

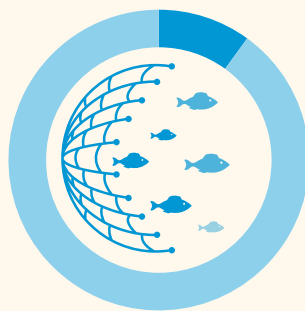
# Spotlight on Plastic Fishing Gear



## ECOS factsheet

Marine plastic litter is a major global problem. Thanks to its strength, longevity and low cost, plastic has replaced natural materials in many sectors, and the global fishing industry is no exception. Small-scale nets, traps and buoys were traditionally made from natural plant fibres as well as materials such as cork. Nowadays, chemically treated plastics and metals have replaced these natural solutions. This puts our oceans at great risk.

Unfortunately, not all used fishing gear makes it back to the boat. According to **UNEP and FAO**:



**10% of plastic**

which leaks into our  
oceans every year comes  
**from fishing gear**

**= 640,000 tonnes**

=



**x64**

the weight of  
the Eiffel Tower!

Plastic is a persistent material, giving it an indefinite lifespan and wreaking havoc on the marine environment. The effects are truly devastating: plastic is responsible for smothering reefs and entangling species ranging from small fish to large cetaceans, turtles, and seabirds. Moreover, animals mistake smaller pieces for food, causing ingestion hazards. Plastic breaks down into microplastics, attracts toxins to their surface, and enters the marine, and human, food chain.

### In an ideal world...

- ✓ **Fishing gear is used and reused multiple times without harming the environment.** This is possible thanks to a circular business model, in which nets and gear are no longer treated as low-cost and linear materials. Fishing gear is made from components chosen for their purity and longevity, without toxic chemicals and complex synthetic compositions.

- ✓ **Products can be reused, repaired, and remanufactured** before being recovered for reprocessing into new, high-quality materials and products. These processes are carried out in local ports to minimise transportation and its environmental impacts. The goal: an absolute reduction in the amount of fishing gear found in the oceans.

## ECOS works to...

- ✓ **Bring robust and mandatory policy solutions for fishing gear.** It is essential that the design of fishing gear is improved, to extend its use phase, and ensure proper end-of-life treatment. This will help to reduce abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear ('Ghost Gear').
- ✓ **Contribute the highest level of expertise to the development of European standards on the circularity of fishing gear.** The EU must ensure fishing gear is high on the policy agenda, and that policy solutions are easy to implement by all stakeholders at all lifecycle stages.
- ✓ **Deliver expertise in circular business models.** This enables fishing gear to retain value over a longer period of time through repair, repurposing, and eventually recycling into new products.



According to **data** released by The Ocean Cleanup project in 2018, currently floating in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch:

