

Bottom Trawling

What it looks like in New Zealand



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Trawling is the most common fishing method in New Zealand's waters. Bottom trawling is when a net is towed on or just above the bottom of the seafloor. Around 70% of our catch by volume is caught by trawl, on or within one metre of the seafloor.



In New Zealand, many of our popular fish species live near the bottom of the ocean and bottom trawling is the most reliable way to catch them.¹



Our bottom trawling has a small spatial footprint (around 1.7% of our waters)^{1,2}



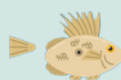
Since 1990, trawl gear has contacted an estimated total of 11% of New Zealand's waters - meaning the vast majority has never been trawled.^{1,2}



Kiwi fishers return to the same fishing areas year-on-year where fish are known to be found - these are our traditional fishing grounds. We are managed by strictly enforced rules that say where and how we can fish.



Most bottom trawling occurs on muddy and sandy seafloors and fishers avoid reef habitats where rocks and corals are present.



¹ Fisheries New Zealand, mpi.govt.nz/fishing-aquaculture/sustainable-fisheries/strengthening-fisheries-management/bottom-trawling/

² The footprint was estimated for deepwater fisheries from 1990 and for all trawl fisheries from 2008



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New Zealand's seafood is managed sustainably

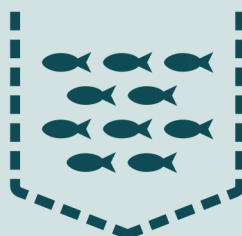
Commercial fishing is regulated by government and includes the world's largest on-board camera programme. A recent United Nations report rated New Zealand as part of the second most sustainable fisheries areas in the world.³ To ensure that we have seafood for future generations, science-based limits are set that determine how much fishers can catch and where and how they can fish.

Bottom trawling happens in less than **2%** of New Zealand waters each year.¹



Around two-thirds of the catch from New Zealand's deepwater fisheries is now certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) or is in an MSC improvement programme.

31% of New Zealand's waters are closed to bottom trawling – an area four times our landmass.¹



In 2025, 97% of stocks landed by volume were scientifically evaluated as being in good shape.⁴

The seabed area contacted by trawl gear has **decreased** from 2008-2024.¹



Wild-caught fish from New Zealand's deepwater fleet has the lowest carbon footprint among commonly consumed animal proteins and foods produced in New Zealand.⁵

³ openknowledge.fao.org/items/8b1f881-9208-4c59-86e2-9ada635960dd

⁴ Fisheries New Zealand, mpi.govt.nz/fishing-aquaculture/fisheries-management/fish-stock-status/

⁵ AgResearch, "Carbon footprint of fish from the New Zealand Deepwater Trawl Fleet: A preliminary study", 2023