

MSC sets 20 percent global coverage goal

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) aims to have at least 20 percent of the world's fisheries certified to its sustainability standard by 2020 – up from the current level of 12 percent.

MSC were one of a number of companies and organisations from across the seafood supply chain to share a raft of commitments in support of the Our Ocean conference, hosted by the European Union and opening in Malta today.

The 2-day meeting aims to inspire joint solutions and ambitious commitments in managing our oceans sustainably. The 2020 Leaders for a Living Ocean, an initiative from the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), brings together 27 companies from around the world who are committed to increasing supply, trade and availability of certified, traceable, sustainable seafood. The alliance builds on the groundswell of more than 300 fishing operations and 3,000 supply chain businesses, including 80 major retailers, committed to producing and selling seafood certified to the MSC standards.

“Business leadership and engagement is fundamental to addressing the global challenges of unsustainable and illegal fishing. Transforming the global fishing industry and delivering healthy, productive marine ecosystems relies on business innovation and responsible stewardship,” said Rupert Howes, Chief Executive of the Marine Stewardship Council. “As these impressive commitments show, sustainability is at the heart of these forward-thinking businesses. These leaders share our vision for healthy oceans, clearly recognise the importance of environmental performance to their companies, and our planet, and are ready to act.”

Among the MSC partners announcing ambitious commitments are the Japanese retailer, Aeon and Tmall Fresh, the fresh produce segment of the Chinese ecommerce giant, Alibaba. Their targets to reach 20% certified seafood by 2020 has the power to transform the sector. Targets have also been set by major companies within the catch sector, with the Danish Fishery Producer Organisations, representing all Danish commercial fishermen, achieving MSC certification for more than 90% of the country's fisheries and reasserting their commitment to driving improvements in and on the water.

2020 vision

Targets announced by the seafood leaders are made in the context of the MSC's commitment to engage 20% of global marine catch in its program by 2020. To achieve this the MSC will increase its

focus on ecosystems currently underrepresented in the program, but where catches and the threat to biodiversity are high, and will deliver new tools to better enable fisheries in the Global South to progress towards MSC certification.

MSC certified fisheries now harvest 12% of global marine catch and new data shows that the volume of seafood available with the MSC label grew 10% in the last year alone (from around 660,000 in March 2016 to 731,000 in March 2017). The MSC's impacts report also shows that 94% of fisheries entering the program have made at least one improvement to achieve or maintain certification, totalling more than 1,200 over the last 16 years. Certified fisheries, overall, target larger populations of fish in the years following certification and, compared to non-certified fisheries, show less variability in the sustainability of target fish stocks.

The MSC's science-based Fisheries Standard reflects international guidelines set by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO) and the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI), both present in Malta. Fisheries that meet the MSC standards undergo independent assessment, regular audits and may be required to improve further in order to continue to meet best practice.

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