



SYSTEM DIMENSIONS	CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL	BIOLOGICAL COMPONENTS	HUMAN USES
Extent Pattern	Nutrients, Carbon, Oxygen Contaminants Physical	Plants and Animals Communities Ecological Productivity	Food, Fiber, and Water Recreation and Other Services

## ● Commercial Fish and Shellfish Landings

**What Is This Indicator, and Why Is It Important?** This indicator reports the weight of fish, shellfish, and other products taken from U.S. waters. Landings, plus certain aquaculture harvests, are shown for five regions that cover all waters out to the 200-mile territorial limit.

The amount of fish and shellfish caught for food, meal, and oil is a measure of society's reliance on the seas for these products. Of total landings, about 70% is for human consumption, about 20% is for meal, oil, and other industrial purposes, and the remainder is used for bait and animal feed.

**What Do the Data Show?** Since the late 1970s, yearly landings of fish and shellfish from U.S. waters have totaled nearly 5 million tons. In the late 1970s, the United States established a Fishery Conservation Zone (FCZ), covering hundreds of thousands of square miles of formerly international waters. Foreign fishing in these waters was eliminated, except in Alaska, where it was phased out, ending completely in 1991. The total foreign catch in the FCZ is uncertain, as indicated by the dotted line on the graph, and pre-1963 estimates are not available. In most regions, landings by U.S. vessels have remained more or less constant over the past 30 years. In Alaska, an expanding fleet has substantially increased U.S. landings.

**Discussion** This indicator does not provide information on the condition of fish stocks (see Status of Commercially Important Fish Stocks, p. 82). Furthermore, these aggregate landing figures do not reveal that, over the years, fishing efforts have repeatedly shifted from species that have been depleted or overfished to others that have been relatively unexploited.

In 1999, about 84% of landings were fish, about 14% shellfish, and about 2% other products, including sea urchins and worms. These data include some aquaculture production.

The technical note for this indicator is on page 226.

