

# Foreword

Fisheries play an essential role in feeding the global population and providing jobs and livelihoods to coastal communities. Yet, today, this is coming under threat from unsustainable fishing practices.

Some countries have made progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14 – which seeks to “conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” – but this success has not been met globally. Today, almost a quarter of fish stocks, for which information is available, are at risk. Of the remaining three-quarters, only little over half are sufficiently abundant to produce the maximum sustainable volume or value of catch.

This is avoidable. The *OECD Review of Fisheries 2020* shows that a number of current policies are contributing to the overexploitation of stocks. Governments continue to support fisheries through policies that lower the cost of inputs (such as fishing vessels or fuel). This, in-turn, tends to encourage unsustainable fishing when catch is not controlled sufficiently. While not all countries provide the same level or type of support, on average, between 2016 and 2018, countries covered by the OECD Fisheries Support Estimate (FSE) database spent over USD 3 billion annually on support that reduces input costs. Of this, support to fuel was the single largest direct support policy, accounting for 25% of total support to the sector. Such policies not only favour unsustainable fishing practices, but also fail to achieve their primary objective: the effective transfer of income to fishers.

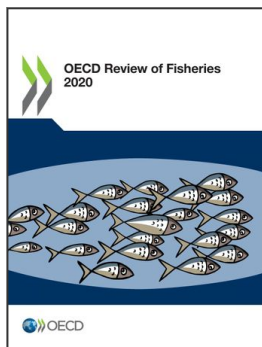
The *OECD Review of Fisheries 2020* makes a powerful case that reforming this support should be a priority for policymakers, especially as they build a robust and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Attaching ‘blue strings’ and henceforth aligning any support granted with long-term objectives will be key to securing a sustainable, equitable and resilient fisheries sector. Transparency in policy responses is vital to maintain confidence in seafood markets and build legitimacy for reform. Drawing on the latest available data reported by OECD countries and partner economies, this Review analyses how governments are currently managing and supporting their fisheries and puts forward priorities for action, both at the national level and for the international community.

The *Review* also shows that policies to ensure the long-term viability of fisheries and to protect and restore ocean resources and ecosystems can be reconciled with policies to address short-term socio-economic goals. Moreover, economic, equity and environmental priorities include: supporting fishers in need, rather than subsidising fishing inputs or effort; investing in data collection and analysis in order to ensure that evidence-based management is implemented and enforced; and implementing comprehensive and transparent regulation and policies to fight Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. The *Review* includes examples of such policy reforms successfully implemented across various countries. With this policy package, governments can ensure the welfare of fishing sector communities and accelerate the transition to more sustainable and resilient fisheries.

As policy makers tackle the challenges of ensuring a sustainable recovery and forging a path to achieving the SDGs, they can count on the OECD and on the *Review of Fisheries 2020* to support and inform their efforts.



Angel Gurría  
Secretary-General  
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development



**From:**  
**OECD Review of Fisheries 2020**

**Access the complete publication at:**

<https://doi.org/10.1787/7946bc8a-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2020), "Foreword", in *OECD Review of Fisheries 2020*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/db1c2154-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.