

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.

Lift Netters

Similar to **gillnetters** (See Fishing Vessel Types) and **seiners** (See Fishing Vessel Types), **lift netters** are designed to fish with large nets. Lift netters deploy and retrieve large lift nets over the sides of the vessel using **outriggers**. Often the vessels use **powerful lights** to attract fish to the surface.

Lift netters are typically greater than 10 m (33 ft) in length. The smaller boats typically have an open deck layout and have few mechanized features. The larger decked vessels are designed for **open-ocean** fishing and are equipped with mechanized winches to help with the deployment and retrieval of the nets. Small lift netters are used in both commercial and artisanal **fisheries** in Southeast Asia and Africa, whereas Russians in the Caspian Sea use larger lift netters. Lift netters primarily target various species of **Pacific Sardines** (See California Fisheries) and other schooling **pelagic** species.

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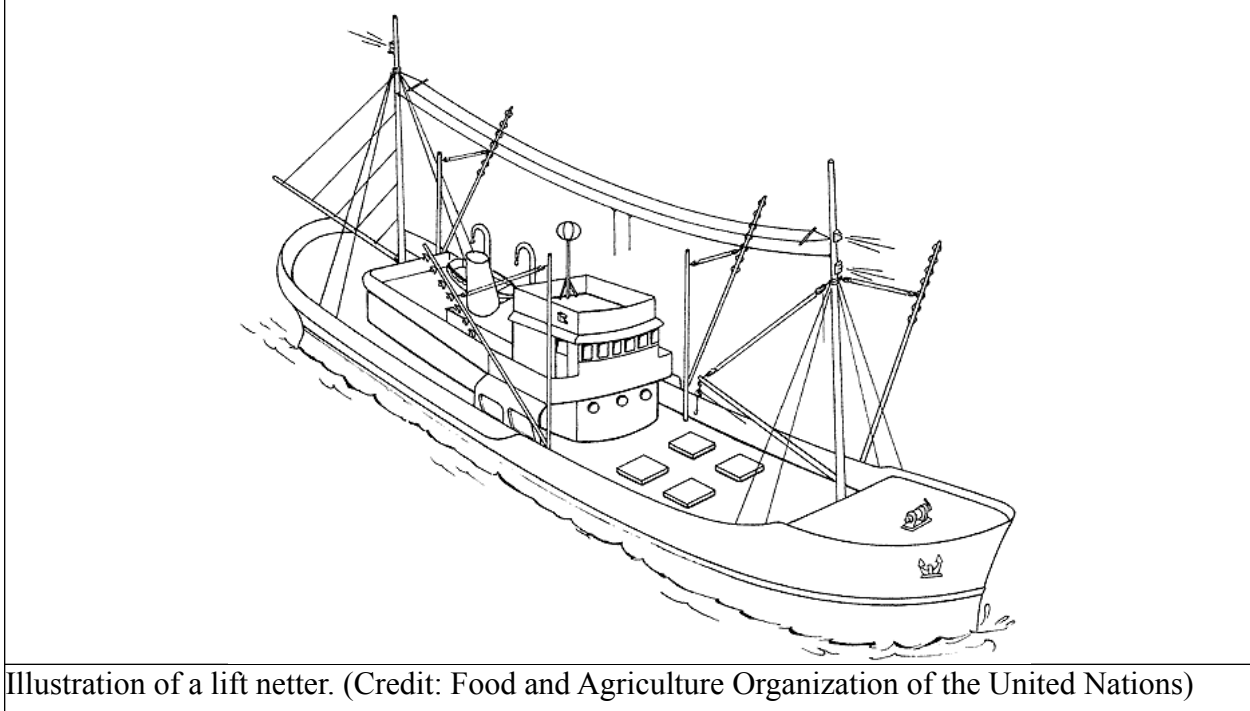


Illustration of a lift netter. (Credit: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)

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>)