

# Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing Regional Overview



## SOUTHEAST PACIFIC OCEAN

### Geography

The waters of the Southeast Pacific Ocean stretch the entire Pacific coast of South America - from Panama to Cape Horn. It has both warm and cold currents which creates a robust marine environment. Notably, the Humboldt Current System (HCS) accounts for approximately 18-20% of worldwide fish catch, and waters off the coast of Peru are home to approximately half of the global catch of jumbo squid and mahi mahi. The area is home to several unparalleled natural habitats, including the Galápagos Islands and the Malpelo Fauna and Flora Sanctuary.

### Strategic Significance

The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) has identified IUU fishing as the leading global maritime security threat. USCG and USSOUTHCOM have increased partnership activities in the area. Distant Water Fleets and Dark Fleets, primarily from China, are contributing to environmental degradation and unsustainable fisheries, which negatively impact economic potential and regional stability.



In 2017, IUU Fishing in Chile's EEZ amounted to approximately \$300 million.



Latin America's fish consumption is expected to increase 33% by 2030.





# SOUTHEAST PACIFIC IUU CHALLENGES

## TRANSPARENCY

Publicly available data on key elements of the fishing industry are crucial to ensure adequate management and accountability for fishery resources. According to the [Fisheries Transparency Initiative](#) (FiTI), countries need to share information on items such as catch volumes, vessels, permitting, and fishing licenses in order to properly manage fisheries sustainably. Ecuador is the first Latin American country to [commit](#) to FiTI standards of transparency. FiTI has also been working with stakeholders in [Peru](#) to facilitate broader adoption of transparency standards.

## DISTANT WATER FLEETS (DWFs) & DARK FLEETS

Distant Water Fleets consist of industrial sized trawlers originating from nations without any territorial claim to Southeast Pacific Waters. "Dark Fleets" turn off ship automatic identification systems (AIS) to avoid detection, and impacts are exacerbated by insufficient and underfunded monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) mechanisms. These DWF and "dark fleets" are often hotbeds of suspected criminal activity, [including drug trafficking and human rights abuses](#). In 2020, a fleet of approximately [300 Chinese owned fishing vessels](#) went "dark" for extended periods of time, rendering their locations and activities untraceable. These vessels swarmed just outside of Ecuador's EEZ for several months, sparking intense [international scrutiny](#), and resulted in an unprecedented joint condemnation statement by Chile, Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru.

## ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION

Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador host some of the largest marine protected areas in the world. Precious ecosystems, like the Galapagos, have been able to flourish thanks to concentrated conservation efforts. But progress is under duress from [pollution and IUU fishing mostly perpetrated by Chinese fishing fleets](#). The notorious 2017 seizing of a Chinese vessel caught [transporting 300 tons of sharks and other protected species](#) has continued to loom large over monitoring activities.





# SOUTHEAST PACIFIC KEY PARTNERS & ACTIVITIES

## REGIONAL

- [South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization](#)
- [Permanent Commission for the South Pacific \(CPPS\)](#)
- [Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Area of the South-East Pacific \(Lima Convention\)](#)
- [Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru Joint Statement Condemning IUU Fishing](#)

## UNITED STATES

U.S. agencies leverage several IUU portfolios, programs, and laws. Examples include:

- [Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006 \(MRSA\)](#)
- [National Ocean Council Committee on IUU Fishing and Seafood Fraud](#)
- [Maritime Security and Fisheries Enforcement \(SAFE\) Act](#)
- [Interagency Working Group on IUU Fishing](#)
- [Department of Labor's \\$5 million grant to strengthen conditions in Peru and Ecuador](#)
- [USSOUTHCOM and Global Fishing Watch IUU Partnership Agreement](#)
- [USSOUTHCOM Multilateral UNITAS Exercise](#)

## INTERNATIONAL

- [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\) - IUU Fishing](#)
- [FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing](#)
- [International Chamber of Commerce \(ICC\) International Maritime Bureau \(IMB\)](#)
- [International Maritime Organization](#)
- [Seafood Alliance for Legality and Traceability \(SALT\)](#)