

Canned fish industry markets

Friend of the Sea label

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Around 30% of the fish products labelled Friend of the Sea (FOS) worldwide commercialised are canned, according to FOS founder Paolo Bray. A total of 700 companies based in 60 countries, mainly small scale producers, have joined the project already and 100 new members join every year.



The European FOS project is a non governmental organisation (ONG) that follows the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) criteria requests for stocks not to be overexploited nor overfished according to official stock assessments.

One of the main requirements for a company to be FOS sustainably certified is to be Dolphin-Safe according to the Earth Island Institute DS programme. This is a programme intended to minimise unintentional dolphin captures when fishing tuna destined for canning.

Products certified under the FOS label come 50% from aquaculture and 50% from fisheries; mainly small scale producers. More than the half these product certifications originate from aquaculture producers in developing countries.

Its main competitor in sustainable fish labelling, the Marine Stewardship Certification (MSC), focuses on 'pure wild-capture fisheries', 'pure aquaculture' and the 'enhanced fishery' in which there is human intervention for growing fish.

Asked about the difference between FOS and the MSC, Paolo Bray told IEG Vu: "Friend of the Sea is completely industry independent whereas MSC was founded by Unilever and several representatives of the certified companies are on MSC's advisory board."

Both FOS and MSC are voluntary certification schemes. "Companies and fleets apply for MSC others for FOS, others for both, depending on the request from their target markets or their own opinion of the certification programmes," Bray explained.

IEG Vu learned this week that there are Moroccan anchovy companies and fleets Friend of the Sea certified but not MSC certified. Paolo Bray responded: "I believe the question should be asked to the Moroccan companies and fleets. There are also fisheries which have been certified by MSC but which have not passed the Friend of the Sea audit, such as some bottom trawl fleets for hake in South Africa and Namibia."

Approximately 25 new fisheries are audited per year and surveillance audits are carried out every year. Tuna companies represent approximately 20% of all certified fish companies and other major groups of products are mussels, salmon, anchovies, sardines, mackerel, seabass, prawns and trout.

FOS revenue originates from royalties to use the logo, authorised only if the product obtains certification following third party auditing by accredited certification bodies.