

Introduction to Fisheries Policy and Law

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Key concepts, objectives, institutional framework, and major legal instruments

1. Why Fisheries Policy & Law Matter

Aspect	Explanation
Economic	Fisheries provide livelihoods for millions, generate export revenue, and support related industries (processing, gear manufacturing, tourism).
Food Security	Fish are a primary source of animal protein and essential micronutrients for billions of people.
Environmental	Sustainable harvest protects marine ecosystems, biodiversity, and the services they provide (e.g., carbon sequestration, coastal protection).
Social & Cultural	Many coastal communities have traditions and identities tied to fishing.
Governance	Clear rules reduce conflicts, prevent over-exploitation, and enable transparent allocation of rights and benefits.

2. Core Objectives of Fisheries Policy

1. **Sustainability** – Maintain fish stocks at biologically sustainable levels (Maximum Sustainable Yield, Precautionary Approach).
 2. **Equity** – Ensure fair access to resources, especially for small-scale fishers, women, and Indigenous peoples.
 3. **Food & Nutrition Security** – Provide affordable, nutritious fish for domestic consumption.
 4. **Economic Development** – Promote value-adding, market access, and job creation along the value chain.
 5. **Conservation & Biodiversity** – Protect habitats (e.g., mangroves, coral reefs) and non-target species (by-catch, marine mammals).
 6. **Compliance & Enforcement** – Build capacity for monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) and deter illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
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3. Institutional Landscape

Level	Main Actors	Typical Functions
International	FAO (Food & Agriculture Organization), Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), World Trade Organization (WTO)	Set global norms, facilitate data sharing, negotiate quotas, resolve disputes.
Regional	RFMOs (e.g., ICCAT, WCPFC), Sub-regional bodies (e.g., ECOWAS Fisheries Committee)	Manage migratory stocks, coordinate transboundary measures, harmonize regulations.
National	Ministry of Fisheries / Marine Resources, Coast Guard / Navy, Environmental Agency, Parliament / Legislative bodies	Draft legislation, allocate rights, enforce rules, conduct scientific assessments.
Local / Community	Fishers' cooperatives, Indigenous councils, NGOs, Local Government Units	Implement co-management, monitor compliance, provide traditional knowledge.

4. Legal Foundations

4.1 International Treaties & Agreements

Treaty / Agreement	Scope	Key Provisions
UNCLOS (1982)	All maritime zones (Territorial Sea, EEZ, High Seas)	States have sovereign rights over resources in EEZ; duty to conserve and manage living resources.
FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF, 1995)	Voluntary, global	Principles for sustainable management, ecosystem approach, precautionary principle, stakeholder participation.
Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA, 2016)	Prevents IUU fish entering markets	Requires port inspections, denial of entry for vessels lacking documentation.

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Treaty / Agreement	Scope	Key Provisions
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	Biodiversity conservation	Requires ecosystem?based management and consideration of marine genetic resources.
RFMOs Agreements	Specific fish stocks/areas	Set quotas, technical measures (size limits, gear restrictions), monitoring protocols.

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