



News Release

05 October 2017

Seafood leaders set out bold commitments to safeguard our oceans

New initiative rallies businesses committed to seafood sustainability within the timeframe of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

MALTA, 05 October 2017 – Companies and organisations from across the seafood supply chain have shared 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 Chinese e-commerce giant, Tmall Fresh. Their targets to reach 20% certified seafood by 2020 has the power to transform the sector. China and Japan are the world’s top two biggest seafood markets. Longstanding commitments from major multinationals, including Nomad Foods Europe, Carrefour, McDonalds and IKEA, have also provided critical momentum for certification and encouraged newcomers into the MSC program. Today more than 90% of Nomad Foods Europe’s wild caught fish is MSC certified, while Carrefour aims to sell one fish out of two from sustainable sources globally by 2020.

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. The Icelandic Sustainable Fisheries organisation, representing about 50 leading Icelandic seafood companies, aims to obtain MSC certification for 100% of the country’s commercial fisheries, with close to 70% of the current catch already certified. Other catch companies also announced their commitments to get specific fisheries MSC certified.

“The MSC provides a unique mechanism to connect seafood producers with consumers, through the supply chain, from ocean to plate. We remain committed to supporting fisheries on their path to sustainability and business partners in their journey to improve their own operations and act as agents of change within the sector,” added Howes. “The MSC remains focused on maintaining the rigour and robustness of our global standard for environmentally responsible and sustainable fishing and making improvements where needed. Working with our partners, the MSC is committed to driving real and lasting change where needed to ensure healthy oceans and seafood supplies for the future.”

Targets announced by the seafood leaders are made in the context of, and will contribute to, the MSC's commitment, also delivered in Malta this week, 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 MSC 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 2018). 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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Notes for editors:

1. Go to www.msc.org/2020-leaders to read all commitments made by MSC's *2020 Leaders for a Living Ocean*
2. Rupert Howes, Chief Executive of the MSC will speak at a media briefing taking place at 14:00 in the Our Ocean conference in Malta on Friday 6 October. For more information, contact Sarah Bladen.

About the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is an international non-profit organisation. Our vision is for the world's oceans to be teeming with life, and seafood supplies safeguarded for this and future generations. Our ecolabel and certification program recognises and rewards sustainable fishing practices and is helping create a more sustainable seafood market.

The MSC ecolabel on a seafood product means that:

- It comes from a wild-catch fishery which has been independently certified to the MSC's science-based standard for environmentally sustainable fishing.
- It's fully traceable to a sustainable source.

More than 300 fisheries in over 35 countries are certified to the MSC's Standard. These fisheries have a combined annual seafood production of almost 10 million metric tonnes, representing close to 12% of annual global marine catch. More than 25,000 seafood products worldwide carry the MSC ecolabel. For more information visit msc.org

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