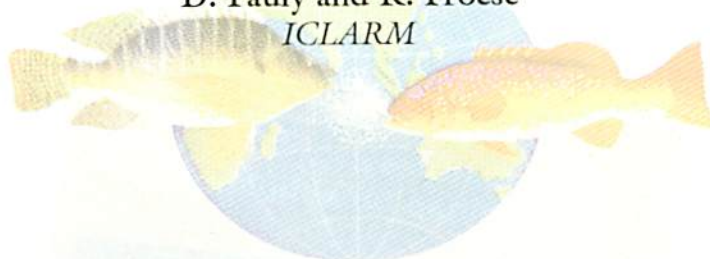# Announcing the Release of FishBase 96

D. Pauly and R. Froese
ICLARM

FishBase is a computerized encyclopedia on fishes developed at ICLARM with the support of the European Commission and in collaboration with a large number of institutions throughout the world, notably FAO, and available since 1995 as CD-ROM.

Presently covering all species important to humans, and 15 000 species of marine and freshwater occuring throughout the world, FishBase was, since its first release, the largest database of its kind, providing extensive coverage of the scientific and common names of fishes, of the growth and mortality parameters required for fisheries management and aquaculture, as well as an array of biological features ranging from their metabolic rates to their ecotoxicology, and from their reproduction to their feeding habits.

The major improvement of version 1.2 (September 1995) had been the incorporation into FishBase of a routine not only capable of displaying occurrence records on a map, but to document these occurrence records when "clicked", thus addressing an issue raised in a FishBase review, and enabling FishBase to support biodiversity studies.

Major improvements since version 1.2 have now allowed for the release of FishBase 96, whose name indicates our intention to update FishBase annually.

Some of the major improvements of FishBase 96 over its predecessors are:

(i) 3 000 more species (total 15 000) and 3 000 more pictures (total 9 000);

(ii) complete marine checklists for 48 countries, and freshwater checklists for 60 countries;

(iii) a new user module to document local knowledge on fishes;

(iv) a stand-alone glossary defining 2 500 ichthyological and related terms;

(v) new databases on brain weights (from R. Beauchot and colleagues at the University of Paris VII, Paris), on ciguatera (from P. Dalzell, at the South Pacific Commission, Nouméa), and on recruitment (from R.A. Myers and colleagues at the Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans, St. John's); and

(vi) new graphs to display quantitative data: through time series, pie charts and bivariate plots.

While it is items such as (i) and (ii) which contribute to our goal of eventually covering all fishes of the world, in all countries, it is the other features, especially (v) and (vi), which we think will contribute most to making FishBase useful to more colleagues.

Thus, the inclusion of R.A. Myers et al.'s time series of recruitment and related statistics makes it possible to document the evolution of over 300 of the major fisheries of the world with graphs that are, in most cases, frighteningly telling (Fig. 1), and which mostly demonstrate downward trends.

As before, FishBase is available free to collaborators (please contact FishBase@cgnet.com for details), for US$50 as update to registered users of previous versions, and for US$95 for new users.

Further Reading

McCall, R.A. and R.M. May. 1996. More than a seafood platter. Nature 376(6543):735.

Froese, R. and D. Pauly, Editors. 1996. FishBase 96: concepts, design and data sources. ICLARM, Manila, Philippines. 179 p.

Myers, R.A., J. Bridson and N.J. Barrowman. 1995. Summary of worldwide stock and recruitment data. Can. Tech. Rep. Fish. Aquat. Sci. 2024.

D. PAULY is ICLARM Principal Science Advisor and Professor at the Fisheries Centre, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. R. FROESE is leader of ICLARM's FishBase Project.
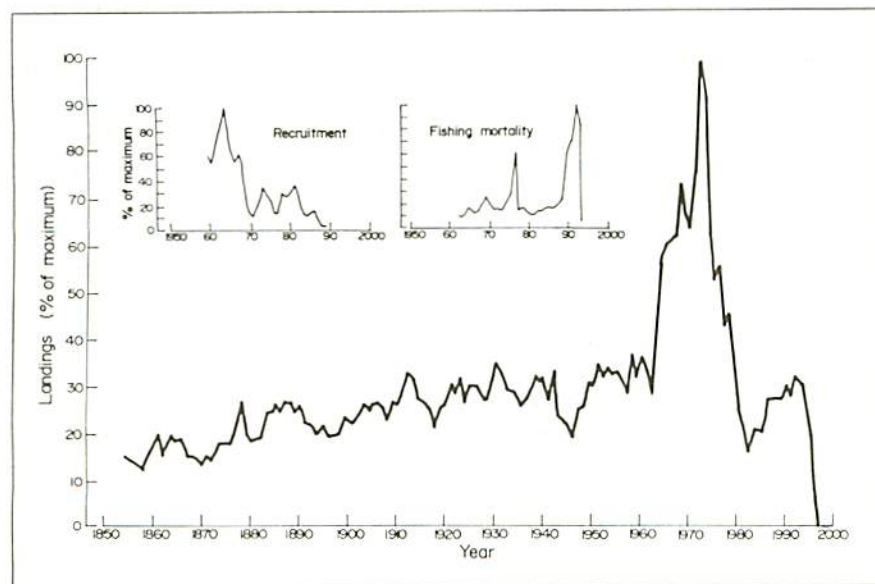
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Fig. 1. Time series of catches, of Northern cod (Gadus morhua) around Newfoundland, Canada (from Myers, R.A. et al. 1995, documenting the sustainable artisanal fishery that thrived until foreign trawlers (1960s to mid 1970s) and a local trawl fleet (1980s) drove the stock to collapse.