# WTO - Fisheries Subsidies

## What is the issue?

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- WTO is considering proposals on prohibiting certain fisheries subsidies in its upcoming Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina.
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- However India and many developing countries are certainly concerned with this.
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## What is the concern?

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- The issue gathered pace when an informal grouping of members called “Friends of Fish” demanded for curbing fisheries subsidies.
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- The group included Argentina, Australia, Chile, Colombia, New Zealand, Norway, Iceland, Pakistan, Peru and the US.
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- They highlighted that subsidies to the fisheries sector have led to over-capacity and overfishing.
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- Countries including Japan, South Korea and Chinese Taipei have expressed uncertainty over the link between subsidies and over-fishing.
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- On the other hand, many developing countries such as India and Philippines seek flexibility in granting subsidies.
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- India provides subsidies in the form of support for motorisation of fishing boats, fuel rebates and infrastructure support.
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- Notably all of this fall under the targeted subsidies list at the WTO.
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## What is India's proposal?

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- **Subsidies** - India has proposed the members to agree to apply prohibitions only outside territorial waters.
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- This would leave the management of territorial waters to their respective national authorities.
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- This provision is exceptional of the prohibition in cases of IUU (illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing).
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- Such an arrangement would not disturb the benefit of subsidies offered to small scale fishers, and continue to protect subsistence and artisanal fishing.
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- The proposal has generated a lot of interest from members including the ones pushing seriously for a prohibiting pact.
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- **Over-fishing** - India has suggested a flexibility clause for the concern on over-fishing.
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- Accordingly, when a fish stock is found to be over-fished, developing countries must be given some flexibility in terms of time period.
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- Within a specified number of years, the country should withdraw the related subsidies.
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- And this rule should only cover areas beyond the territorial waters.
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**Source: The Hindu, BusinessLine**

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