

Subsistence Fishing

Fishing Methods Fact Card

What is subsistence fishing?

Subsistence fishing refers to fishing, other than sport fishing, that is carried out primarily to feed the family and relatives of the person doing the fishing. Generally it also implies the use of low tech “artisanal” fishing techniques and is carried out by people who are very poor. Quite often this fishing is part of a life that also relies on small-scale agriculture and other sources of income, and may include some sale of fish.

In Canada, the term also applies to First Nations fisheries for food and ceremonial purposes, and may have some slightly differing legal implications depending on the part of the country.



What do subsistence fishers?

Subsistence fisheries can catch a large variety of species, but generally only those relatively close to shore or in fresh waters.

What are the issues?

Subsistence fisheries, when conducted by the poor social classes in a country for survival can also imply problems of contamination in the food and struggles with other parts of society for access to the fishing resource. Very rarely is there a problem of a subsistence fishery threatening a fish stock.

In the case of Canadian subsistence fisheries, there are a variety of issues related to its definition and competition between different resource users.