

Individual Fishing Quotas

Fact Sheet

An individual fishing quota is...

- a federal permit to harvest a quantity of fish, generally expressed as a percentage of a fishery's total allowable catch, that may be held for exclusive use by a person.

Individual fishing quotas around the world.

- IFQs have been adopted in four U.S. fisheries: Alaskan halibut and sablefish, wreckfish, and surf clams/ocean quahogs.
- They are also used in New Zealand, Australia and Iceland.
- In 1996, Congress blocked implementation of an IFQ program for Gulf of Mexico red snapper.

Individual fishing quotas are an important management tool.

- IFQs can reduce overcapitalization in the fishing industry and help rebuild depleted stocks.
- They reward efficiency and conservation.
- The use of IFQs should be evaluated on a fishery-by-fishery basis.

Individual fishing quotas can benefit fish and fishermen.

- Reduced bycatch of nontarget species and fewer regulatory discards.
- Less pressure to exceed annual catch levels recommended by biologists.
- Ending the “race for fish” means higher prices, lower costs, and safer working conditions for fishermen and better quality fish for consumers.

No free lunch.

- IFQ programs need to be carefully designed and monitored.
- Initial allocation of permits is likely to be difficult.
- There are concerns about the concentration of economic power and absentee owners.

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