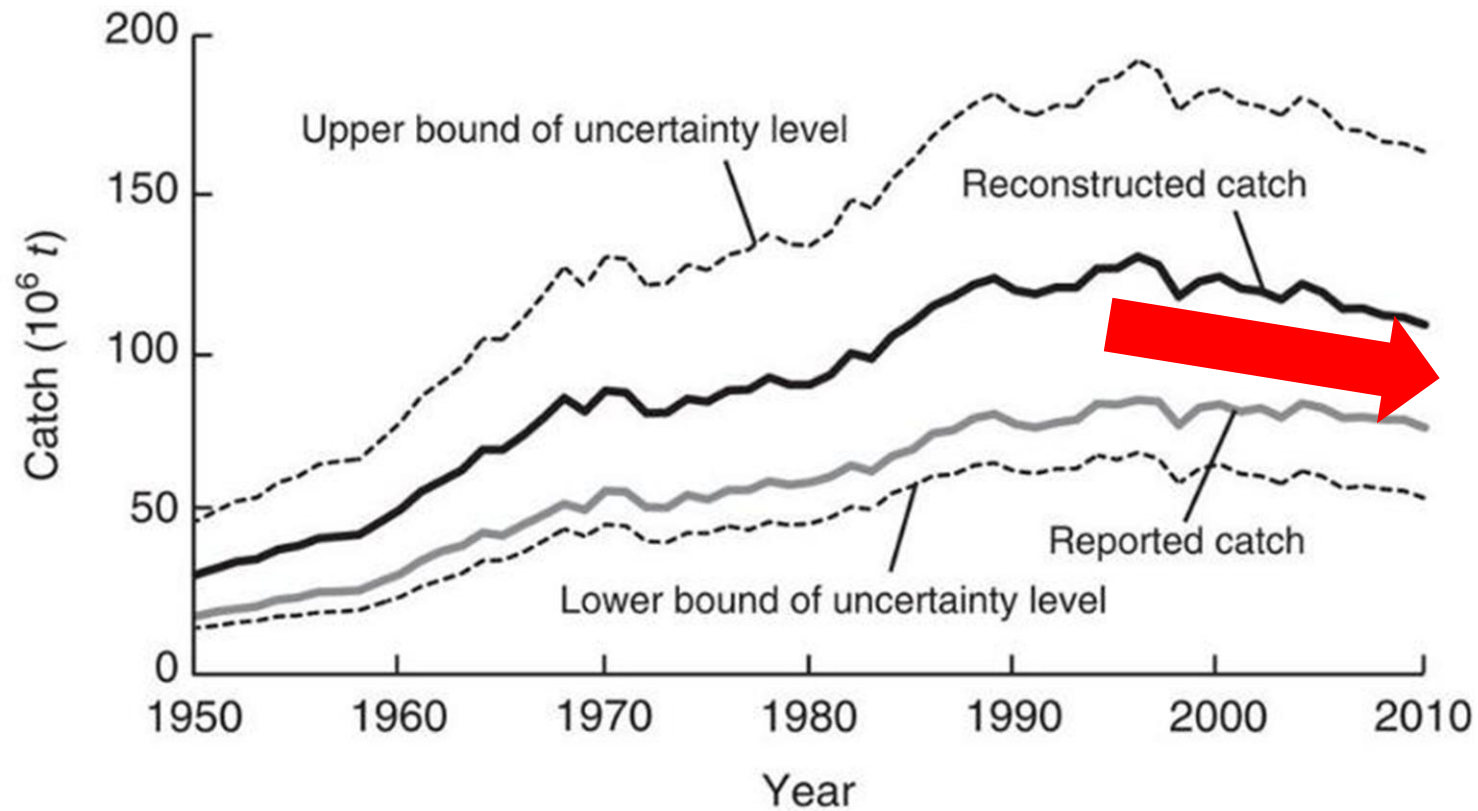


This talk will...

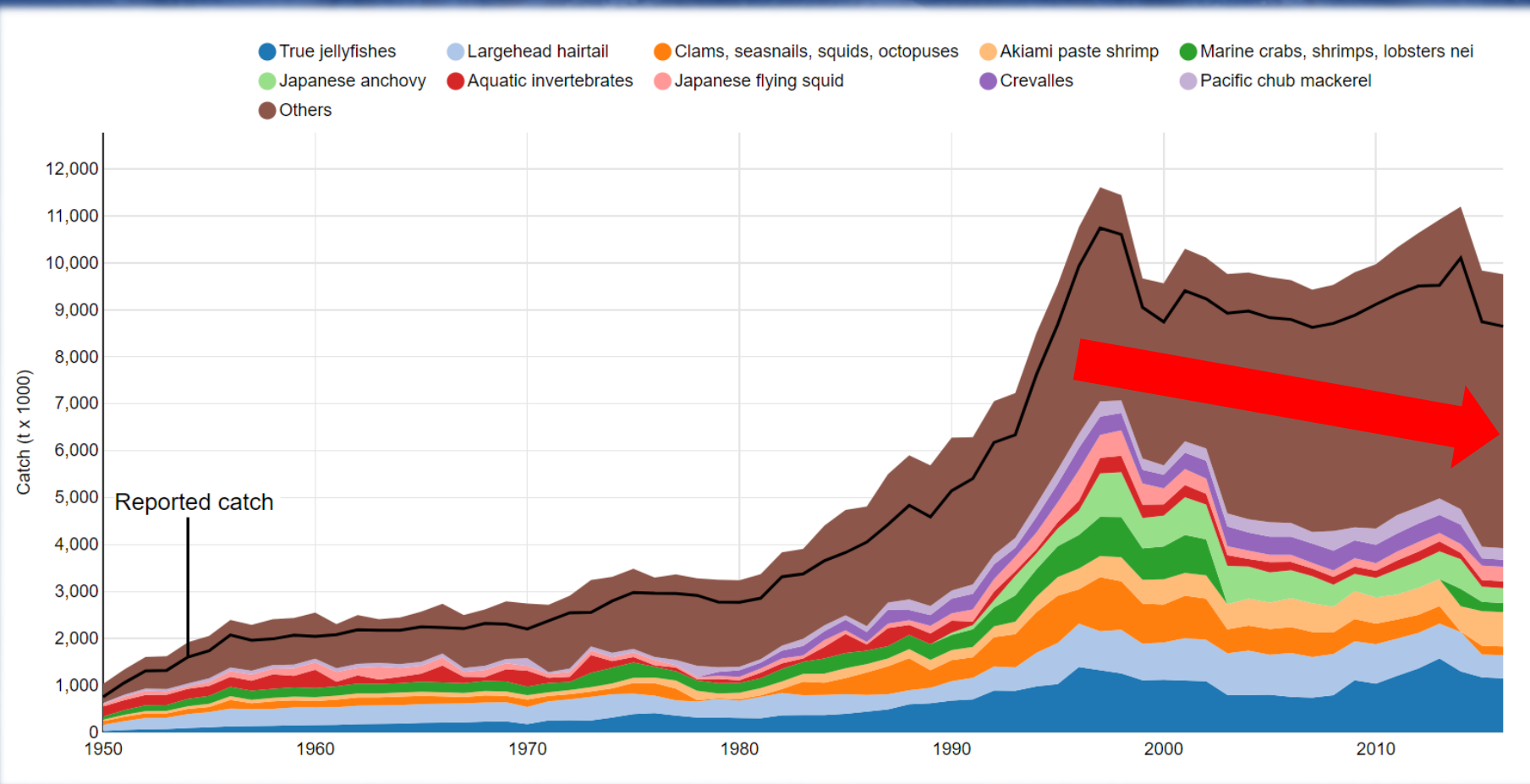
- Explain the role and impact of fisheries subsidies;
- Provide an update on fisheries subsidies estimates;
- Describe the link between fisheries subsidies, large-scale fishing and distant-water fishing; and
- Present new estimates of the spatial distribution of the impact of harmful subsidies.



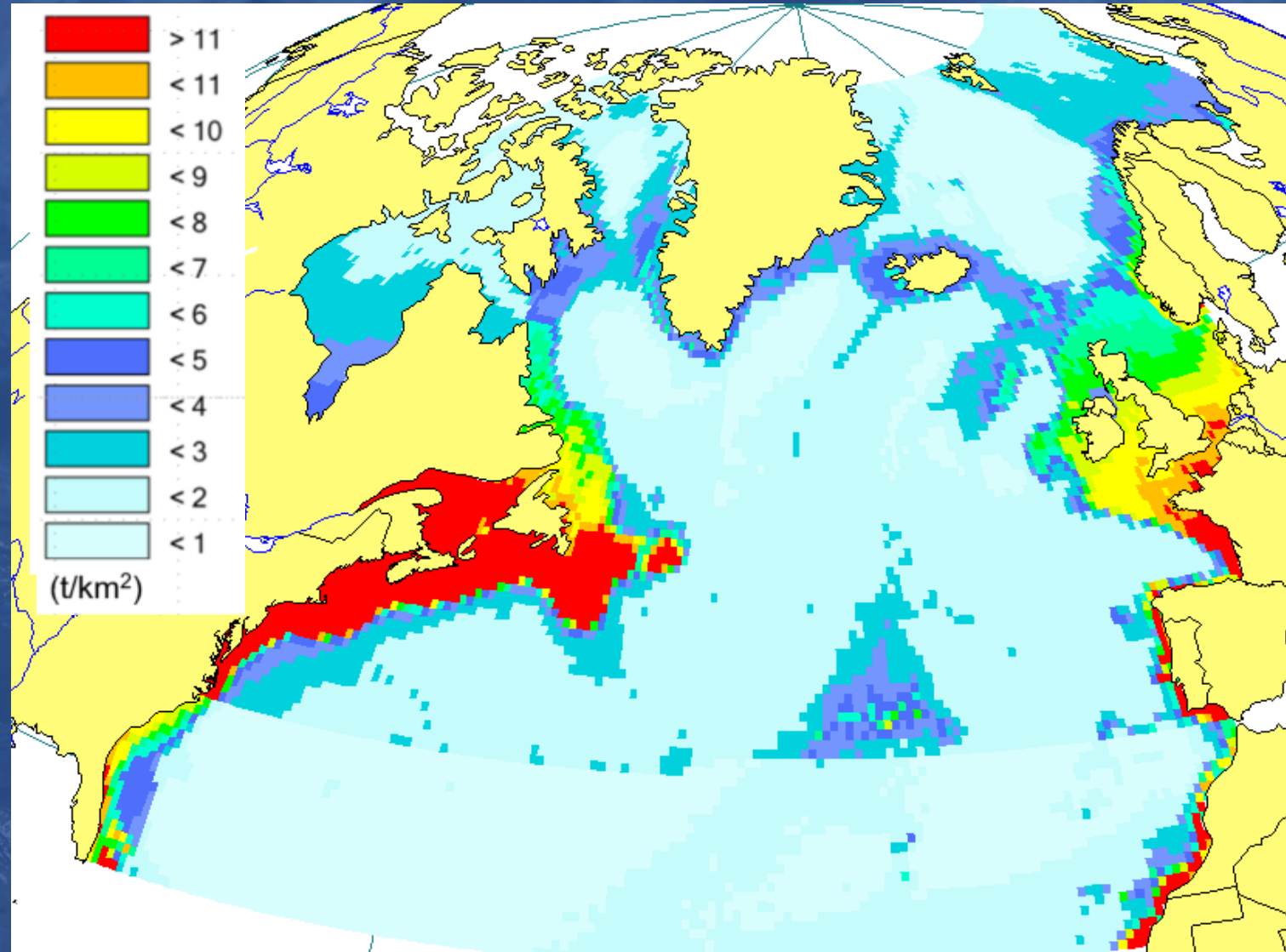
Global catch trends



Regional catch trends – waters of China

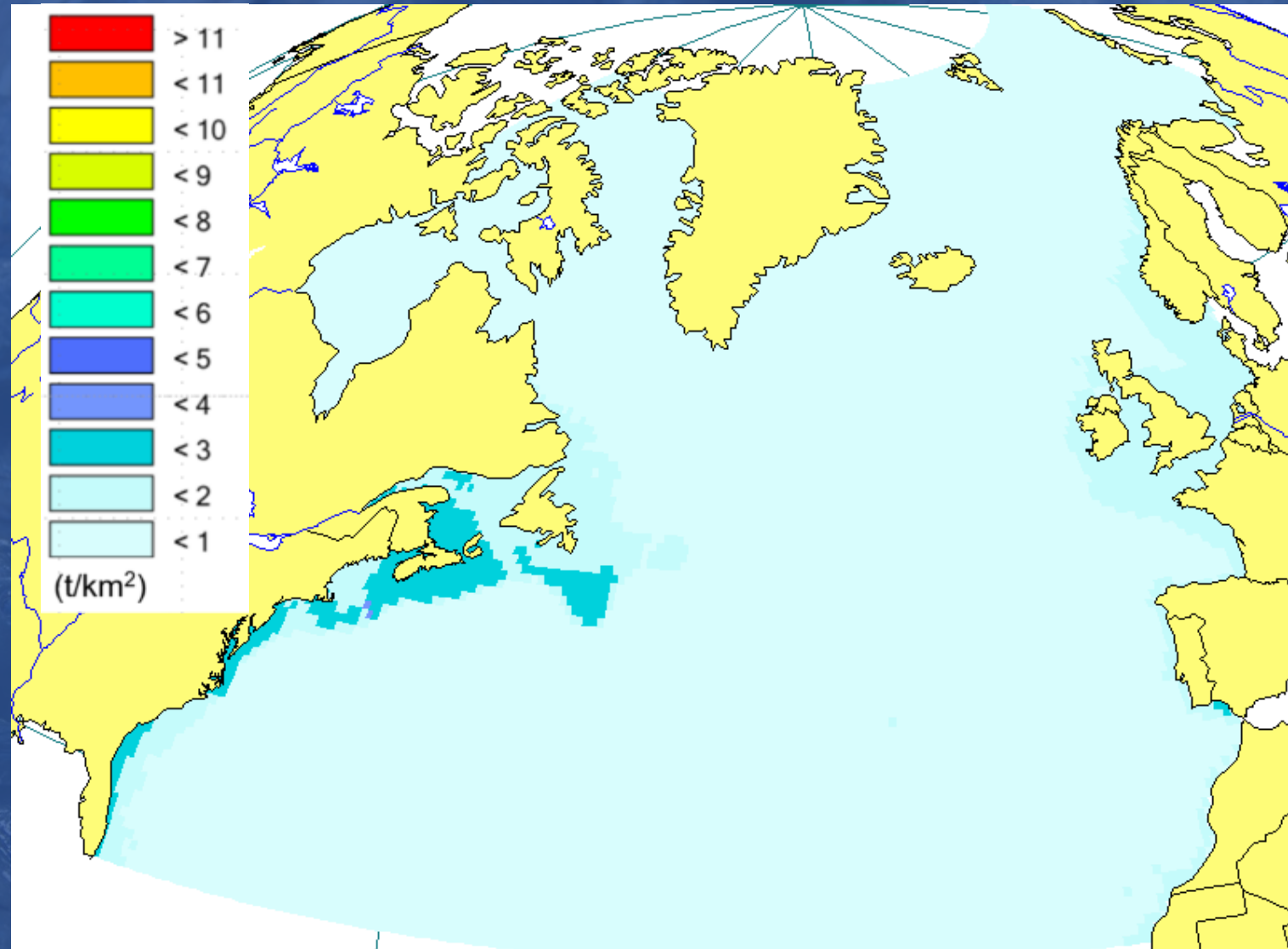


'Commercial' fish abundance (1900)



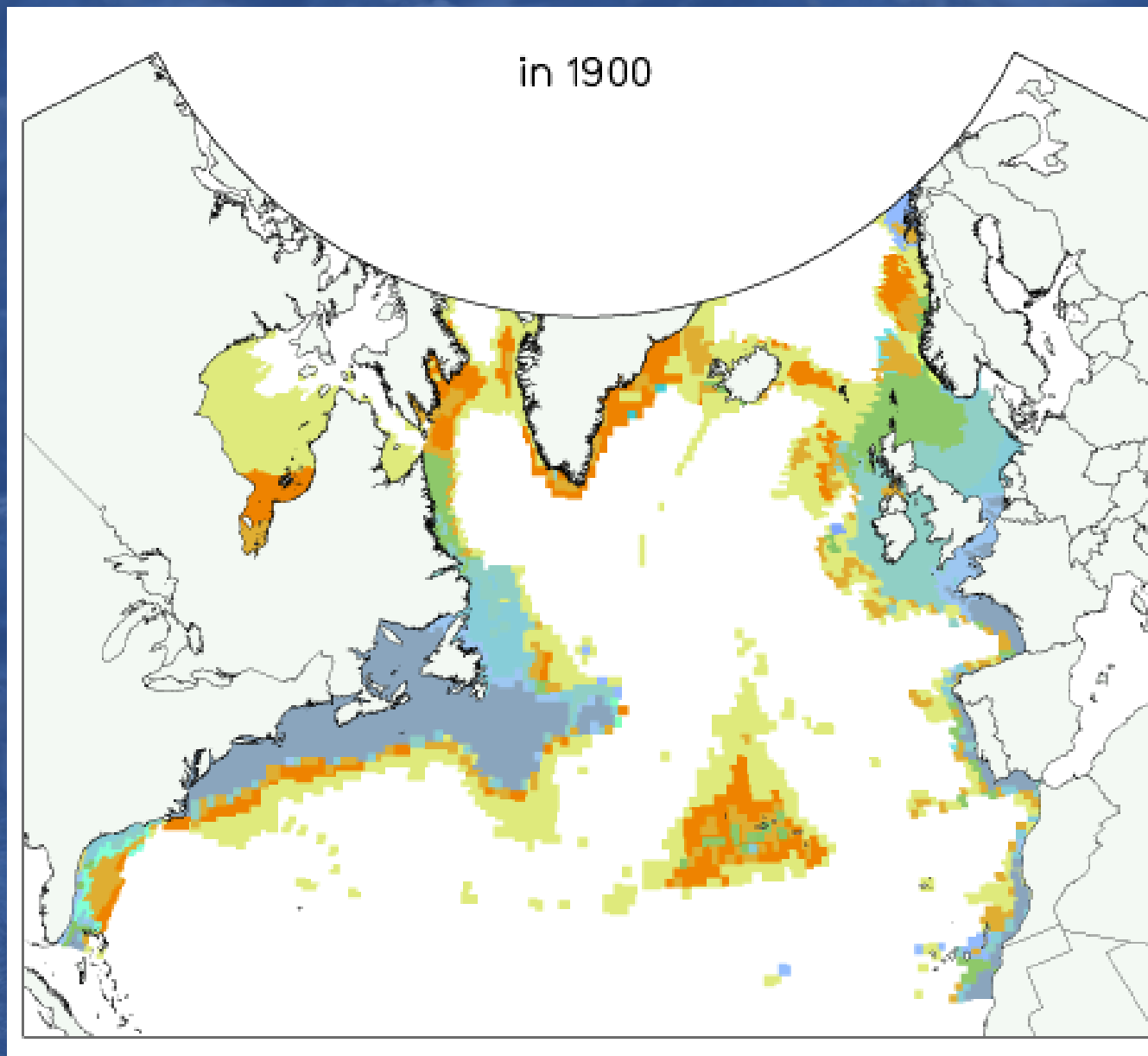
Source: Biomass of key commercial fish in 1900 (Christensen et al. ,2003).

'Commercial' fish abundance (2000)



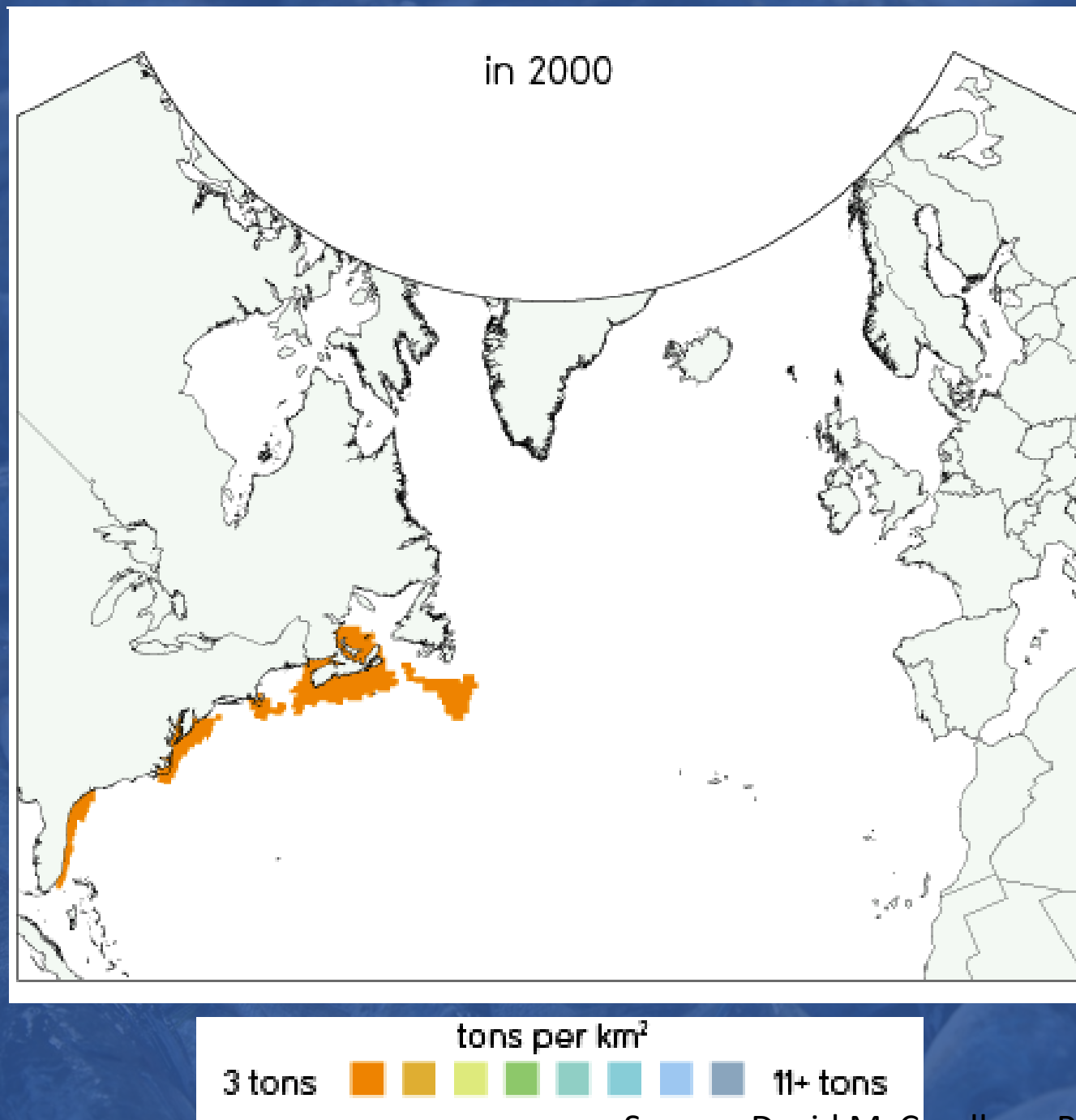
Source: Biomass of key commercial fish in 1900 (Christensen et al. ,2003).

Fish Biomass



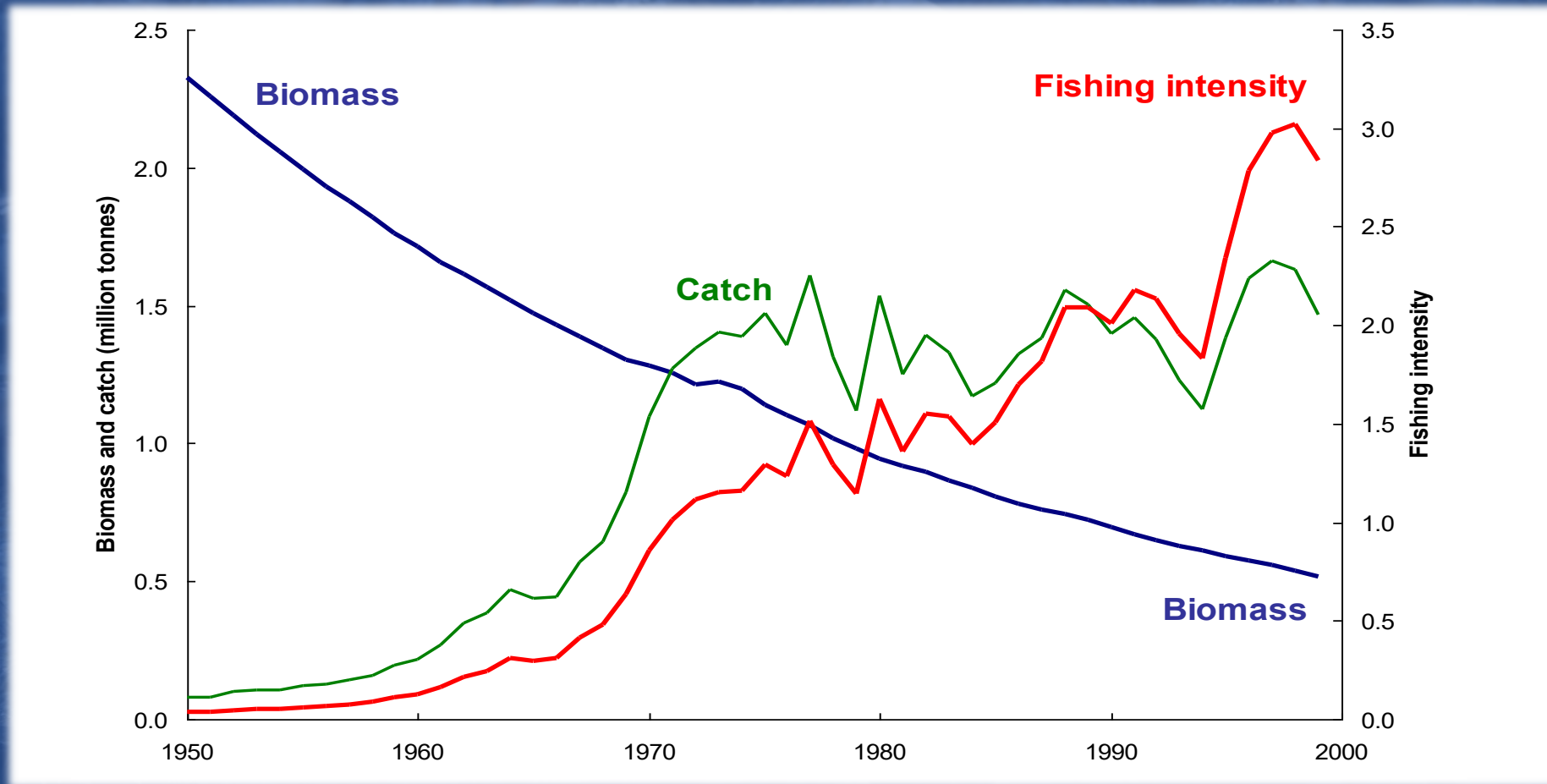
Source: David McCandless, PEW

Fish Biomass





Overfishing...





What are fishery subsidies?

- A financial contribution, direct or indirect, by any public entity to the fishing sector, which 'benefits' the sector by making them more profitable than otherwise.
- Empirical studies are clear—subsidies that artificially increase profits or reduce costs... result in overcapacity and can lead to overfishing.

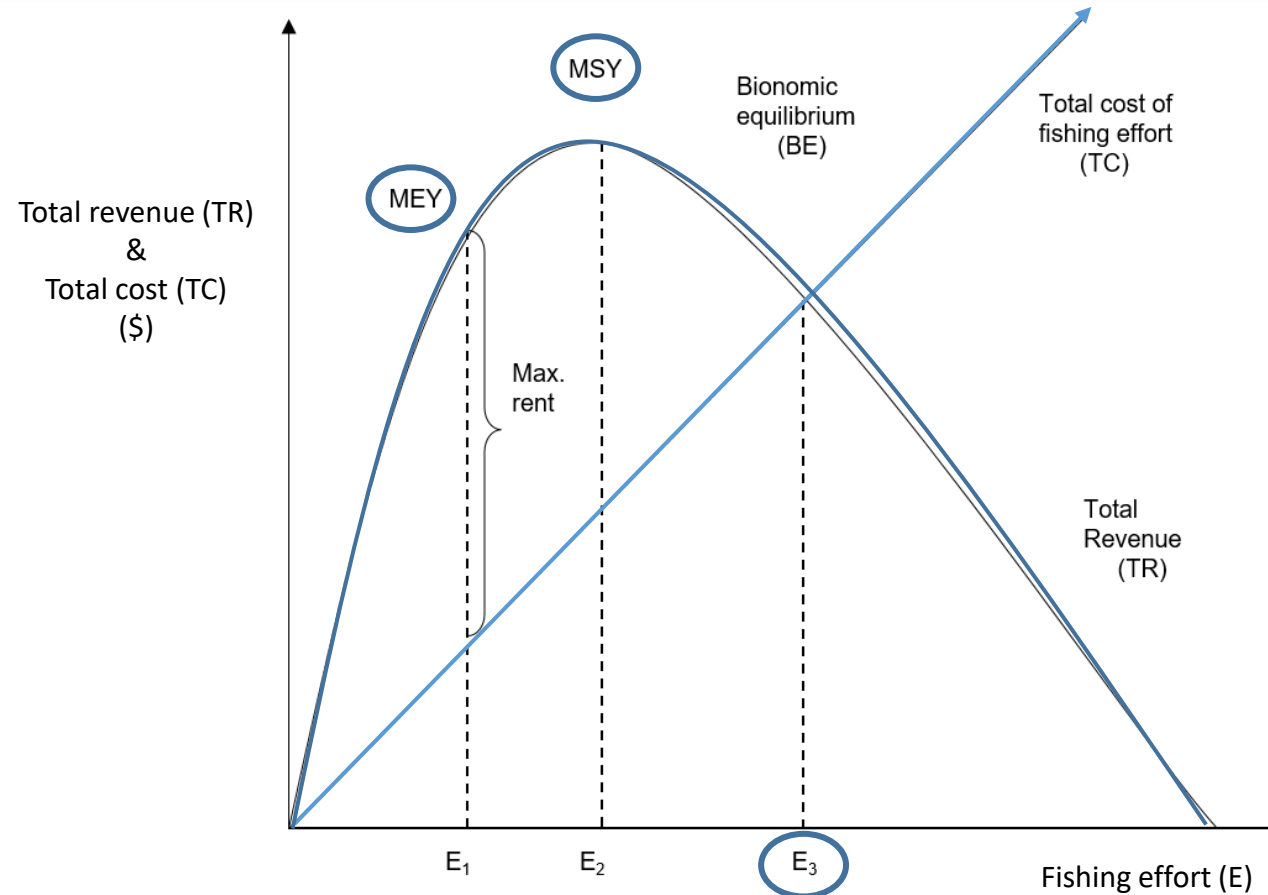
Source: Fishery subsidies: the interaction between science and policy (Sakai, Yagi & Sumaila 2019).

TARGET

14.6 by 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminate subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing, and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the WTO fisheries subsidies negotiation

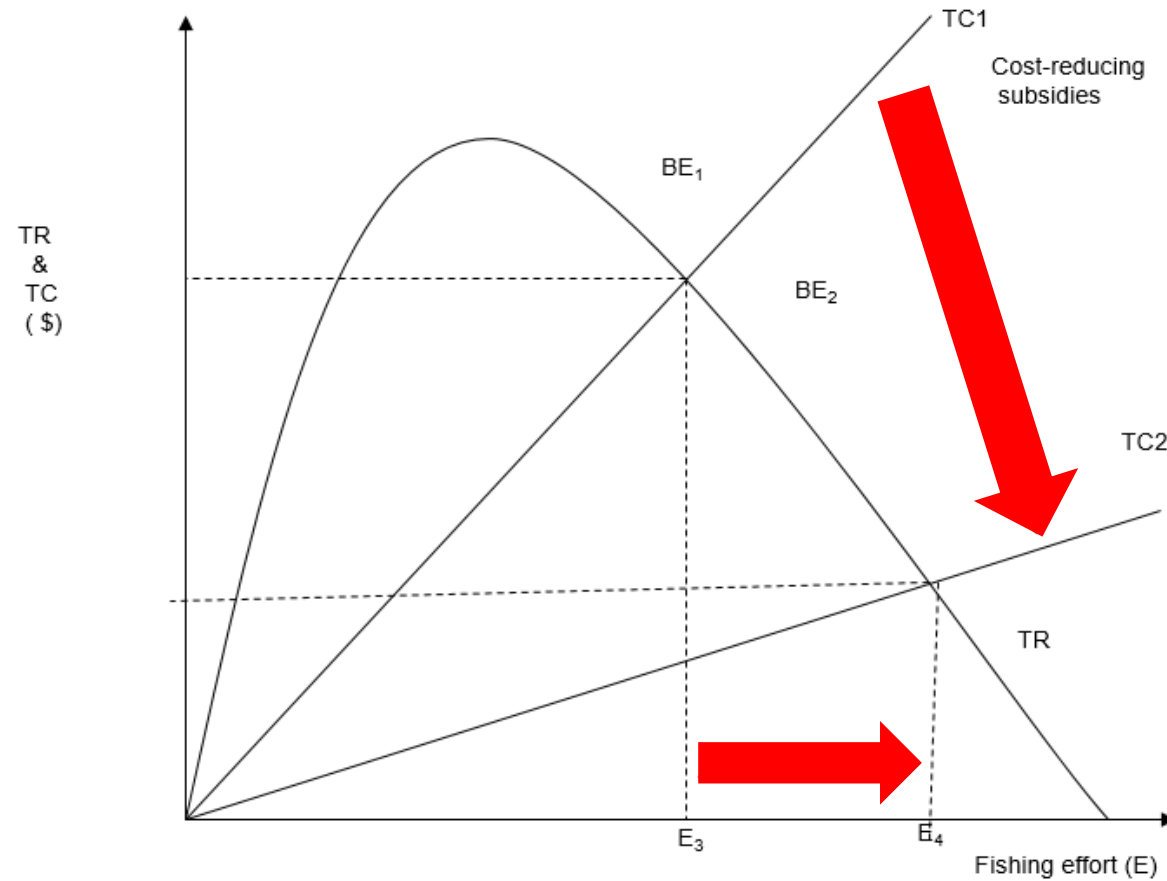


Impacts of fisheries subsidies





Impacts of fisheries subsidies





Cataloguing subsidies

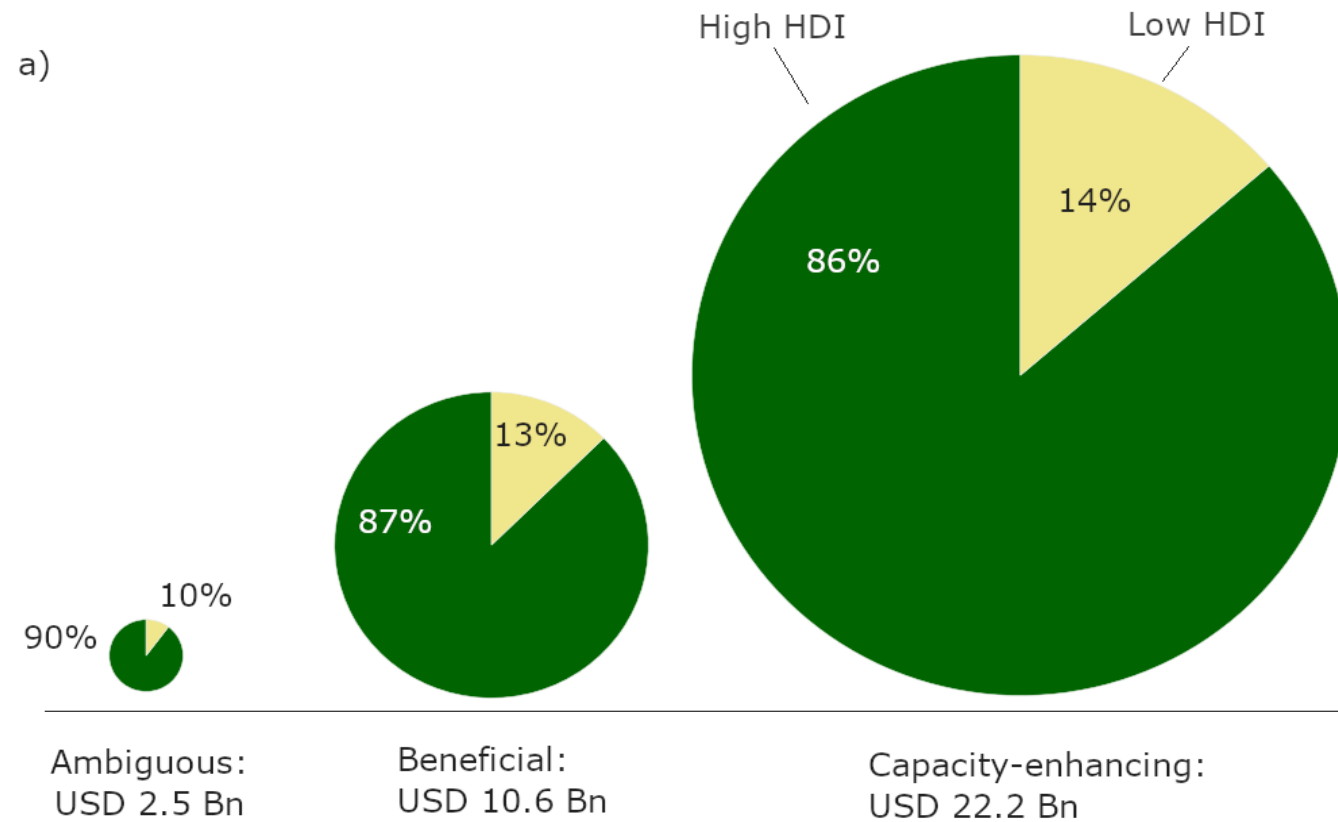
- Harmful subsidies (capacity-enhancing);
- Beneficial subsidies ('investment' programs in fish stocks);
- Ambiguous subsidies (programs may benefit or harm fish stocks);
- Developed a methodology to fill data gaps;
- Created a global database in the early 2000s and updated in 2019.

Sources: Sumaila & Pauly (2006); Khan et al. (2006); Sumaila et al. (2010, 2016; 2019).



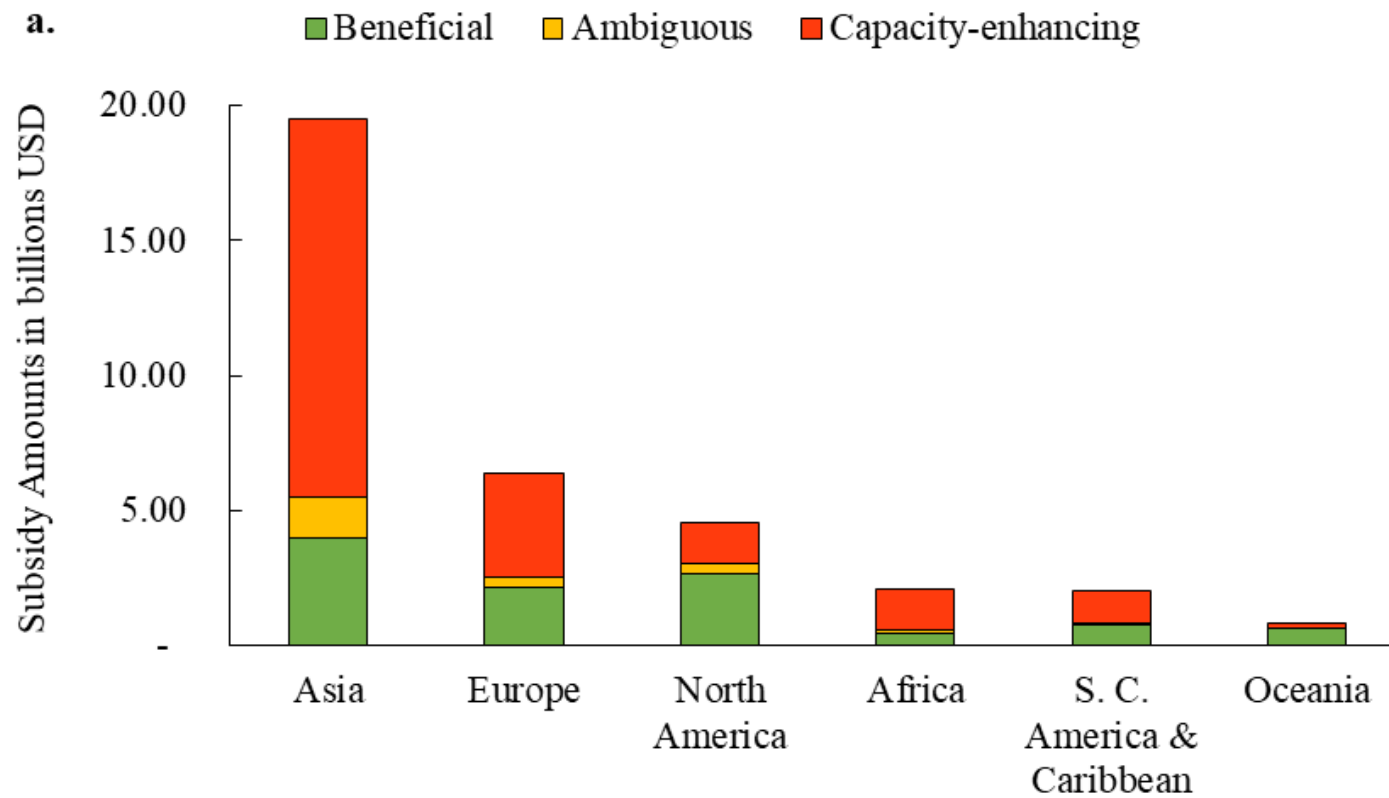


Global subsidies



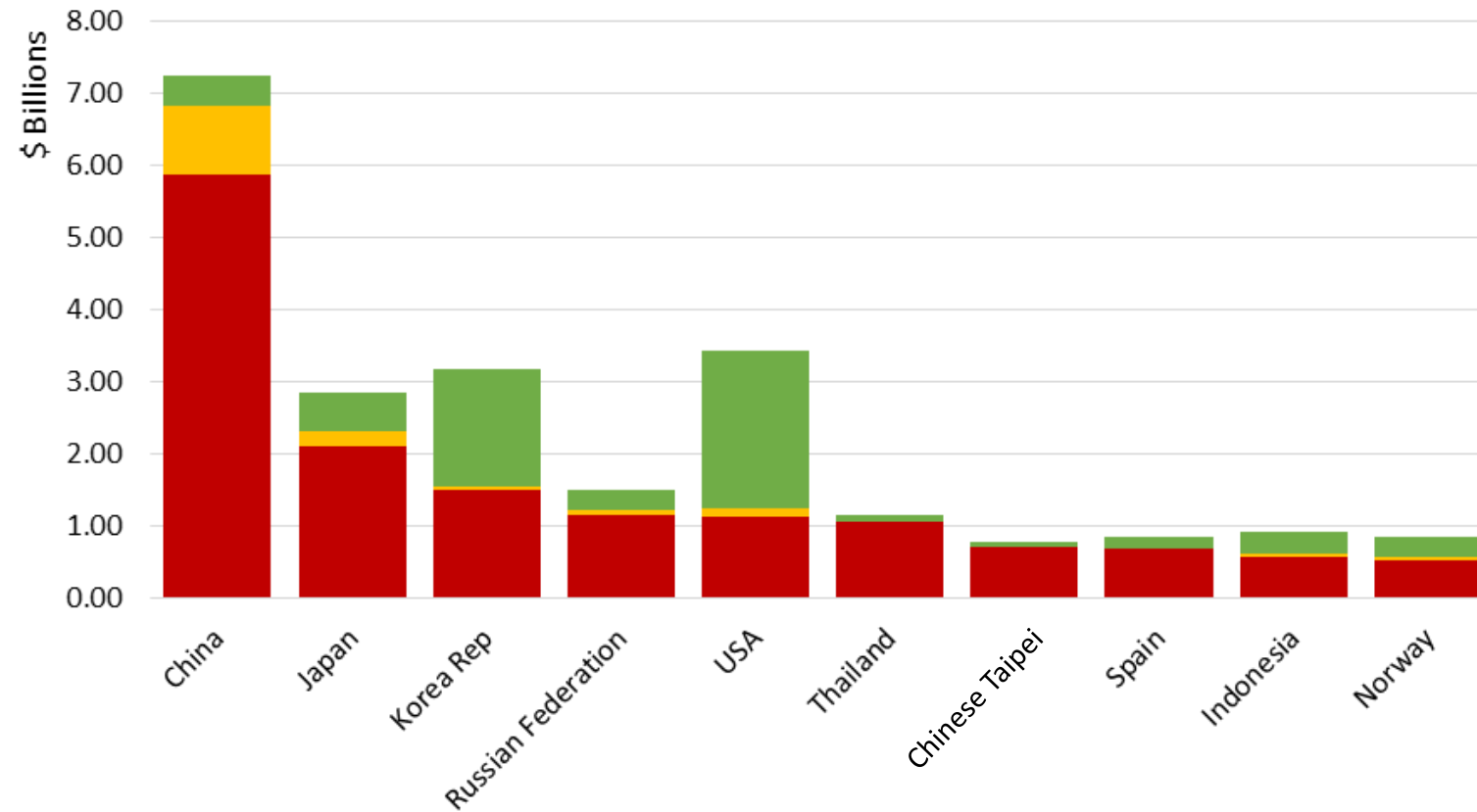


Global subsidies



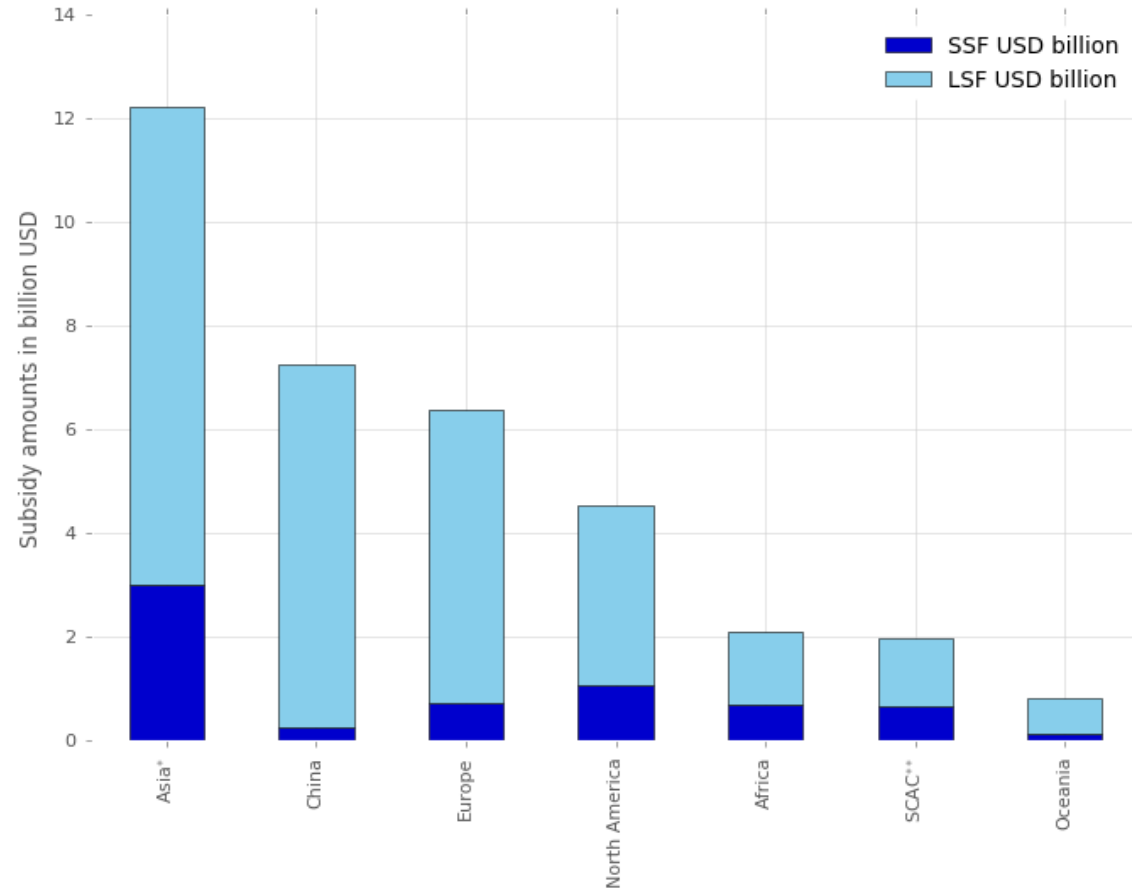


Top subsidizing countries



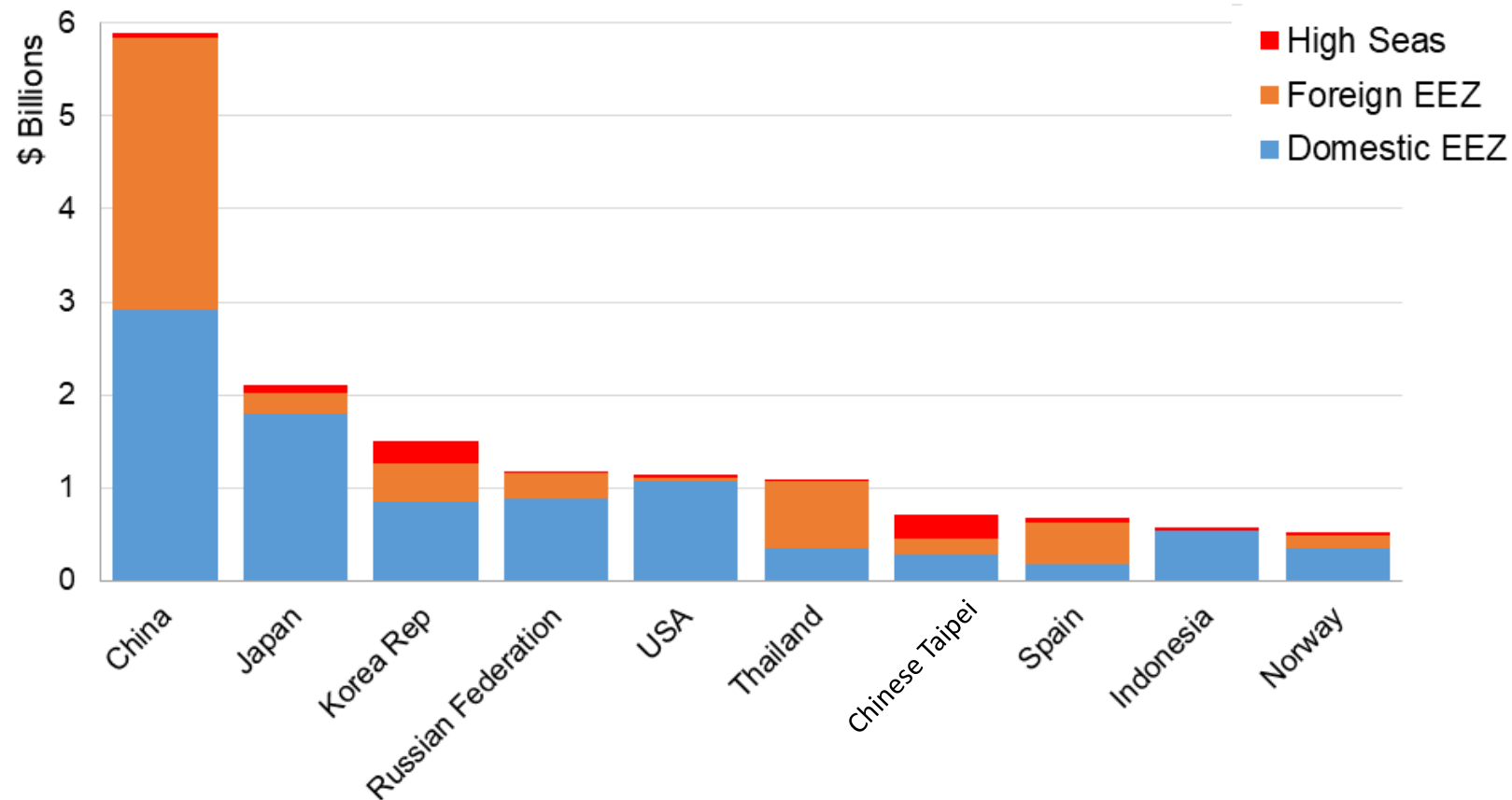


Subsidies to SSF & LSF



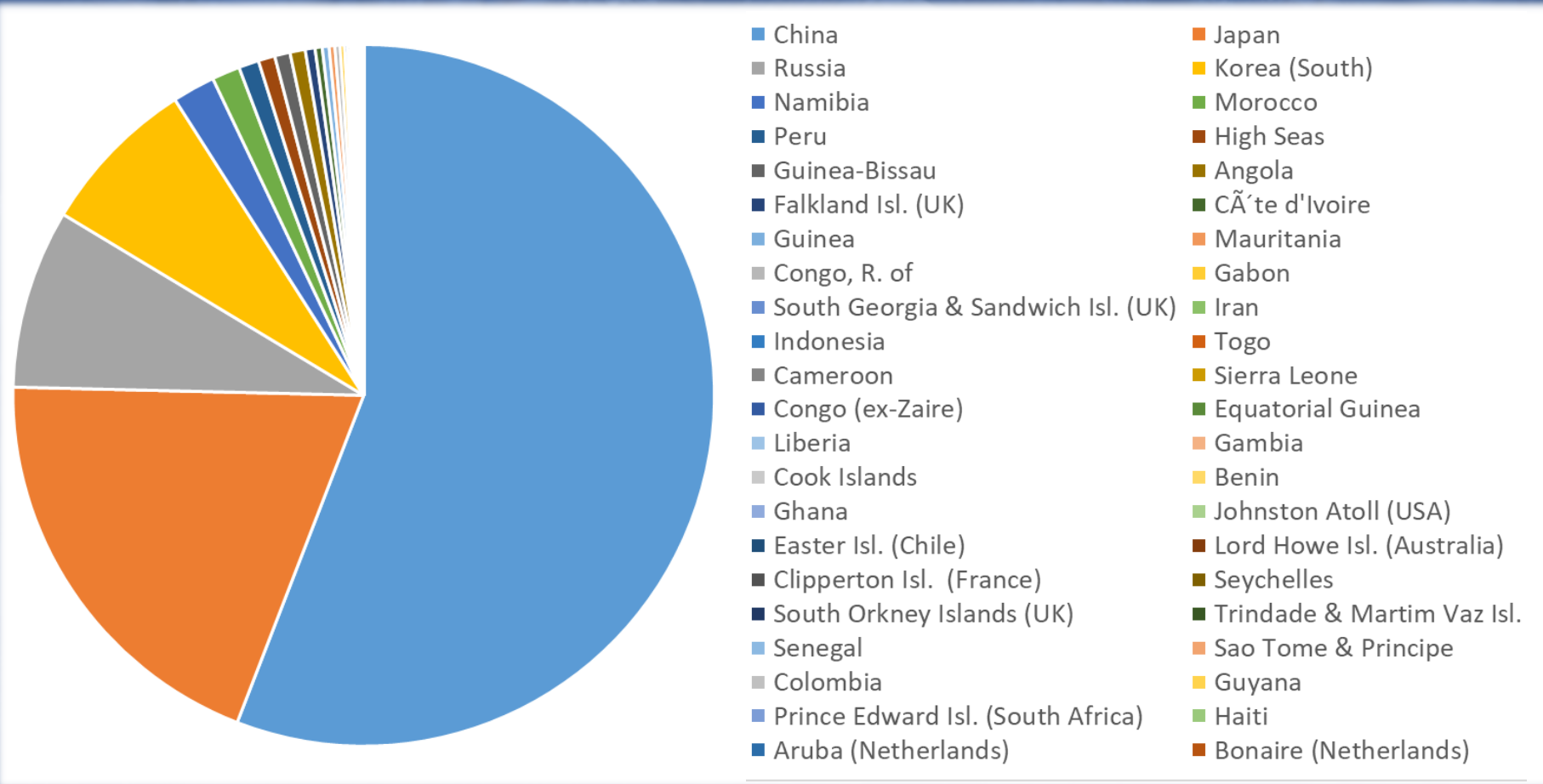


Domestic and foreign subsidies



Country	Domestic Subsidies (USD)	Foreign Subsidies (USD)	High Seas subsidies (USD)	Domestic Subsidies (%)	Foreign Subsidies (%)	High Seas subsidies (%)
China	2,908,760,550.20	2,925,048,939.72	51,831,571.95	49%	50%	1%

Distribution of China's harmful subsidies





Distribution of China's harmful subsidies (LSF)

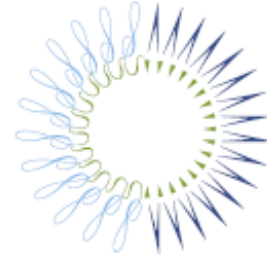
EEZ	Sum of Chinese Catch (tonnes)	Foreign Harmful Subsidies 2018 (USD)
China	5,963,281	2,638,570,093
Japan	2,972,817	1,315,380,636
Russia	1,258,278	556,749,744
Korea (South)	1,117,968	494,666,713
Namibia	300,022	132,750,686
Morocco	196,815	87,084,783
Peru	142,172	62,906,901
High Seas	117,142	51,831,572
Guinea-Bissau	108,398	47,962,601
Angola	107,157	47,413,902
Falkland Isl. (UK)	68,996	30,528,757
Côte d'Ivoire	50,016	22,130,722
Guinea	47,671	21,093,152
Mauritania	40,527	17,932,035
Congo, R. of	35,958	15,910,104
Gabon	30,906	13,675,042
South Georgia & Sandwich Isl. (UK)	22,595	9,997,518
Iran	21,968	9,720,085
Indonesia	18,613	8,235,670
Togo	18,375	8,130,275



Summary...

- Subsidies are often harmful and provided to LSF fleets of high-HDI countries...
- They cause harm when they artificially increase profits or reduce costs, but this harm is not confined to domestic waters...
- 35% of harmful subsidies provided by top-10 providers, impacts the waters of other nations or the high-seas...
- 50% of China's harmful subsidies impacts foreign EEZs, and 1% impacts high-seas...
- Clearly, the problem of harmful subsidies is not a domestic one, but a global one, and multi-lateral action is therefore essential.





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OCEAN
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FERU: <http://feru.oceans.ubc.ca/>



Key references

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