

FAO Fisheries Homepage

Fish on the Net

**The Internet is often like a maze where you could easily get lost.
To guide you, the first in a series on fisheries sites on the World Wide Web**

The website of the Fisheries Department of the FAO (<http://www.fao.org/waicent/faoinf/fishery/fishery.htm>) is one of the most comprehensive websites on the Internet on fisheries. FAO aims to 'prepare, manage and disseminate the information that it produces to the widest possible audiences, in the most efficient manner, utilizing the latest technologies, at less cost.'

WAICENT (World Agricultural Information Centre) is FAO's primary information gateway. Though each FAO department has presented its information resources independently, users can access these data using a single search mechanism. The site has links to topics like World Food Summit, Biosafety, Food Safety, and Codex Alimentarius.

WAICENT is a good example of how information can be integrated across departments and divisions, and made available anywhere in the world. The centralized database of WAICENT can be accessed either through the FAO homepage or through its Fisheries Department page.

The emphasis of the FAO site is more on textual matter and statistical data. It provides the full texts of technical conferences, consultations and agreements (for example, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, including technical guidelines, and the FAO Compliance Agreement), statistics of capture and culture fisheries production, and trade in fish and fish products.

Almost all the reports of FAO meetings, workshops and consultations are available in three languages—English, French and Spanish. The site is also a source for regional and country profiles,

databases and other data on, for example, the world's fishing fleet and population of fishers.

SOFIA (*State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture*), an annual publication of FAO, presents a global overview of trends in production and trade in fisheries and aquaculture. The 1998 edition, the latest available on the site, incorporates developments in fish production, utilization and trade. It identifies and discusses important issues related to the sector's future contribution to food security and economic growth.

More documents, such as the Review of the State of World Fishery Resources: Marine Fisheries, and the Review of the State of World Aquaculture, are also available on the FAO site.

The Virtual Library project of the David Lubin Memorial Library has specialized databases, electronic journals, library catalogue, special bibliographies and a list of the bookmarked sites of interest. The search window for the library catalogue is available on this site.

The David Lubin Memorial Library of the FAO is its main library which has branch libraries in the Fisheries and Forestry Departments, and the Nutrition and Statistics Divisions.

The search for data on FAOSTAT, the statistical database of FAO's WAICENT, can be defined in several ways—by country, commodity, region, or year, or by a combination of these. Data from 1961 to 1996 are available on FAOSTAT.

The data on marine and freshwater fish as well as processed products, arranged by groups, are available on FAOSTAT. Specific country wise searches for groups of

fishery resources like crustaceans, molluscs, and tunas can be carried out, Export and import as well as consumption and trade data are also available.

The country profile section of the page features crisp profiles of countries involved in fisheries. However, while FAO has made available in print profiles of 140 member countries, the website, at present, features only 42. In South America, for instance, only Argentina, Colombia and Uruguay figure, while Asia has no presence at all. Data in some of the country profiles have not been updated for about seven years. It would be useful to have up to date profiles of more countries.

The fisheries statistical data can be downloaded as zipped files. But, depending on connectivity speed, these files, often large, can take a long time to download. An alternative is to conduct specific searches. Though FAOSTAT gives various permutations and combinations of statistical data compiled from FAO's print publication, FAO Yearbook of Fishery Statistics—is not as detailed as the book.

The FAO site also gives links to the various downloadable software for organizing documentation of different kinds of fishery-related information and statistical data. All the data as well as the software available on this site can be downloaded free of cost.

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