90% of wild fisheries are dangerously depleted. Plant-based and cultivated seafood products may offer an alternative without the need for destructive practices

Up to 2.7 trillion wild-caught fish are believed to be slaughtered globally each year, resulting in approximately 90 per cent of wild fisheries being overfished or fully exploited.

Although aquaculture is often hailed as a solution, this comes with its own set of problems, including disease management, antibiotic use, organic pollution, and significant welfare concerns.

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This is where alternative proteins are tabled as a promising solution to divert a portion of seafood production away from the ocean. As alternatives to conventional animal proteins; plant-based and cultivated seafood products offer consumers the same taste and texture they know and love, without the destructive fishing practices, stressors to fisheries and ethical controversies.

Made from plants such as legumes, mushrooms and algae, plant-based seafood products have long been available on the market. In contrast to the seitan fish fillets commonly found in Chinese restaurants and hawker centres, next-generation plant-based foods are quickly gaining sophistication with the introduction of new technologies that seamlessly integrate ingredients, and replicate complex structures.

For consumers who prefer “the real thing”, scientists and entrepreneurs are actively developing cultivated seafood options, producing genuine seafood from animal cells grown in bioreactors. By moving seafood production to a controlled environment, cultivated seafood is often considered to be a healthier alternative that is free from mercury, microplastics, and other contaminants commonly found in wild-caught and farmed seafood.

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