

Fight for the Ocean

By eating sea creatures, people are contributing to the destruction of the world of other beings, but as vegans we also need to do more. We cannot be passive. We must fight for every living creature in the ocean—for their lives. In 2018, we started our Fight for the Ocean effort in order to make a difference for our ocean.

Ghost Fishing Gear

“Ghost fishing gear” is abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) such as nets, long lines, fish traps, or any human-made contraptions designed to catch fishes or other marine creatures. (1)

As it drifts, this ghost fishing gear takes on a life of its own, trapping fish, entangling all kinds of animals from seabirds and turtles to dolphins and whales, and snagging or smothering coral reefs. Sea creatures who are caught in this gear die and in turn attract scavengers who will get caught in that same net, thus creating a vicious cycle.

Also called “ghost gear,” this lost fishing equipment is among the greatest killers in our ocean, and not only because of their numbers. Literally hundreds of miles of nets and lines get “lost” every year, and due to the nature of the materials used to produce these types of gear, they can and will keep catching and killing animals for multiple decades, possibly even for several centuries.



Fishing nets alone make up

46%

of the 79,000 tons of garbage in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. (3)

Plastic Pollution

Plastics pollution has a direct and deadly effect on wildlife. Thousands of seabirds and sea turtles, seals, and other marine mammals are killed each year after ingesting plastic or getting entangled in it.

Researchers from the University of Exeter and Plymouth Marine Laboratory have found microplastics in nearly all the species of marine animals they have looked at, from tiny zooplankton and fish larvae to dolphins and turtles. (4)

- **Fishes** in the North Pacific ingest 12,000 to 24,000 tons of plastic each year. (5)
- Research indicates that half of all **sea turtles** worldwide have ingested plastic. (6)
- It's estimated that 60 percent of all **seabird** species have eaten pieces of plastic, with that number predicted to increase to 99 percent by 2050. (7)
- An estimated 136,000 **whales, dolphins, seals, and sea lions** die as a result of ingesting, and/or getting tangled up in plastics, such as “ghost fishing gear.” (8)
- In the Mariana Trench east of the Philippines, the deepest depth on Earth, **100 percent of the animals** studied had plastic fibers in their digestive tracts. (9)

While reports of dead animals washing up on shore with their stomachs filled with plastics have become sadly common, the new study reveals that beached carcasses are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to plastics pollution in our oceans.

Impact of Eating Sea Creatures

Today, the world is witnessing the devastating effects of the fishing industry's infinite greed, as they repeatedly destabilize and exploit our ocean.

In 2006, 29 percent of all commercially fished species were in a state of population collapse—defined as populations “at least 90 percent below their historic maximum catch levels.” Similar findings in 2008 state that 80 percent of wild populations are either fully exploited, over exploited, depleted, or recovering from depletion.

Commercial fishing techniques and the common practices used to catch sea life indiscriminately capture any and all animals who are unable to escape them. They also decimate ancient coral communities that are home to thousands of plant and animal species.

Whether entangled in nets or impaled by hooks, sea creatures experience prolonged pain and suffering. They tirelessly try to free themselves and are vulnerable to predation and parasitism. The nets and hooks are reeled in at a fast rate, causing rupture of the eyes and swim bladder. Most of the fishes die of suffocation in the minutes after being lifted from the water and dumped onto a boat.

For crustaceans (lobsters, crabs, shrimps) and molluscs (octopuses, squids, scallops, clams, oysters), their fate is not any better. After being removed from the water, they may spend hours or days on the deck of a ship. Surrounded by unfamiliar sights, smells, and feelings, they are stacked, piled, and thrown with no regard for their well-being. Once on land, they either suffer slow deaths as they are packed into ice, or they are delivered to stores and restaurants to be killed on-site. There is no “humane” method for killing any animal, and these invertebrates are no exception. For lobsters and crabs, the most common methods of killing include decapitation, live dismemberment, and boiling alive.

As with other industrially farmed animals, fishes, crustaceans, and molluscs who are hunted and raised for “meat” experience unnecessary pain, fear, and suffering. (10)

It is critically important that we understand the impact of our food choices. Our demand for consuming sea creatures is indisputably linked to the destruction of our ocean and all who call it home. By recognizing the power we have, we can create positive change and help put a stop to the relentless cycle of exploitation and destruction.



Join us in Fighting for the Ocean

Food Empowerment Project has declared August 30th Fight for the Ocean Day in honor of the birthday of Dr. Sylvia Earle, an amazing oceanographer! We don't think we can be passive. We must fight for every living creature in the ocean—for their lives.

We are calling on people to:

- **Do an Ocean Cleanup on August 30th!**
If you live near a seashore, grab a bucket and some friends and spend a few hours cleaning up to help the ocean and all who live there!

Don't live near the ocean? No problem! Organize a cleanup at one of your local lakes, streams, or rivers!
- **Don't Eat Animals—It Hurts the Ocean!**
The continued demand for eating sea creatures is why fishing equipment exists to begin with. The ocean and animals who call it home suffer tremendously, and we **MUST** do our part to stop the suffering we inflict on them. Ultimately, demand creates the continuation of exploitation, and by choosing to go vegan, we can help end the cycle of exploitation and destruction.

References

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