

Galicia's company awarded first MSC European hake certification

The Grupo Regal line-caught hake (*Merluccius merluccius*) fishery has been certified to the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standard for sustainable, well-managed fisheries following an independent full assessment. This implies that from now on, all hake caught by the group using longlines may display the MSC blue ecolabel, ensuring consumers that the product comes from a sustainable and environmentally friendly fishery.

The certification was awarded after an evaluation carried out by the fully accredited certification body Food Certification International, conducted against the MSC standard for sustainable fishing showing that the stock is healthy and that the fishery is well managed, with a minimal impact on the marine ecosystem.

The certification was awarded to longline fishing boats operated by Grupo Regal and associated companies. The certification is open, meaning that it can be shared with other Spanish longline boats fishing for north-eastern Atlantic cod, which would thus also be eligible to display the MSC blue ecolabel on their catches.

Line-caught hake fishing operations are performed in the Gran Sol area of the North-eastern Atlantic Ocean (FAO Fishing Area 27), in European waters. The certification unit consists of two ships, which together had catches totalling 1800 tonnes in 2013. Hake is caught using longlines, a selective technique with a minimal impact on the environment which rarely catches smaller, spawning fish.

Besides, MSC highlights that Grupo Regal has incorporated a robust code of conduct, allowing it to plan a catch strategy aimed at maintaining sustainable and responsible fishing activity. The code of conduct includes protocols for reducing catches of seabirds and cutting down on rejects, reducing the impact on vulnerable marine ecosystems and protected areas, and waste management.

Grupo Regal is a family-owned company founded in 1964. which in 2010 obtained MSC certification for its toothfish fishing operations. At present, the entire Grupo Regal fleet has MSC certification.

"This certification rewards our commitment to supply the market with fresh, line-caught Spanish hake, a natural product with extraordinary quality and with the assurance that it was caught sustainably and with respect for the environment, contributing to the improvement of fishing resources for this generation of fishers and the generations that will follow," stated Juan Antonio Regal, Grupo Regal Director.

MSC Spain and Portugal Country Manager Laura Rodríguez remarked: "Hake is one of the most sought-after species in Spain and throughout Europe. This certification is an important step, making line-caught European hake with the MSC ecolabel available at fish markets and fresh fish counters throughout Spain."

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