



# “How do you choose your fish?”

**Consumer's choice matters:** buy wisely, choose sustainable fish

A European Commission awareness-raising campaign to support the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy

September–December 2011

**PRESS PACK**

**[www.chooseyourfish.eu](http://www.chooseyourfish.eu)**

This press pack contains information for journalists on how to help consumers understand more about the fish they buy and about the Common Fisheries Policy. It also includes quotes from stakeholders, the European Commission and related links.



PRESS PACK- Consumers

# “HOW DO YOU CHOOSE YOUR FISH?”

## Table of Content

What consumers should know when choosing their fish .....	3
Best practice examples .....	6
Stakeholders have their say on protecting Europe’s fisheries .....	8
Key points of the Common Fisheries Policy reform .....	9
Tentative upcoming calendar of the reform.....	11
Maria Damanaki, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.....	12
Contacts and web links .....	13

## “HOW DO YOU CHOOSE YOUR FISH?”

### What consumers should know when choosing their fish

Sub-titles suggested following the editorial interest of journalists:  
November (fashion shows) – Sustainable fish is in fashion!  
December (Christmas time) – Welcome fish at your Christmas table

With Europe’s fish stocks on the decline, the European Commission is undertaking a major reform of the European Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). To support the reform, it has launched a campaign to encourage consumers to ‘think sustainable’ when buying their fish.

While policy is fundamental to restoring fish stocks, consumers are just as important: by choosing products that originate from sustainable sources, they can help the fishing industry move towards sustainability.

Each one of us can take steps to protect the future of our fish, fisheries and ultimately of our seas. Whenever we buy fish – at our local market, supermarket or at a restaurant – our decision counts. We have the purchasing power to make a difference.

Some producers, retailers and restaurants have already chosen to source their fish from sustainable fishing activities; you can make the same choice.

#### What is the problem with European fish stocks?

Overall, 3 out of 4 stocks are overfished: 82% of Mediterranean stocks and 63% of Atlantic stocks. In addition, fishing at present is very wasteful: large volumes of undersized, over-quota or unwanted fish or other sea creatures are routinely caught in nets, and thrown back (‘discarded’) into the sea, usually dead or dying. Very young fish and dolphins are just some of the victims of such practices. Meanwhile, Europe depends on imports for about two-thirds of its seafood.

#### Should I eat less fish?

No. Fish and other seafood are natural renewable resources, as long as they are managed sustainably. Ask about sustainability when you purchase fish or order it at a restaurant. Add variety to your diet by choosing a wide range of fish species.

#### Why is fish healthy?

Fish and seafood are an excellent source of nutrition. They provide healthy protein, essential fatty acids, vitamins and minerals, and play an important part in a healthy diet. Most people are advised to eat at least two portions of fish each week to get the best of the health benefits; eating fish regularly can reduce the risk of developing a wide range of diseases and disorders, from cancer, heart disease and depression to dementia and arthritis.

#### Why should I diversify the fish I eat?

High demand for certain species of fish and seafood can lead to overfishing. In contrast, many lesser-known species are available in ample supply. Consumers should look beyond the usual suspects and try something new, discovering new tastes and recipes. Virtually all fish is delicious and easy to cook.

#### How can I know whether a fish comes from a stock that is managed sustainably?

Contact organisations or businesses that you trust and that offer guides for sustainable purchasing, or ask your local fishmonger to help you choose species that are exploited sustainably. You can also give preference to products bearing a ‘sustainable fisheries’ label.

## “HOW DO YOU CHOOSE YOUR FISH?”

### **What kind of information can I find on labels?**

At present, fish and seafood products must be labelled with:

- the commercial name of the species;
- the method of production ('caught' or 'farmed');
- the area of production.

Under the new rules, products will, in addition to the above information, have to be labelled with:

- the catch date (or harvest date, for farmed products);
- whether the product is fresh or has been defrosted.

Producers will also be able to include on a voluntary basis: environmental, ethical or social information; information on production techniques and practices; nutritional information. The new regulation will be better enforced to ensure that labelling information is not misleading to consumers.

### **Do 'sustainable fisheries' labels apply common sustainability criteria?**

Yes. The FAO (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation) laid out the guidelines for these labels in 2005. The following aspects must be taken into account:

- State of the stocks: the stocks concerned must not be overfished;
- Management system: the fisheries must comply with the management measures laid down by law for the zone concerned.
- Impact on the ecosystem: the fishery must not have an adverse effect on the ecosystem.

### **Which are the main labels that certify sustainable fisheries?**

- The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), created in 1997, certifies a fishery or a fish stock. It operates worldwide, with the majority in developed countries, and applies multiple international standards including the UN FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing.
- The 'Friend of the Sea' (FOS), created in 2006. It certifies both farmed fish and fish caught at sea, in both developed and developing countries.
- The KRAV 'fisheries' label, created in 2004, is limited to Sweden and Norway.
- The 'Dolphin Safe', label focuses solely on by-catches of dolphins, but does not guarantee other conditions for sustainable fisheries.

Major retailing chains and other players have also organised their own labels, but consumers should get information about the true extent of these commitments.

### **Does size really matter?**

It is important to take care to buy only fish that have reached adult size. Fish that are caught too young have not had a chance to reproduce and help renew stocks. Talk to your fishmonger and find out about the legal sizes for the different types of species to be sure you are not buying fish caught too young.

### **Is there an 'organic' label for fishing and aquaculture products?**

Farmed fish can be certified as 'organic'. Fish from organic aquaculture is bred according to stricter criteria, without the use of pesticides, dyes and antibiotics that can otherwise be used. Organic production methods have less impact on the environment compared to conventional means. Since fish caught at sea are not produced under controlled conditions, the criteria for organic farming cannot be applied; there is thus no organic label for fishing at sea.

### **Are aquaculture products farmed sustainably?**

Yes, as a general rule, since European regulations guarantee that European farms respect the fish, their food and the environment, but some fish farmers go beyond their statutory obligations, notably to meet the conditions required for 'organic' labels. Find out the origin and farming methods used for the products you buy.

## “HOW DO YOU CHOOSE YOUR FISH?”

### **Is there a better time of year to buy one species or another?**

For fresh fish, it is important not to buy a species caught during its reproduction period. Ask your fish shop about the seasons for seafood, or get this information from organisations involved in this area. Frozen fish can be eaten any time of the year (as long as it was caught at the right time).

### **What information should I look for when I buy frozen fish?**

Questions about frozen fish are the same as for fresh products:

- Check the label for information about the species, production method and origin.
- Is the fish from a stock exploited sustainably?

### **Should we buy fish caught close to home?**

Small-scale local fishing nurtures the social and economic life of your favourite coastal area. Fishermen operating at this scale may use only ‘passive’ fishing gear – hook and line, pots and traps, and stationary nets – which are all more energy-efficient than using towed gear. Of course, eating locally-caught fish also results in less carbon emissions due to ‘food-miles’. Discuss this with your fishmonger.

**[www.chooseyourfish.eu](http://www.chooseyourfish.eu)**

This website has been created to explain the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy to European citizens as part of a broad campaign to publicise the changes.

The website highlights the role of consumers and retailers in driving the shift to sustainable fishing in European fisheries. It also has a quiz (with prizes) to test general knowledge about fishing in Europe. The broader campaign includes adverts for print media and other websites, campaign leaflets and a video package, for distribution free of copyright to broadcasters

# "HOW DO YOU CHOOSE YOUR FISH?"

## Best practice examples

Awareness is growing among the different stakeholders in the fish industry to give preference to products from sustainable fisheries and, through this commitment, influence fishermen to adopt responsible fishing practices. In this way, they can respond to consumer demand for seafood products that have been produced sustainably. A recent WWF survey carried out in 14 countries revealed that 88% of European consumers want to buy sea products from stocks fished in a responsible manner.

At a European level, WWF succeeded in gathering some of the most important European federations of processing and distribution companies in an alliance supporting the development of sustainable fisheries in Europe. The federations joining WWF in this initiative are the AIPCE-CEP (EU Fish Processors Association), Eurocommerce (the European retail, wholesale and international trade sectors), Euro Coop (the European organisation of Consumer Co-operatives) and Eurotoque (the association of European chefs).

These European commitments are not just empty declarations of intent. Small businesses are also trying to meet consumer demand for sustainable fish. The following list is far from exhaustive.

### Restaurants

Sea-conscious diners are demanding that chefs play their part in protecting Europe's fish stocks – and this is exactly what Teresa Alves, Chef of La Marée Restaurant in Brussels, is doing. She says: *"It's very important to know where the fish comes from because people are more and more concerned about ecological issues."*

Teresa ensures her seafood comes from "responsible" fishermen who respect different species' reproductive cycles and do not fish endangered varieties. She checks the sources of her seafood and does the necessary research to make sure her choice is the sustainable and healthy one. She has a preference for aquaculture products, which may further relieve the burden of her diners' taste for seafood on Europe's oceans.

Other examples:

- Tom Aikens is a London-based chef and owner of the critically acclaimed [Tom Aikens restaurant](#). His restaurant serves only sustainable fish.
- Again in the UK, [Pisces-Responsible Fish Restaurant](#) initiative helps chefs source better quality, more sustainable and more local fish and rewards good fishing practices with better prices for fishermen. Pisces-RFR fosters direct relationships with independent fishing families, securing their livelihood while at the same time being able to guarantee for the restaurants a strict environmental policy and top-quality seafood.
- Fish2fork is the world's first website to review restaurants according to whether their seafood is sustainable, and not just how it tastes. Fish2fork is already active in 4 European countries.

### Fish Suppliers

Fishermen need to turn their catches into profit, while consumers demand sustainable species. Lonxanet Directo in Spain has found a way to fish that is both environmentally-friendly and commercially viable.

The company only sells sustainable fish species and has implemented fishing methods to avoid depleting fish stocks. For example, Lonxanet only sources fish species that are "in season" and requires that fishermen only catch bigger fish to give species a chance to reproduce. In return for fish from more plentiful stocks that are bigger, fishermen receive better pay for their catch.

*"Lonxanet wants big fish, not little ones... With little ones, it takes 50 to fill a crate worth 50 Euros. A single big fish brings in 50 Euros. That's the difference!"* says Augustín Pérez Pernas, Head of the Fishermen's Association of Cedeira (ES).

Lonxanet also offers customers guarantees of traceability. At any time, the customer can find out the name of the boat, who caught the fish and how. Moreover, Lonxanet practises direct selling: from the

## "HOW DO YOU CHOOSE YOUR FISH?"

sea to the consumer. In this way, the SME avoids middlemen. In terms of price, it benefits both the sustainable consumer and the responsible fisherman who favours the capture of mature fish.

Other examples:

- The Swedish Pelagic Producers Organisation (SPPO) North Sea herring fishery has been certified as a sustainable and well-managed fishery. *"Our clients in the Netherlands are demanding certified herring,"* says Peter Friis, Quality & Environmental Manager for Skagerak Pelagic A/S. *"We are happy that the SPPO North Sea herring was certified in time for the important season for producing **Maatjes** herring for the Dutch market."*
- The Danish company Espersen produces frozen Baltic cod blocks. The company is committed to only source fish for primary processing from sustainable, well-managed fisheries. Espersen has a fisheries standard with the following objectives:
  - The fisheries are managed effectively to ensure that long-term adult stock levels are healthy
  - The fisheries use environmental best-practice methods
  - Marine protected areas are established.

### Supermarkets

Since 2007, Carrefour has identified the best sources of supplies in order to offer their customers frozen fish certified to be from sustainable fishing. The supermarket carries many lines, including its own brand, with the Marine Stewardship Council label. This label guarantees the sustainability of a product. Having the choice of MSC-certified fish products enables the supermarket to take advantage of the public's growing taste for sustainable fish and gives environmentally-aware consumers the option of buying sustainable species.

In the space of just four years, the Carrefour sustainable fish range has made spectacular progress and has grown to 30 different varieties to satisfy the ever-increasing demand. Indeed, the supermarket's top-selling fish is the MSC-certified cod.

Carrefour Merchandise Sustainability Manager Stéphanie Mathey adds that the supermarket has a discount product that is also MSC-labelled. *"Discount products are not meant to be niche; these really are for the broader market,"* she says. This means that all shoppers can play a role in preserving fish species.

German retail group Edeka offers clients a range of seafood products from sustainably managed fisheries, based on the advice of WWF experts and on Marine Stewardship Council labelling.

Some of the examples presented here can be found on the video "A new vision for Europe's seas" if you follow the link:

<http://www.tvlink.org/mediadetails.php?key=437f191ff41c267623bc&title=A+a+new+vision+for+Europe%27s+seas&titleleft=Water>

[www.chooseyourfish.eu](http://www.chooseyourfish.eu)

## "HOW DO YOU CHOOSE YOUR FISH?"

### Stakeholders have their say on protecting Europe's fisheries

*"If we get this reform right, fishermen and coastal communities will be better off in the long run and all Europeans will have a wider choice of fresh fish, both wild and farm produced. The consumer is very important since it can influence the decision with its fork"*

**Maria Damanaki**, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

*"We firmly believe that sustainable practice is the only way to safeguard fish as a key global food resource both now and for future generations."*

**Mike Mitchell**, CSR Director for Young's Seafood and Findus Group

*"This is an important milestone in our commitment to ensure future long-term supply."*

**Steve Easterbrook**, President of McDonald's Europe

McDonald's has announced that from October 2011 it will sell only MSC-certified sustainable fish in its European restaurants.

*"We are committed not to purchase fish from endangered stocks. We have also decided not to sell and serve fish and seafood red listed by IUCN and/or WWF."*

**Anders Lennartsson**, Sustainability Manager, IKEA Food Services

*"If we can manage to maintain fishing stocks, environmentally speaking, we will manage to maintain jobs and sustain economic activities"*

**Stéphanie Mathey**, Merchandise Sustainability Manager, Carrefour

*"We want to preserve fish stocks in the sea for our kids. Changes to make fishing sustainable will be the only way the industry can cope."*

**Scott McMaster, Manager**, The Chip Box, fish and chip shop, Stewarton, Scotland

*"People want to know what they are eating and where it comes from. In this case, that means whether the fish is healthy and whether it was fished in a reliable place."*

**Teresa Alves**, Chef, La Marée, Portuguese restaurant, Brussels

*"Our consumers accept that certain species may not be available at certain times. They are willing to replace one species by another in order to support sustainable fishing"*

**Sergio Sanz**, Commercial Director, Loxanet Directo, fish supplier, Spain

*"Many MSC certified fisheries have shown environmental benefits such as by-catch reduction, reduced impacts on ecosystems and better protection against illegal or 'pirate' fish entering supply chains."*

**Nicolas Guichoux**, Director Europe, Marine Stewardship Council

[www.chooseyourfish.eu](http://www.chooseyourfish.eu)

## Key points of the Common Fisheries Policy reform

### Why the reform?

Under the Common Fisheries Policy, EU governments work together to set the rules for and manage a shared, common resource: fish. Over time, however, our fleets have become so large and our technology so efficient that we have overfished three-quarters of the stocks in Europe. Catches have declined steadily and we are obliged to import two-thirds of our fish.

### When will the reform take place?

The European Commission proposed the reform in July 2011. It needs to be agreed by both the European Parliament and EU Member States in the European Council before it can enter into force.

### More fish in the sea

The new rules put long-term sustainability first. Based on scientific advice about the state of fish stocks, fishing will be restricted where necessary to allow fish to grow to maturity, reproduce and replenish populations. By 2015, European fishing has to be sustainable.

### An end to throwaway fishing

The reformed Common Fisheries Policy will phase out the practice of ‘discarding’: throwing over-quota and unwanted catches back into the sea, usually dead. This waste of fish resources affects nearly a quarter of all fish caught – and substantially more in some fisheries. Fishermen will have to land everything they catch, and change their fishing techniques to avoid unwanted catches.

### A revitalised fishing industry

Fishing communities and businesses need healthy seas for their industry to thrive. Fishermen will have more control over their activities, and be more accountable for stewardship of the sea. The reform seeks to bring new prosperity to the sector by creating new opportunities for jobs and growth in coastal areas, and by ending continued dependence on subsidies, notably for the fishing fleets.

### Aquaculture (fish-farming)

The reform will promote sustainable aquaculture with increased means. Countries will draw up national plans to develop their aquaculture (fish-farming) industry and uphold environmental, economic, and social standards in the sector. By giving more support for aquaculture, we will encourage growth in the sector and increase the supply of EU -produced aquaculture products.

### A secure food supply for Europe

By preventing overfishing and the waste of wild fish resources and supporting the growth of aquaculture, an increased contribution from fisheries and aquaculture to the food supply for Europeans will result.

### Better information for consumers

Consumers will get better information about the origin, quality and important characteristics of the fish they buy. Extra information – about environmental, ethical or social characteristics, production techniques and practices, or nutritional information - may be provided on a voluntary basis.

### Reform of public support

Public support is needed for the transition to sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. Public money shall no longer (directly or indirectly) contribute to overfishing, wasteful practices or destroying fish for market reasons. Support will be available for environmentally friendly initiatives that promote smart and sustainable growth in the industry only. Fisheries products may be stored temporarily when prices are very low to help market stability. Those who overfish or act against the rules will not be

## “HOW DO YOU CHOOSE YOUR FISH?”

eligible for public support. For the period 2014-2020, €6.7 billion is envisaged for support to fisheries, aquaculture and maritime affairs.

### **Employment**

Adjusting Europe’s fishing fleet to match the available fish resources will inevitably have consequences for employment in the catching sector. However, the reform creates an opportunity to improve attractiveness of the jobs on board (safety, working conditions, wages). Workers and communities affected will receive support to re-skill for alternative jobs, for example, in aquaculture or in the wider maritime industry, a sector identified as having significant growth potential, particularly in tourism (coastal and cruise), offshore and coastal wind energy, recreational boating and maritime works (dredging and environmental protection).

### **Transferable Fishing Concessions**

Fishing operations are best done under a long-term biological and economically sustainable perspective. Therefore fishermen need long-term legally secure entitlements to a share of the national fishing quota each year. These fishing concessions will be allocated to vessels over 12 metres. Fishermen will be able to lease or trade these ‘shares’. This will help reduce overcapacity in the fishing fleet, underpin stronger economic performance, and create greater flexibility and accountability.

### **Special protection for small-scale coastal fishing**

Member States will be allowed to restrict fishing within 12 nautical miles of their shoreline. Small-scale fisheries will be exempt from transferable fishing shares. They will also be given greater support to help their communities and businesses adapt to the changes.

### **Improved data collection**

National programmes will be set up to support improved data collection about the state of marine resources and the economic performance of the sector. Collecting and sharing information will contribute to improved management of fisheries. The ban on discards will also help provide information about the state of fish stocks, as all catches will have to be landed.

### **Decentralised management**

More decisions may be taken by Member States in a regional context. Overall standards and targets will be decided at the EU level, while individual countries may then set the specific measures to meet these targets, in cooperation with neighbouring countries and regions.

### **International fishing**

The European Union will step up its efforts at a global level to promote sustainable fishing, and support measures to combat illegal fishing and overcapacity in the fishing fleet. Bilateral agreements with third countries will also be refocused towards ensuring that fisheries are sustainable, and that EU boats only fish for what is surplus to local requirements. The costs for accessing third-country fishing grounds will be transferred from the EU to ship-owners.

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"HOW DO YOU CHOOSE YOUR FISH?"

## **Tentative upcoming calendar of the reform**

The European Commission adopted its proposal in July 2011. The text is now in the hands of Member States and the European Parliament. They will discuss the proposal and need to reach an agreement on any amendments.

The aim is for the proposal to be officially adopted at the end of 2012 and to enter into force on 1 January 2013.

The next steps of this process will be a hearing in the European Parliament on small-scale fisheries (October), and the adoption of the new financial instrument for the Common Fisheries Policy (November).

**[www.chooseyourfish.eu](http://www.chooseyourfish.eu)**

"HOW DO YOU CHOOSE YOUR FISH?"

**Maria Damanaki,  
European Commissioner  
for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries**



**Maria Damanaki** was born in Crete, in 1952, and studied chemical engineering in the National Technical University of Athens.

Active in the underground student opposition to the dictatorship in Greece, she played a leading role in the coordination of its activities: during the days of the popular uprising against the dictatorship, known as "the Polytechnic revolt", she was speaker of the clandestine radio transmitter set-up inside the occupied National technical University of Athens. Her voice thus became known as "the voice of the uprising". She was subsequently imprisoned by the dictatorship. Very early, Commissioner Damanaki moved her steps in the world of Greek politics and at the age of 25 she was the youngest Member of Parliament ever, when first elected in 1977. She has then been elected continuously until 1993 and has become the first woman to be elected Vice-president of the Greek Parliament. As President of the Coalition of Left and Progress, she has also been the first woman ever to lead a Greek political party, later joining PASOK (the Socialist Party).

**[www.chooseyourfish.eu](http://www.chooseyourfish.eu)**

## "HOW DO YOU CHOOSE YOUR FISH?"

### Contacts and web links

#### More about the campaign

Choose Your Fish website and advertising clip

<http://www.chooseyourfish.com/>

Campaign information leaflet

[http://chooseyourfish.eu/documents/MARE-Leaflet\\_en.pdf](http://chooseyourfish.eu/documents/MARE-Leaflet_en.pdf)

#### More about the reform

The Common Fisheries Reform at a Glance

[http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/publications/leaflet\\_reform\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/publications/leaflet_reform_en.pdf)

Common fisheries policy reform website

[http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/reform/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/reform/index_en.htm)

Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/maritimeaffairs\\_fisheries/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/maritimeaffairs_fisheries/index_en.htm)

Maria Damanaki, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_2010-2014/damanaki/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/damanaki/index_en.htm)

"A new vision for Europe's seas" video

<http://www.tvlink.org/mediadetails.php?key=437f191ff41c267623bc&title=A+new+vision+for+Europe%27s+seas&titleleft=Consumers>

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