

# Fishery Basics — Fishing Vessels

## Fishing Vessel Types

Fishing vessels are typically designed with a specific purpose. That purpose is to locate, **catch**, and preserve fish while out at sea. The planned operations of a vessel determine the overall size of the vessel, the arrangement of the deck, **carrying capacity**, as well as the machinery and types of equipment that will be supported by the vessel. Due to the inherent differences in **fishing communities** around the world, there is a wide range of types and styles of fishing vessels. Vessel sizes can range from the 2 m (6 ft) dug out canoes used in **subsistence** and **artisanal** fisheries, to factory ships that exceed 130 m (427 ft) in length. Commercial fishing vessels can also be characterized by a variety of criteria: **types of fish** (See Biology & Ecology) they catch, **fishing gear and methods used** (See Fishing Gear), capacity and **processing** capabilities, and the geographical origin of the vessel. In 2002, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimated the **world fishing fleet** had approximately four million vessels, with an average vessel size ranging from 10-15 m (33-49 ft). Based on a **quarterly catch statistics report**, published by the **Pacific Fisheries Information Network (PacFIN)**, approximately 1,950 vessels landed their catches in California ports.

Due to the technological innovations that began in the 1950s, many fishing vessels are now classified as **multi-purpose vessels**, because of the ability to switch out gear types depending on the targeted species. However, single use vessels still exist in the world fishing fleet today. The **United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** has identified eight general vessel classifications by fishing method, which we have provided detailed information on. Most, if not all, modern **commercial** vessels are also equipped with advanced technological equipment for navigation and fish finding.

## Hand Liners

**Handliners** are typically small to medium sized vessels, less than 12 m (39 ft) in length, without any special features for gear handling. In contrast to many other commercial fishing vessels, most handliners are undecked vessels, meaning that they lack any covered compartments or a covered **hull**.

Traditionally fishermen fish with **hook and line gear** (See Fishing Gear) over the side of the boat and pull in their catch manually. However, some boats are equipped with hydraulic or electrically powered reels. Handliners operate all over the world from shallow coastal waters to depths of 300 m (984 ft).

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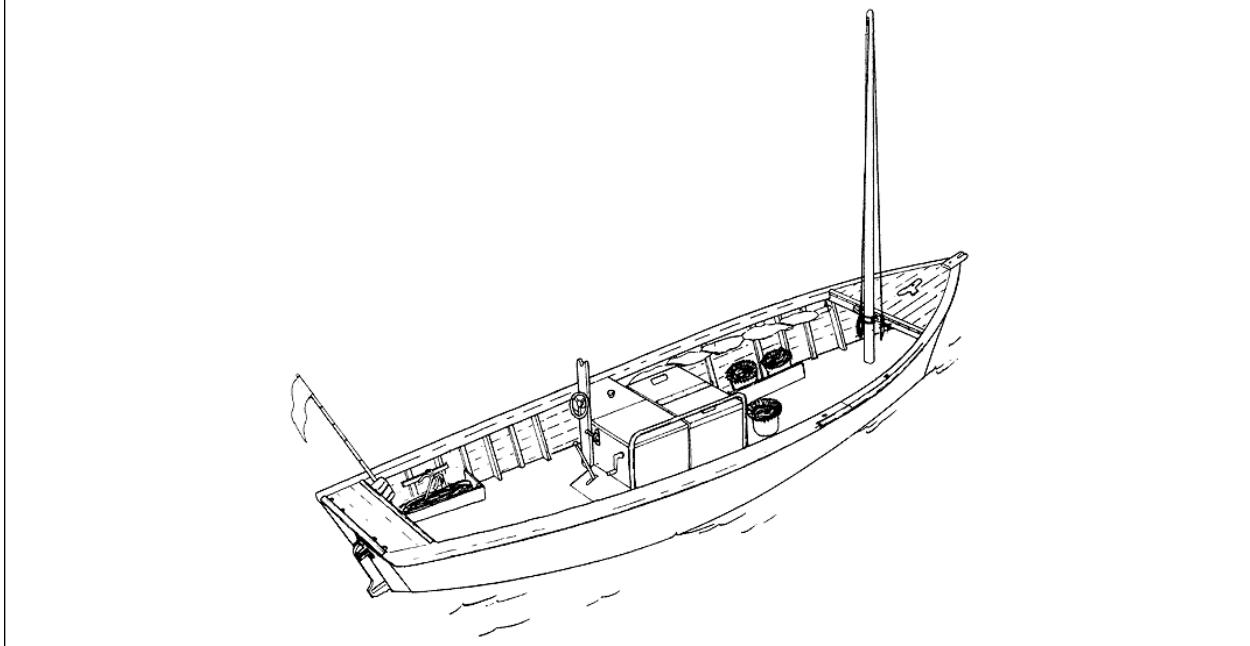


Illustration of a small-undecked handliner. (Credit: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)

## References

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## Additional Resources

### **National Marine Fisheries Services: Fisheries Gear**

(link to: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/fishinggears.htm>)

### **National Marine Fisheries Services: Interactive Illustration with Vessels, Gears and Species**

(link to: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/speciesid/Sustainability.html>)