



Celebrating and supporting sustainable fisheries

**The Marine Stewardship Council
Annual Report 2019 - 20**

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The coming decade will be pivotal. We have a route map agreed by 193 nations to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 – including SDG14, to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Let us use this opportunity to redouble our efforts and deliver.

Rupert Howes, Marine Stewardship Council CEO

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Werner Kiene, Marine Stewardship Council Chair

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A message from our CEO



It has been an extraordinary year.

Covid-19 has turned the world upside-down. The pandemic has wreaked terrible human suffering and loss, and catalysed the worst economic crisis in centuries. It will continue to pose huge challenges as societies around the world adjust to a new and far from stable reality in a coronavirus-present world. But this dreadful crisis is also an opportunity: a once-in-a-century chance for humanity to reboot, to reappraise what we really value, and to shift our economies onto a sustainable and more equitable footing.

Just as nations, companies and individuals have committed to a whatever-it-takes approach to combating Covid-19, so we need to apply the same commitment to the other big challenges facing us – including the existential threat of climate change and the need to provide food and sustainable livelihoods for a growing global population, while restoring the health of the planet that all of us depend upon.

Ensuring thriving oceans for future generations is an essential component of this – and sustainable fishing is a key part of the solution. We need to manage fish stocks, globally, on a sustainable basis so they can continue to provide renewable, healthy, affordable and low-carbon protein for humanity, and maintain their role as the foundation for resilient and prosperous coastal communities. Healthy marine ecosystems are also likely to be more resilient and able to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

From the catch sector all the way up the seafood supply chain, our partners have continued to show leadership in this area. From fisheries and businesses large and small, in more countries than ever, we've seen more commitment to producing, supplying and sourcing sustainable seafood. The industry has adapted and

innovated remarkably in response to the extraordinary challenge of Covid-19, using all its dedication and ingenuity to continue to deliver sustainable seafood choices to consumers around the world, safely and affordably. I firmly believe those that keep sustainability at the heart of their business strategies, across all sectors, will eventually emerge stronger and more resilient and with a stronger license to operate as the world grapples with the delivery of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

Part of the reason for this, for our sector, is the growing demand and expectation for traceable, sustainable seafood. Our latest GlobeScan survey confirmed that consumers around the world care about ocean issues, and that sustainability and provenance are increasingly important factors when buying seafood. While this survey was carried out just before the pandemic, all the signs we are seeing suggest these trends will continue as people reflect on what matters to them and place greater emphasis on health and wellbeing.

For more than 20 years, the MSC has connected fishers, businesses and consumers who care about the future of our oceans. We have achieved so much together – we cannot afford to slip back now. Instead, we must increase our efforts to engage more fisheries, especially in the Global South, reach new markets and drive further improvements on the water. The coming decade will be pivotal. We have a route map agreed by 193 nations to fulfil the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 – including SDG14, to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Let us use this opportunity to redouble our efforts and deliver.

Rupert Howes, Marine Stewardship Council CEO

A message from our chair



Around the world, the response to the Covid-19 pandemic has brought countless examples of solidarity and cooperation for the greater good. At the same time, recent protest movements have exposed ongoing divisions and injustices. Globally, our societies are wrestling with ideas of representation and diversity, and that is something we have been doing within the MSC.

We are a global organisation with a mission that matters to everyone. Indeed, healthy seas and fish stocks are especially important in the Global South, where seafood provides food and livelihoods for so many people. As we increasingly seek to engage with more partners in different geographies, we encounter different historical ways of doing things and different challenges.

It is essential that we incorporate this diversity into our governance structure: doing so gives us a chance to engage more meaningfully with a wider range of partners, constituencies and stakeholders, which will make us a stronger and more effective organisation. Although we have very clear policies on this, we know we can do better in practice.

One major achievement this year has been the increasingly active involvement of our Stakeholder Advisory Council (STAC).

This group is becoming a dynamic hub for engagement with our broader group of stakeholders, and for bringing their concerns to our executive team. That is something I have dreamt of, and we are really starting to see it working in action now. This active input will be necessary with the upcoming review of our Fisheries Standard, where it is so important to ensure that the views of our stakeholders are considered.

We collaborate with the global scientific community via our Technical Advisory Board (TAB). We owe a great deal of thanks to all of them for offering their considerable expertise and time, whether through their institutions or on a purely personal level, as well as to our supply chain experts, who also form part of the TAB's membership. Their contributions, along with those of the STAC members, are a major investment into the MSC, which we draw on every day.

All of our partners and stakeholders are committed to our vision of oceans teeming with life, though they may have different views, different capacities and different ways to achieve it. Harnessing that diversity makes us stronger.

Werner Kiene, Marine Stewardship Council Chair

Tackling global challenges

Our vision is of the world's oceans teeming with life, and seafood supplies safeguarded for this and future generations.

Our mission is to use our ecolabel and fishery certification program to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by recognising and rewarding sustainable fishing practices, influencing the choices people make when buying seafood and working with our partners to transform the seafood market to a sustainable basis.

This report shows how we have been working together with partners throughout the seafood sector so future generations can enjoy seafood and oceans full of life, forever.

+122% rise in total food fish consumption, 1990 to 2018

+14% rise in global capture fisheries production, 1990 to 2018

+527% rise in global aquaculture production, 1990 to 2018

A call to action to end overfishing

Demand for seafood continues to rise, but far too many of the world's fisheries remain overfished.

The *2020 State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA)* report from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) illustrates why fishing and seafood are vital for food security and the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people. Its analysis of information and data indicates a higher proportion of fisheries are now operating at unsustainable levels than before.

The SOFIA report estimates more than one in three fisheries is exploited beyond biologically sustainable levels – compared to one in ten in 1990. During the same period, the amount of fish eaten worldwide has risen by 122%. Most of that increase has come from aquaculture, though this industry is heavily dependent on wild fisheries as a source of feed. Production from wild capture fisheries has increased too, reaching the highest level ever recorded at 96.4 million tonnes in 2018. Within this, production from marine fisheries increased to 84.4 million tonnes from 81.2 million tonnes the previous year.

Increased demand cannot be met by fishing unsustainably.

The 34.2% of stocks that the FAO estimates are overfished produce only 22% of landings. By contrast, the data in the report indicates sustainably managed fisheries produce more, and the biomass of these stocks tends to increase, safeguarding seafood supplies for future generations. Catches of tuna and

tuna-like species, for example, reached their highest ever levels in 2018 at more than 7.9 million tonnes – while the proportion of overfished stocks may have fallen by 10 percentage points in the last two years. Although the FAO estimates at least a third of tuna stocks are still overfished, management has improved, with 28% of the global catch of the main commercial tuna species now certified to the MSC Standard.

While many countries are making progress in improving fisheries management, some continue to subsidise overfishing. Recent research from the University of British Columbia found that 63% of fishery subsidies risk encouraging unsustainable or illegal fishing. Sir David Attenborough is among those leading the call for the World Trade Organization to ban harmful fishing subsidies, which amounted to £18 billion last year alone.

The MSC Standard provides a mechanism for well-managed and sustainable fisheries to showcase what sustainable fishing looks like in practice. Across the globe, fisheries large and small are demonstrating it is possible to be more profitable and productive by maintaining healthy fish stocks, minimising impacts on marine ecosystems and following good management systems. Today, 15% of global catch is certified to the MSC Standard. We set an ambitious target to have more than a third of landings engaged in the MSC program by 2030 as our contribution, through the leadership of our partners, to the delivery of SDG14.

34.2% of stocks estimated to be fished to biologically unsustainable levels (2017)

78.7% of landings estimated to be from biologically sustainable stocks

Contributing to global goals



The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a shared vision of the future, and a framework to guide governments, industry, non-profits and the entire global community in working together for a better world.

MSC certification contributes to SDG14 on Life Below Water, which commits countries to conserve and use the oceans sustainably, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Our work also contributes to other goals including food security (SDG2), decent work (SDG8), sustainable consumption and production (SDG12) and strengthening global partnerships for sustainable development (SDG17).



Ocean action

The sheer scale of our oceans makes SDG14 (Life Below Water) one of the most complex and challenging of the SDGs to tackle. Potential actions to deliver the 2020 and 2030 deadlines set out in SDG14 were released in a partnership report to coincide with our annual Seafood Futures Forum held at the Seafood Expo Global in Brussels in April 2019.

Accelerating Progress on Healthy and Productive Oceans draws on the perspectives shared by more than 225 NGOs, seafood industry professionals and experts from 31 countries during the SDG Leadership Forum for Goal 14, an online discussion we co-hosted with GlobeScan and Nomad Foods. Almost half of the participants in the discussion said sustainable sourcing is the most effective way to accelerate progress towards ending the global challenge of overfishing, while acknowledging that engaging consumers, government leadership and more support for the Global South are challenges to be met.

39 million

People employed directly in fisheries

3.3 billion

People who get at least 20% of their daily animal protein intake from fish



Seafood is a low-carbon source of protein

Catching a kilo of fish emits 1.5kg of CO₂ on average, compared to between 50kg and 750kg for a kilo of red meat



A changing climate

Climate change is having a profound impact on our oceans and marine life. Habitats and fish distribution patterns are changing as the oceans become warmer and more acidic, presenting new challenges for fisheries.

The special report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in September 2019 details the likely impacts on the ocean in a changing climate. It predicts that overall productivity and seafood catches are likely to decline, with potential seafood catch in parts of the tropics falling by up to 40% by 2050. The report also warns that shifting distributions of fish stocks across international boundaries will increase the risk of potential conflicts about fishing quotas – something that we have already seen with herring in the North East Atlantic (see page 24).

As the impacts of climate change take hold, fishing sustainably in a way that maintains and restores the resilience of ecosystems is more important than ever. Fisheries will also need to be able to adapt to rapid changes in distribution or population levels, which will require better monitoring and management and greater international cooperation.



Food and livelihoods

Fishing is vital for the food security and livelihoods of millions of people around the world. Some 39 million people are directly employed in fishing, the vast majority in the developing world. Many more are employed in seafood supply chains. Half of them are women, who often work in poorly paid positions with low job security.

Fisheries need to be managed sustainably to ensure that the communities that depend upon them can survive and thrive. The MSC Standard provides a framework for fisheries to work towards sustainability, and certification can offer significant economic benefits.

Making the MSC program work for fisheries in the developing regions is one of our top priorities, and we've seen some significant progress this year (see page 27).

For the first time, we have also introduced requirements for audits on a risk basis across supply chain businesses to eliminate the risk of forced labour or child labour (page 32).

Innovating and responding to the pandemic

The initial impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the global fishing industry was devastating. Vessels could not get out to fish, some fleets had to be tied up and even when fishing was possible, disruption in supply chains meant that for some, with the loss of their markets, there was little point in going fishing.

We recognise the ongoing challenges fisheries are facing, as the pandemic continues to have an impact on people around the world. Because of the constraints, regional fisheries management organisations temporarily suspended observer coverage, international meetings have been deferred, and, in March 2020 we took the unprecedented decision to offer certified fisheries a six-month extension on the usual timelines for assessments and allowed remote audits of fisheries and supply chain businesses. These measures are being monitored carefully, to ensure certificate holders are supported in continuing to meet the requirements of the MSC Standards.

Whilst the severity and duration of the initial impact of the pandemic varied across supply chains and regions, and the long term impact remains to be seen, the industry responded quickly – innovating and adapting to ensure consumers could still have access to sustainable seafood choices.

Saluting Ocean Heroes

We have seen wholesalers switch to selling direct to the public, supermarkets stocking new lines that would once have gone to top-end restaurants, and vessels adopting quarantine measures for their crew. MSC certified food-service businesses have teamed up to deliver care packages to people self-isolating at home, while suppliers have donated seafood to hospitals, community organisations and even zoos.

In Australia, fishing and processing company Walker Seafoods adapted by opening a retail outlet on its premises, selling MSC certified yellowfin and swordfish directly to the public.

When Chinese fisher Captain Zhang found his wholesale business struggling with the closure of the hospitality industry, he took to social media, inspiring home consumers with seafood recipes and tips.

With flights home suspended indefinitely, Spanish crew members working in the Echebatar tuna fishery volunteered to stay at sea in the Seychelles, not knowing how long they might remain.

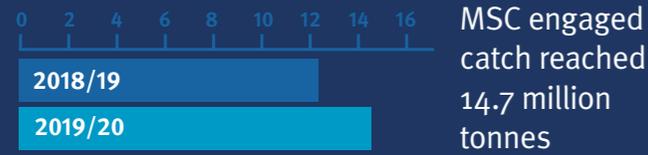
We have highlighted some of these efforts in a new series of online stories. **“Ocean Heroes”** pays tribute to the people going to amazing lengths to keep sustainable seafood on our plates.



When the pandemic disrupted food supplies for injured penguins at The Wildlife Hospital Trust in New Zealand, seafood firm Sealord supplied a tonne of MSC certified southern blue whiting.

Progress in the year

In 2019 - 20



Of all wild marine catch...

17.4 % was engaged with the MSC

15.0 % certified

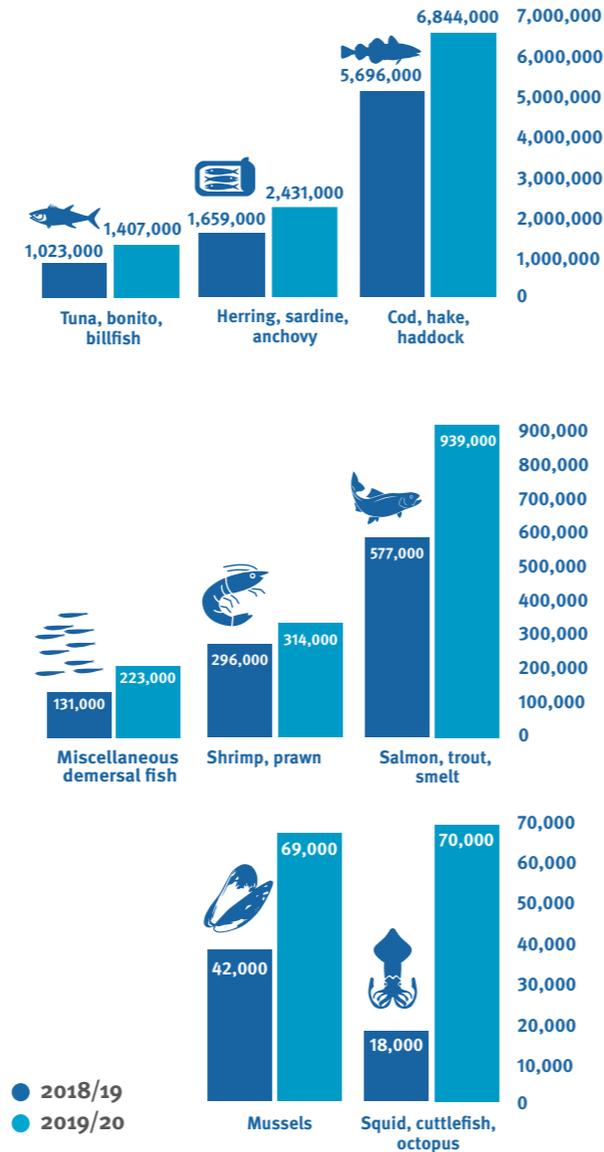
1.2 % certified but suspended

1.2 % in assessment

An **additional 8% of global marine wild catch** came from fisheries working towards MSC certification (those in the In Transition to MSC program, Pathways Projects at stage 3 or 4, and fisheries improvement projects that have MSC certification as an explicit end goal). Altogether this represents **over a quarter** of the global marine wild catch.

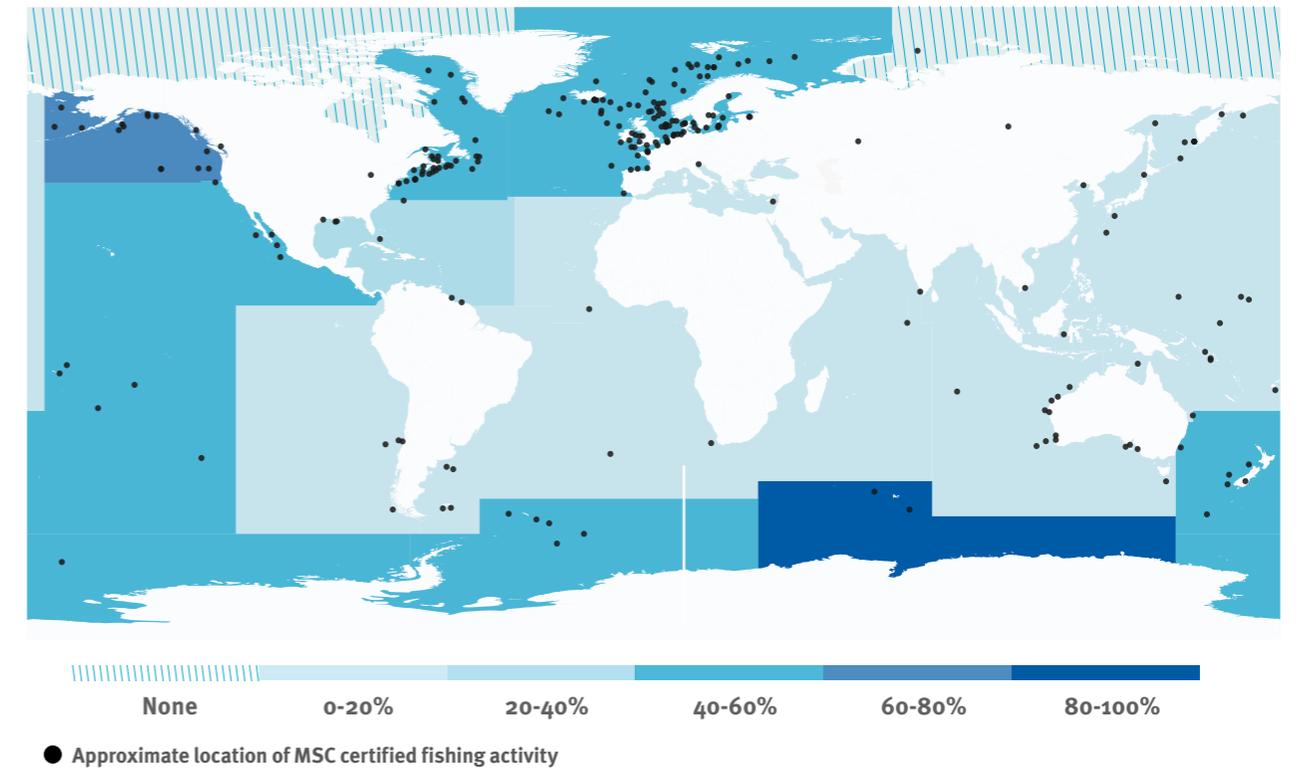
MSC 2019-20 marine catch (follows MSC exclusion policy and does not include farmed fish or inland fisheries) compared with FAO 2018 data

MSC engaged catch volume (tonnes)



Proportion of global catch that is MSC certified

MSC certified marine catch (including suspended fisheries) and fishery data for the 2019-20 financial year, compared with total marine catch in each FAO major fishing area in 2018 (latest UN data available).

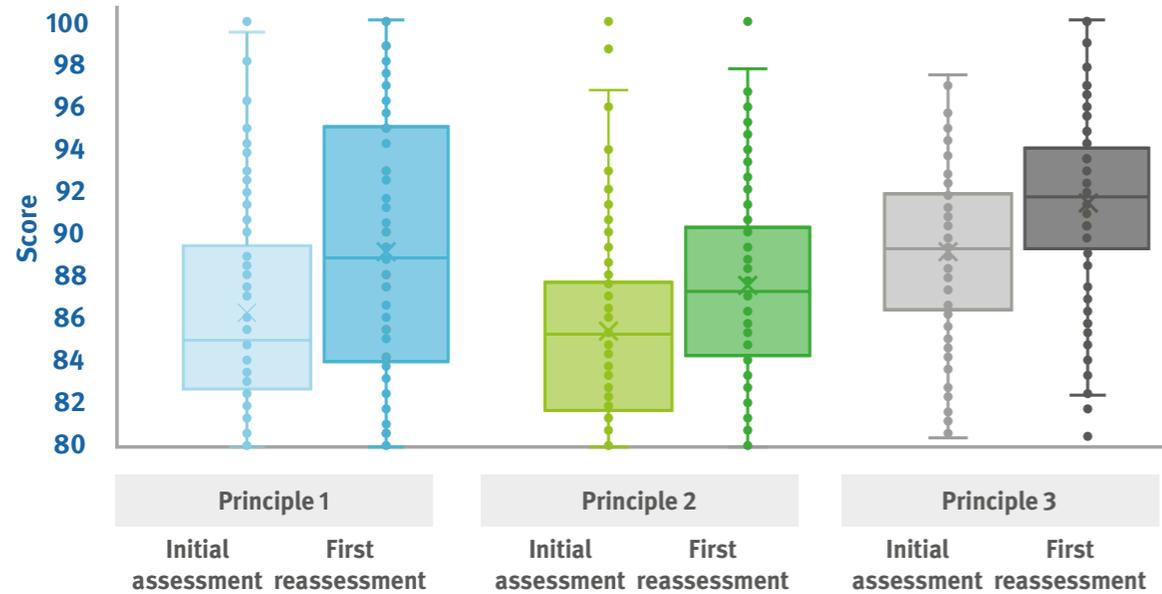


+21%
wild marine catch engaged with MSC since last year

409
fisheries certified (of which 22 were suspended) plus another **89** in assessment

Fisheries improving

Fisheries are scored separately against the three principles of the MSC Fisheries Standard: sustainability of the stock (Principle 1); ecosystem impacts (Principle 2); and effective management (Principle 3). To pass an assessment they must score at least 80, while an ideal score of 100 represents state-of-the-art performance on every indicator under that principle.



Collectively, fisheries show a marked improvement on all principles as they stay in the program, with a statistically significant difference between the average of their scores at initial assessment on joining the program and first reassessment at the end of the first certification period, when a new one begins.

The graph shows the scores from all currently certified fisheries that have completed two full assessments. To date, 119 of our fisheries have been in the program long enough to have been assessed twice and allow comparison between scores. Some of these fisheries have been certified for a decade or more, but data from their first two full assessments will be from their first five years or so in the program. Points represent individual

fisheries' score, with the mean (cross), median (horizontal bar) and 25-75th percentile range (shaded box) showing the distribution of all scores.

Improvements in fisheries are often driven by conditions of certification. These require fisheries to develop an approved action plan for achieving global best practice on every one of the 28 performance indicators they are assessed against. A condition is set if a fishery achieves minimum sustainability requirements on an indicator (at least 60) but less than best practice (80). The condition is closed when it scores 80 or above, with the time limit usually being the lifetime of a certificate, five years.

1,751

improvements made by fisheries by the end of 2019

including 384 since 2017 with:



72 improvements benefiting ecosystems and habitats



126 improvements benefiting endangered, threatened and protected species and bycatch



75 improvements benefiting fishery management, governance and policy



111 improvements benefiting stock status and harvest strategy

Improvements come from a condition of certification being closed, which has resulted in global best practice (a score of at least 80) being achieved on at least one more performance indicator.

Improved Spanish fisheries

Two Spanish fisheries this year were recertified with no conditions.

The **AGARBA Spain cod fishery** operating in the Barents Sea was recertified in April 2019, having successfully completed six conditions that were imposed on its first assessment. This included putting in place detailed recording of catches and interactions with non-target species, and carrying out research into bottom-dwelling fish to better understand impacts on seabed habitats.

AGARBA's recertification used version 2.0 of the MSC Fisheries Standard which requires fisheries to meet new requirements related to their impact on habitats and the ecosystem. This makes AGARBA a pioneer trawling fishery in the area.

Also recertified was the **Cantabrian anchovy fishery**, which in 2015 became the first European anchovy fishery to achieve MSC certification. The artisanal fishery completed three improvements, including improving information on bycatch and interactions with endangered species.

The biomass of the fishery is now at maximum levels and the number of vessels on the fishery's MSC certificate has almost doubled from 50 in 2015 to 93 today, which shows how demand for these MSC certified anchovies has grown. It is a real recovery story for a fishery that was closed several times between 2005 and 2010 because of overfishing and poor management.

Follow the science

From monitoring our impacts to new research, scientific rigour is vital, explains MSC senior scientist Katie Longo



Science is at the heart of the MSC program, both in developing our Standards and in monitoring their impacts.

It is vital that we can prove that we are doing what we say we are doing – that we test the assumptions we make in our theory of change, around how MSC's standard-setting and ecolabeling program leads to more sustainable oceans, and demonstrate our value proposition. Independent scientists increasingly investigate the effects of the MSC and we build on and contribute to this research. This work helps identify the strengths and benefits of our program, but also reveals gaps and helps us find solutions.

Fisheries and seafood supply chain actors trust our program – some have to invest in significant changes in order to join it, and they need to be confident they are working towards best practice,

with MSC as a credible partner. As a stakeholder-based organisation, it is our duty to monitor and report back how the program is operating to certificate-holders and all interested parties, including NGOs, scientists and consumers: from showing sustainability improvements on the water, to monitoring social and economic effects of certification throughout the supply chain. One such example is our collaboration with external social scientists and economists piloting systematic interviews with different stakeholders involved in the program. This work enables us to understand how the MSC program's incentives and costs affect people in different parts of the world.

Our research is not just about checking the program and identifying evidence of its impacts. We also take a scientific approach to program improvement. For example, we are developing

assessment tools to make certification more accessible to data-limited fisheries that meet our Fisheries Standard, but have to use less conventional kinds of information to be able to demonstrate it.

This year, in collaboration with the Supply Chain team (see page 32) we have also investigated how DNA and stable isotope techniques can help confirm the origin of certified seafood to combat fraud and mislabelling. These techniques have been developed in an academic environment, but through our network of fishery partners we were able to test their application in real supply chains to demonstrate sustainable provenance of eco-labelled products.

Advancing sustainability requires different environmental and human processes coming together. It is not always a simple story, but to me as a scientist that complexity is what makes it so fascinating.

Supporting fisheries science

Since launching in 2012, our student research grant has awarded more than £90,000 to support students researching topics related to sustainable fishing. This year's recipients were:

Bianca Haas from the University of Tasmania, Australia, who is researching the connections between regional fisheries management organisations and sustainability initiatives such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Rodrigo Oyanedel from the University of Oxford, UK, who is investigating how to reduce the illegal fishing of common hake in Chile, which affects local fishers who depend on hake fishing for their livelihoods.

Guilherme Suzano Coqueiro from the Federal University of Paraná, Brazil, who is studying the socio-economic effects of using bycatch exclusion devices in small-scale, traditional community fisheries in southern Brazil.

Santiago Bianchi from the National University of Mar del Plata, Argentina, who will use the fund to study whether escape rings can help reduce spider crab bycatch in the Argentine southern king crab fisheries.

Read about our other Science and Research grants as part of our Ocean Stewardship Fund on page 29.



Find out more about our science and research

Alaska pollock: big is beautiful

The world's largest MSC-certified sustainable fishery by volume celebrated its 15th year of certification in 2020. Alaska pollock is also the largest fishery in the US, demonstrating how large-scale fisheries are well placed to balance economic and environmental priorities to safeguard both the ocean and our future food supplies.

The fishery's performance scores are among the highest in the MSC program. A history of conservative quotas has kept stocks of pollock healthy, with fishery managers setting catch levels below the maximum sustainable yields calculated by scientists. Bycatch levels of non-target species are below 21%, and fishery regulations are in place to minimise impacts on sea lions and other species. The fleet has 100% observer coverage.

Full utilisation of the pollock fish is just one of the ways this fishery goes above and beyond the MSC Fisheries Standard to ensure sustainability. The meat is frozen at sea for maximum freshness, while the remainder is processed into fish meal and fish oil.

UK and Ireland shellfish in the spotlight

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Cockling has been an important part of our local community for hundreds of years. This certification proves our fishers continue to be committed to the sustainability of the fishery into the future.

Andrew Rattley, Leigh Port Partnership

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The UK's Thames Estuary cockle fishery achieved MSC certification in December 2019. For the 14 vessels in the fleet, it rewards their consistent productivity and low environmental impact – as well as being prime cockle territory, the area is important for wildlife.

Further up the east coast of the UK, The Wash brown shrimp fishery is also newly certified. The 50 small vessels in the Wash use lightweight beam trawls to minimise harm to the seabed compared to other types of beam trawl, and stay away from the most sensitive areas. Crewed by two or three people, trips last one to three days. The catch is sorted and cooked on board before further processing on land – the majority is then exported for sale on the Dutch market.

Across the Irish Sea, all mussels on the island of Ireland are now certified as sustainable after the Irish rope grown mussel fishery achieved MSC certification in July 2019 – joining the bottom-grown fisheries that have been certified since 2013. Introduced on the west coast of Ireland in the 1980s, the rope grown sector produced 8,549 tonnes of mussels in 2017. The export-oriented Irish mussel industry was valued at €11.7 million in 2018.

Tuna: five years of improvements

At the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak, there was a huge rise in online searches for tinned tuna recipes. Tuna sustainability is on the up too. In April 2019, we released figures showing that sales of MSC certified tuna had more than doubled from 21,500 tonnes in 2015-16 to 54,000 tonnes in 2018-19, and are still growing. Now, 28% of the global tuna catch is certified to the MSC Standard, compared with 14% in 2014. Today there are 29 MSC certified tuna fisheries, up from just eight in September 2014.

Tuna has huge social and economic value. The global market is worth more than US\$42 billion a year, and in the Asia Pacific region tuna fisheries support some 6 million livelihoods. Currently, 65% of global tuna stocks are assessed as healthy, and the trend towards sustainability continues upwards.

In October the Marshall Islands' bigeye and yellowfin tuna longline fishery achieved certification, making it the second MSC certified bigeye tuna fishery.

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As a small island nation, the Marshall Islands depends on healthy oceans and fishing for our livelihood and the welfare of our communities. MSC certification gives us the confidence that we're fishing our oceans sustainably, leaving a thriving resource for generations to come. It also gives those fishing our waters extra market incentive to safeguard the environment. It's a win-win.

Glen Joseph, Director, Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority



A first for Dongwon

Dongwon Industries became the first South Korea based business to meet the MSC Standard. The certification of its yellowfin and skipjack tuna fishery in October 2019 covers 13 purse seine freezer vessels operating in the West Central Pacific Ocean. The fishery has 100% observer coverage and real-time monitoring.

Dongwon Industries is part of the Seafood Business for Ocean Stewardship (SeaBOS) initiative, which aims to stimulate transformative change in the oceans. Dongwon President and CEO Myoung Woo Lee calls certification “a great honour”, and says the company is “sincerely excited” to be flying the flag for sustainability in South Korea.



Australia: in the vanguard

Twenty years ago, the first ever MSC certification was awarded to Western Australia rock lobster fishery. Today the country remains a global leader in seafood sustainability, with 20 fisheries representing 29 species certified. In Western Australia, close to 90% of fisheries by value are certified to the MSC Fisheries Standard, with two more added to the list in this financial year.

The Western Australia octopus fishery is the first octopus fleet to be certified in the southern hemisphere and only the second anywhere in the world. Its 23 vessels use unique trigger-trap technology to keep bycatch levels below 1%. While 2017 saw a harvest of 189 tonnes, fishers are confident that sustainable yields of up to 1,000 tonnes are achievable.

The Western Australia sea cucumber fishery is the world's first to be MSC certified and covers two species, the deep-water redfish (*Actinopyga echinites*) and sand fish (*Holothuria scabra*). This is a welcome development in light of global concerns over sea cucumber populations, which are today the target of a multibillion-dollar industry in which illegal markets and overfishing are rife.

Tasmanian Seafoods CEO Mark Webster explains what makes this fishery different: "Western Australia sea cucumber is hand-harvested in remote and pristine waters. This is a diver fishery, so there are very few interactions with the ocean floor and none with threatened or endangered species. Due to hand harvesting, the fishery has no incidental bycatch."

Sea cucumbers recycle vital nutrients, playing an important role in maintaining biodiverse ecosystems and acting as a buffer against ocean acidification. Plans are afoot to achieve MSC certification in all of Australia's sea cucumber fisheries.

A third Australian success in August 2019 brought three more species into the MSC program. The newly certified South East Australia small pelagic fishery uses midwater trawls to catch blue mackerel (*Scomber australasicus*), greenback horse mackerel (*Trachurus declivis*) and redbait (*Emmelichthys nitidus*).

North by North-West

Russia is one of the world's biggest producers of wild-caught seafood. New certifications of the Russian Barents Sea Greenland halibut fishery and the Opilio trap fishery brought the total of MSC certified fisheries in Russia to 42, of which 18 are in the Barents Sea.

The MSC certified Opilio trap fishery holds 70% of the commercial snow crab quota in Russian waters, of a total allowable catch of nearly 10,000 tonnes. It comprises 12 vessels that fish from March to June, using partially biodegradable traps. Meanwhile, the Greenland halibut fishery includes three vessels operating from September to November, yielding 4,700 tonnes in 2019.

Both fisheries are run by members of the North-West Fishing Consortium. "In 2016 we committed to achieving MSC certification for all of the fisheries that we are part of," says the Consortium's executive director Sergey Nesvetov. "These latest certifications complete this commitment and are a proud moment for our organisation. Sustainable and responsible seafood production is an essential part of our business model."



The Kholmogory vessel operates in MSC certified fisheries in Russia
© North West Fishing Consortium



Oysters. © iStock.com/stanfram

The world is your oyster

Two oyster farms on opposite sides of the globe achieved significant new certifications in December. Prestige Oysters in Texas and Louisiana became the first MSC certified wild oyster fishery in the Americas, and Japan's Seto Inland Sea saw the world's first certification of a rope-grown oyster fishery.

For Prestige Oysters, the move to get certified was a logical step - increasingly good market reasons for doing so. "In the past decade, we have seen initiatives from food service to retail customers to source MSC certified seafood, and I am excited to meet that demand," says CEO Johnny Halili.

Processor Maruto Suisan had noticed the same trend: in response to growing Japanese consumer demand for certified seafood, the processor joined forces with local fishers to make the operational improvements needed in the Seto Inland Sea oyster fishery.

Maruto Suisan president Kimihiro Kokubo is quick to emphasise the value of collaboration: "Through the assessment process, we were able to engage with numerous stakeholders and form strong ties with the local fisheries cooperative and oyster producers in Okucho, who provided us with a wealth of knowledge, expertise and appreciation for their commitment to sustainability."

Sustainability in Latin America

Fisheries in Chile and Mexico are among those progressing towards sustainability, explains MSC Latin America director Cristian Vallejos



We are proud of our growth in Latin America this year. We now have 16 certified fisheries, and our volume of MSC certified seafood has more than doubled this year, from around 400,000 to 900,000 tonnes.

Most of the growth is down to the certification of the jack mackerel fishery in Chile. This is one of the largest fisheries in the world, with the annual quota recently increased from 400,000 to 600,000 tonnes. A portion of the catch is sold as low-cost canned food in Chile, some is exported to West Africa where it provides important protein, and some is turned into fish meal.

Also certified was Chile's southern hake fishery, after several years of work to strengthen the operations and institutional set-up. This is a high-quality, export-oriented fishery, so having the MSC label is important for securing access to valuable European markets. It brings the total number of certified fisheries in Chile to eight, about 20% of the total catch.

In Mexico, meanwhile, about a quarter of the catch is certified. We are now beginning to explore ways to build consumer demand for sustainable seafood in Mexico, as well as working with large retailers to align their corporate social responsibility policies with MSC certification.

There is substantial interest in improving fisheries management in Latin America. Many fishery improvement projects are aiming to meet the MSC Standard, including in Argentina, Ecuador and Peru, while a good number of fisheries in these countries as well as in Uruguay are close to initiating MSC full assessments.

Particularly encouraging is the engagement of the Peruvian anchoveta fishery – by far the largest fishery in the world. Two improvement projects are under way, and we hope part of the fishery will soon be ready to enter assessment. The vast majority of the catch is used for fish meal, mainly in China. While the desire for certification is not driven by consumer demand, this is a multimillion-dollar fishery so it is important for it to demonstrate it is operating to the highest standards.

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Chilean seafood products have achieved great reputation internationally, being the second largest salmon exporter worldwide. Chile is characterised by producing and exporting high quality food, in addition to implementing the highest environmental standards and being a reliable partner. The fact that the Chilean southern hake has been MSC certified is a tremendous support for the industry and for this product, which has its main market in Spain, where the certification was very well received by importers, distributors and retailers, as they know they will be offering higher value to their customers.

Sebastián Pillado, Chilean Trade Commissioner for Spain – ProChile

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Barred sand bass *Paralabrax nebulifer* caught in one Mexican fishery in pre-assessment with Fish for Good © Carlos Aguilera

Beyond borders

Managing fisheries sustainably depends on international cooperation, explains Ernesto Jardim, Fisheries Standard Director



Fish do not acknowledge borders! Highly migratory species such as tuna, cross vast expanses of ocean. Several species

of fisheries resources, in the middle of an interesting, yet extremely complex, management system.

The Joint Demersal Fisheries certification in the North Sea in October 2019 illustrates fishing organisations in different countries can come together to manage stocks that share the same ecosystem. In this case, as a condition of MSC certification, the fisheries need to put in place a monitoring system to prove they meet the landing obligation (discard ban) introduced by European Union's Common Fisheries Policy. Governments need to do this anyway to comply with EU regulations. The requirements of MSC certification add an extra incentive, bringing regulators, fishers and markets together to pull in the same direction.

The need for international cooperation is going to increase. For example, stocks of pelagic species in the North

East Atlantic, such as mackerel and herring, have been moving further north because of climate change and are increasingly found in Greenland and Iceland waters. Nevertheless, quotas set by fishing nations have not reflected this change and have ignored scientific advice. This has undermined the management system, so it is potentially not responsive to the changing status of fish stocks. As a result, all the MSC certified mackerel fisheries in the North East Atlantic had their certification suspended in 2019.

This is a stark illustration of how we need to manage whole ecosystems in an adaptive, scientific way, rather than managing national fish resources independently. While individual fisheries often make great efforts to improve their sustainability, ultimately, they cannot do it alone. International management systems need to deliver too.

migrate between feeding and spawning grounds, which may be in different Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). Species are being pushed outside their traditional boundaries by climate change. And rebuilding fish stocks may expand into new areas.

These ecological dynamics, alongside the political complexity of national policies and brokering international agreements on how to share natural resources, turns the management of seafood resources across multi-jurisdictional areas into one of the biggest challenges for fisheries managers in the years to come. This puts the MSC, as facilitator and promoter of sustainable management

Twelve species, four nations, one certification

Involving four countries, 12 species, 10 gear types and nearly 1,000 vessels, the joint demersal fisheries of Denmark, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands achieved certification in October 2019. Fisheries associations will cooperate to harvest sustainably a marine area in the North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat almost the size of the four countries combined.

The fisheries previously held 10 individual certificates. Bringing them under one will make certification more efficient and cost-effective, as well as helping to drive improvements through better coordination and holistic management of the whole ecosystem. The collective approach has also helped bring some fisheries into the program that might not have otherwise seen certification as commercially viable.

Reflecting the size and complexity of the certificate, the assessment process took more than two years. This included reviews by independent scientists, extensive stakeholder consultations and in-depth analyses of stock assessments, impacts on other species, habitats and the ecosystem, as well as the effectiveness of regulations and fisheries management.

12 species

Cod*
Haddock
Hake
Ling
Megrin
Norway lobster (Nephrops)
Northern prawn (Pandalus)
Plaice
Saithe
Dover sole
Tusk
Whiting*

* Certificates for all North Sea cod and whiting fisheries are currently suspended because of new scientific advice on stock levels.

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We are very proud of the successful completion of our new MSC certificate. We catch high quality fish, our fisheries are sustainable and most of our catch is MSC certified. This is the icing on the cake and a fantastic victory.

Svend Erik Andersen, Chairman of the Danish Fishermen PO

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North Sea cod

Along with rapid changes in the distribution of pelagic species, climate change has been linked to recent declines in cod populations in the North Sea. Few juvenile cod appear to be surviving into adulthood, and stocks which had been recovering are now in decline again. Because of this, all North Sea cod fisheries had their MSC certification suspended in September 2019. It is a bitter blow for the fisheries that have worked so hard to rebuild stocks over the last decade. They have committed to new measures to help the species recover, but cod's changing fortunes underscore the need for more cooperation and adaptive management as the climate changes.

Strategic support

The figures in the UN FAO report (pages 6-7) underline the pressing need to ensure all stocks, globally, are managed sustainably. MSC aims to contribute to this global transition. We provide tools, expertise and funding to fisheries not currently operating at the level of the MSC Standard for sustainable fishing, aiming to support their progress on their pathway to sustainability.

We have a focus on supporting the sustainable fishing ambitions of fisheries in the Global South or that are small-scale fisheries, which collectively provide livelihoods and food security for millions of people around the world.

Small-scale fisheries

Small-scale fisheries have always been an important focus of the MSC's work, but can face particular challenges in becoming certified. To support them we have developed a risk-based approach for fisheries that lack the sort of data usually required in MSC assessments, and guidance on how to consider informal and traditional approaches to management in an assessment.

In 2019, 16% of MSC certified fisheries were small-scale, though many others include a mix of large and small-scale operations. These 62 fisheries span 22 countries across the globe. With nine certified small-scale fisheries, Canada tops the list, followed by Russia, the UK (both six), Sweden and the USA (both five). In total, these fisheries support the livelihoods of more than 80,000 people.

Making Waves

This year, we released *Making Waves*, the first ever review of the collective impact of small-scale fisheries in the MSC program. It shows that not only are real ecological improvements being achieved on the water, but they are often complemented by social and economic benefits on land. In the Ben Tre clam fishery in Vietnam, for example, value at landing increased by 165% following certification.



Fisheries in the Global South

Around 60% of all seafood is caught in the Global South, where it is often a vital source of protein. Nearly half of the countries with MSC certified fisheries are in the Global South (26 countries out of 53). The proportion of catch from MSC engaged fisheries coming from the Global South has risen by nearly a quarter since last year, to 13%. This makes up 3.3% of the total catch from Global South, up by a half since 2018-19.

We are committed to working with fisheries, NGOs and governments in these regions, where the MSC Standard is a benchmark for identifying gaps and charting improvements towards sustainability. In 2019-20 there were 53 certified fisheries and 17 fisheries in assessment in the Global South, a 71% increase in engagement since 2017.

Indonesia

In August 2019, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indonesia Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) to strengthen collaboration on sustainable fishing. The MoU will promote cooperation in areas such as developing fishery improvement projects, sharing sustainable fishing best practice through our Fisheries Standard, and capacity building.

Indonesia is the world's second largest fish producer, and its waters include some of the ocean's richest and most productive ecosystems. Ensuring Indonesia's fish stocks are managed sustainably is vital for marine biodiversity, livelihoods and food security globally and locally, with seafood providing more than half of the country's protein intake.

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Indonesia and the MSC share the vision that sustainable fishing is essential to supporting coastal livelihoods, economic growth, and social development. This MoU shows our commitment to work together towards safeguarding Indonesia's seafood supplies for future generations.

Patrick Caleo, MSC Asia Pacific Regional Director

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13%

of MSC engaged catch from Global South

70

fisheries engaged in the Global South

3.3%

of total Global South catch is MSC certified

26

countries engaged



600+
fishers employed by
the red lobster fishery

Red lobster caught in Baja, Mexico – a fishery in an improvement project

Funding for ocean stewardship

The first grants funded by our Ocean Stewardship Fund were awarded to projects in March 2020. The Transition Assistance strand of the fund provides support to small-scale and Global South fisheries to make the improvements they need to achieve MSC certification. The Science and Research strand of the fund supports vital scientific research initiatives in MSC certified fisheries around the world.

From the first round of applications received this year, 15 projects were awarded up to £50,000 of funding each. These include projects supporting fisheries in Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa that are improving towards MSC certification through our In-Transition to MSC program, as well as research projects focusing on ghost gear and interactions with protected species in other parts of the world.

The Ocean Stewardship Fund also recognises the long-term commitment to sustainability of MSC certified fisheries by supporting the costs of their second or subsequent recertification via the Recertification Assistance Fund.

Pathway to sustainability

Our capacity building program, which works with fishery clients, managers, scientists, consultants and other stakeholders, is now in its fifth year. We collaborate with other NGOs, governments, supply chain businesses and funders to guide fisheries on towards sustainability.

During the year, we ran “Working Towards MSC Certification” workshops in nine countries, six of them in the Global South. These five-day training sessions reached more than 200 people from 28 nationalities.

We received funding from the Walton Family Foundation to increase this effort, so we hope to be able to deliver more training events in more languages. We are also aiming to expand our online training, allowing us to reach even more people.

Working towards certification in Baja California

On the coast of Baja California in north-west Mexico, many families rely on fishing for their livelihoods. Through the Fish for Good project, funded by the Dutch Postcode Lottery, we are working with Mexican non-profit Pronatura Noroeste to support eight small-scale fisheries on the pathway to sustainability.

Two of these fisheries – red lobster and red sea urchin – are now receiving

support from the Ocean Stewardship Fund to work towards MSC certification. The results of a pre-assessment in November 2019 indicate the two fisheries would likely reach the MSC Standard at minimum level, but improvements would be required. Both fisheries are in our In-Transition to MSC program with the aim of completing full MSC assessment by the end of 2024.

The red lobster fishery employs more than 600 fishers in Baja California and mainly exports to Asian markets. Activities as part of the fishery improvement project will include developing a harvest strategy,

measuring the impact on species used as bait and investigating possible impacts on threatened species.

More than 1,500 people are directly employed in the red sea urchin fishery, and exports to Asia and the U.S. have risen significantly in value in recent years. It is a highly selective type of fishing, with divers using hooks to dislodge the sea urchins. Proposed improvements include initiatives to model and monitor stock assessments and restore habitats.

Progress in India



Indian fisheries have made significant progress on the pathway to sustainability, explains MSC India consultant Ranjit Suseelan



Seafood is one of India's most valuable export industries, but the country has lost many fisheries because of overexploitation. MSC certification is important, both to add value to our exports and to secure the future of our resources.

With more than 300 fisheries in India, it is important to decide which to prioritise. In 2018, we held a workshop bringing together around 300 stakeholders from all parts of the country, including government agencies, scientists, processors, NGOs as well as traditional and industrial fishers.

Out of this meeting was formed the Sustainable Seafood Network of India, a national platform to promote seafood sustainability. Several seafood processors have joined together to establish three forums to fund assessments and fishery improvement projects. These cover shrimp and cephalopod trawls and deep-sea shrimp trawls in Kerala, and blue swimming crab in Palk Bay between India and Sri Lanka.

As a result, pre-assessments for 11 species were carried out in 2019, and the fisheries are now strengthening areas such as stock assessments, harvest control rules and management

plans as they work towards full assessment against the MSC Standard. It is a long process, but we hope these fisheries could be carrying the MSC label within the next three or four years.

Separately, the skipjack tuna fishery in the Lakshadweep archipelago was due to enter full assessment earlier this year after support from WWF and the International Pole and Line Foundation. Unfortunately this has been delayed due to Covid-19. These high-value frontrunner fisheries represent a significant portion of India's seafood industry.

We are increasingly seeing fishermen coming forward who want to safeguard the sustainability of their own fisheries, but without the support of the big export companies they are dependent on external funding. One thing we are doing is developing capability within India to carry out audits, as the cost of bringing in international auditors is a barrier. We specifically focused on empowering women – four women completed their training during 2019, and one is already a fully qualified MSC auditor.

Having laid these foundations, we look forward to building a sustainable seafood industry in India in the years to come.

Blue Swimming Crab, *Portunus pelagicus* caught using bottom-set gillnets in Palk Bay, Tamilnadu, India. This fishery has undergone MSC pre-assessment and is now in a fisheries improvement project © Sustainable Seafood Network of India

Small-scale gillnet boats in Kayakulam Fishing Port, Kerala, fish for large pelagic fishes such as Spanish mackerel, barracuda and little tunnies © Image Sustainable Seafood Network of India

Supply chain assurance

Digital traceability tools offer new ways to connect sustainable fishers with concerned consumers, explains our supply chain standards director Sue Lockhart



The Chain of Custody Standard forms the backbone that links certified fisheries to 19,500 certified products bearing the MSC logo. Seafood supply chains are highly complex, spanning different oceans, countries and types of business. By adhering to the MSC Chain of Custody Standard, 45,000 certified businesses, including processors, fishmongers, retailers, restaurants and hotels, ensure that MSC fish is identified, segregated and traceable from intake to dispatch. We also employ a suite of assurance tools – including traceability challenges, DNA testing and most recently stable isotope analysis – to ensure that people can trust the MSC logo when choosing their seafood.

In a rapidly changing world, it is important that the Chain of Custody Standard continues to deliver against evolving industry and consumer needs.

Consumer interest in the origin of food, how it is produced and the journey to plate continues to rise. We believe advances in digital technology offer a great opportunity to strengthen further the chain of custody through the development of a digital traceability tool.

We are not the only people looking at this – there is a big effort from regulators and the industry to improve seafood traceability globally as part of the fight against illegal fishing and fraud. We want to develop a digital solution that complements rather than conflicts with other traceability systems, and support the Global Dialogue on Seafood Traceability, which is establishing a common framework for tracking and sharing origin information across seafood supply chains.

MSC shares industry, consumer and stakeholder concerns about the welfare of the people who work in the seafood industry. Last year, after consulting

with more than 300 stakeholders, including certificate holders, NGOs and subject experts, we updated the labour requirements of the Chain of Custody Standard. Certificate holders must now undergo an annual independent labour audit, unless they can demonstrate a low risk of forced or child labour based on what they do and where they operate.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we are working hard to maintain the integrity of our Standard while being sensitive to the pressures on the industry and the challenges presented by social distancing and travel restrictions. We quickly introduced a system of remote auditing, and extended certification and auditing periods where appropriate. We continue to look for solutions that support the activities of our certificate holders and conformity assessment bodies while ensuring our Standard remains robust, credible and trustworthy.



Growth in China

Awareness of sustainability is rising in the biggest national market for seafood in the world, and our partnerships in China have seen new developments.

Retail chain CRV-Olé has been an important partner, stocking MSC certified products and organising joint promotional activities in its stores – a key goal being to educate customers with support from MSC certified supplier Ocean Gala, as well as to sell the products themselves.

Meanwhile, Suning.com signed a memorandum of understanding stating its aim to source a minimum of 20% of wild seafood from MSC certified fisheries. The Suning Group also took over Carrefour China, and the retailer launched its first series of own-brand MSC certified seafood products in Shanghai in April. The range licensed to carry the MSC label includes more than 20 items across eight species.

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China's consumption power has been rising. At the same time the concept of consumption is constantly being upgraded among consumers. They may initially only be concerned about price, but then they also care more about quality, and now more and more people care about the environmental protection of products.

The younger generation born in the 1980s and 1990s has gradually become the main force of consumption. They have a higher level of education and are much more aware of sustainable development.

Liu Jun, Head of Seafood Sourcing, CRV-Olé

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Further 2019 partnerships for MSC China included work with Sam's Club, which continued to organise the sustainable seafood week promotion with the introduction of a new MSC labelled category. A launch event in August in Shenzhen was followed by children's education programs in four other cities.

In addition, distributors Seamix, Bluesnow, Meichu, Spring Seafood and Yutai – which import Arctic shrimp, cod, salmon and Greenland halibut, among other species – have been working hard on their MSC chain of custody certifications. The operations credit MSC approval with increased sales, thanks to China's ever-growing consumer support for sustainability.

Filet-O-Fish® gets an upgrade

McDonald's Japan introduced the MSC label on its Filet-O-Fish® having achieved MSC chain of custody certification for its 2,900 restaurants across the country. This gives a big boost to the MSC's visibility across the country.

The packaging was updated in time for the 25th anniversary of Filet-O-Fish® in October 2019, which included some improvements to the recipe. Japan's Filet-O-Fish® is made with Alaskan pollock sourced from the world's largest certified sustainable fishery (see page 18).



Filet-O-Fish® © McDonald's Company (Japan), Ltd

Long-lasting commitment by AEON

In 2006, AEON was the first general retailer in Japan to achieve chain of custody certification at stores and shopping centres for processing and distribution of MSC labelled products. Since then the company, which is committed to increasing its sustainable fish products, has kept adding to its certified product range. By 2019-20 year end, it had more than 40 MSC certified lines spanning 22 species, more than any other Japanese retailer.

April 2019 saw AEON launch a new MSC certified sashimi range featuring yellowfin tuna, scallop and shrimp, while it also added several products to its popular Fish Deli series including MSC certified capelin, pollock and surimi. AEON promoted the latter on TV, and held a media event to celebrate its new line of certified rope-grown Pacific oysters from Maruto Suisan (see page 21).

Korea

We have expanded our presence in Korea with the signing of two new memorandums of understanding in November 2019:



DeokHwa Food released MSC certified pollock roe products in stores at Korea's largest supermarket Emart in February 2020. A joint marketing event was also planned for April 2020.



IKEA opened a new store at Busan in February 2020 – the company is interested in promoting MSC sustainable seafood in-store, and developing a joint consumer program.

A Jumbo first

MSC certified prawn crackers were added to the range of MSC labelled products in the Netherlands this year. Prawn crackers are usually made from tropical shrimp, but Dutch retailer Jumbo teamed up with a local producer, the North Sea brown shrimp fishery. It catches some 30 million kilos each year. Since certification in 2018, the fishery has continued research into how it can further minimise its environmental impact and implemented gear improvements to boost its sustainability.

Jumbo's prawn crackers show how retailers can use innovative products to showcase and support fisheries that have worked hard to achieve MSC certification. As consumer demand for sustainable produce keeps growing, the business case for partnerships like these gets stronger all the time.



MSC labelled prawn crackers © Jumbo Supermarkten

From Cocagne to Chile

Awareness of the MSC ecolabel has risen significantly in Belgium in the last two years, according to our latest consumer survey. And Belgian seafood traders such as the Charlier-Brabo Group (CBG) are playing an important part in increasing the public appetite for sustainable seafood.

In 2019, the company launched two MSC labelled products under its own canned brand Cocagne, sardines and tuna. Three other tuna products with the MSC blue tick followed in 2020.

In addition to own brands Cocagne and First State, CBG actively sources MSC certified seafood for retail private label brands, and last year sold nearly 2 million cans of MSC certified salmon, sprat, sardine and tuna. It also became the first trader in Benelux to offer newly MSC certified jack mackerel from Chile, to be launched in September 2020: this innovative move came in response to the continuing suspension of MSC certificates for mackerel fisheries in the North East Atlantic.



MSC labelled sardines © Charlier-Brabo Group

Wins for two UK supermarkets

Global retailer Tesco was the first-time winner of our UK Supermarket of the Year accolade, for increasing MSC labelled products in its wild range from 48% to 69% in 12 months. Consumers can now choose from more than 170 different MSC labelled products on Tesco shelves. The supermarket became the UK's first to achieve 100% MSC labelled own brand fish oil supplements, demonstrating its commitment to sustainable products beyond the dinner plate. Tesco is also an active participant in several of Project UK's fishery improvement projects, helping incentivise fisheries to adopt sustainable practices, leading to supply chain improvements.

Frozen-food specialist Iceland launched 12 new MSC labelled lines – including cod, haddock and prawn – across all its stores in 2019. An MSC labelled Canadian whole cooked lobster proved to be a popular Christmas treat.

Both supermarkets are part of a growing movement of retailers in the UK offering certified seafood, adding to the strong overall position of the MSC.



George Clark (MSC) and Helena Delgado Nordmann (Tesco): Tesco accepting its MSC Supermarket of the Year Award © www.freelanceeventsphotographer.co.uk

Two decades with US champions

In June 2019, we celebrated 20 years of partnership with Whole Foods Market, which was the first retailer to make certified sustainable seafood available to customers in the United States. Whole Foods Market has used its market influence and sourcing policies to drive real improvements in fisheries around the world. In 1999 it took overfished Patagonian toothfish off its shelves, pushing the South Georgia fishery to make improvements and prevent illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. In 2006, it was the first retailer to sell sustainable toothfish with the MSC blue fish label.

Long-term MSC certified partner US Foods, one of the biggest food-service distributors in the world, was the first national distributor to be MSC certified across all its sites. It won our US Ocean Champion award in 2019. With an annual turnover of around US\$25 billion, its commitment to sustainable seafood really makes a difference. It has more than 130 MSC certified products and uses its publications to inform chefs and others in the food-service industry about seafood sustainability.



Wet fish counter in Whole Foods Market © Whole Foods Market

Listening and learning

We are constantly striving to maintain and develop interactions with all our stakeholders, explains Nikki Wood, MSC's head of stakeholder engagement



Independence, transparency, impartiality and multi-stakeholder engagement and input are central to the MSC's values and commitment to maintain and strengthen world-leading standards.

And for the MSC, stakeholder engagement must be an authentic relationship. We work hard to ensure our Standards, strategy and decision-making take account of the views, expertise and experience of a wide range of stakeholders, from academia and government, the fishery and market sectors, and the environmental NGO community.

But we know we can get better at listening to and acting on our stakeholders' concerns, so during the past year we have been investing heavily in this area. This has seen the addition of a number of senior roles focused on stakeholder engagement, including roles concentrating on specific stakeholder groups: fisheries, NGOs and statutory bodies, and our market partners.

One area where we have made real progress is in getting our Stakeholder Advisory Council (STAC) running well. Not every organisation has a body like this within its governance structures, with high-level representatives from a range of interests and regions directly advising the Board. The STAC is about ensuring this range of views gets heard and considered, not just whoever shouts the loudest. It is also very beneficial for stakeholders to hear each other's perspectives – this is where real progress is made, by building a shared and more detailed understanding.

We have also been putting internal mechanisms in place to make sure that input we receive from our stakeholders is recorded and listened to in a systematic way. The issues they raise and the feedback they give is important intelligence that can help us make better management decisions.

As well as building the capacity to listen, we have been trying to improve the way we communicate. That means making

an active effort to reach out to people all over the world, and presenting topics for consultation in plain English so that everyone can engage. That is something we are particularly trying hard to do in our ongoing Fisheries Standard Review. We made a real global effort to get people involved early in the process so that they can have a meaningful influence. Towards the end of the year, we began to organise a series of workshops to consider key issues and explore possible solutions. As a result of the pandemic we switched our planning so these could take place online, which helps with increasing accessibility.

Having worked together to develop preferred options, the next stage after the consultations will be to go back to our stakeholders with a more concrete proposal for a revised Standard, after which there will be another round of consultation. We hope that by going through the whole process together, we will arrive at a Standard that is balanced, and a reflection of the perspectives of our many engaged stakeholders.

Future choices

Consumers around the world are choosing sustainable seafood to make a difference, says chief communications officer Ishbel Matheson



The marketing and communications team actively supports everyone who engages with the MSC program.

Whether you are a fisher, a processor or a retailer bringing seafood to people's plates, or a consumer who wants to make choices that protect our oceans, we share the same ambition – for the oceans to be teeming with life.

Like most people and organisations, we adapted our approach at short notice as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. In-store promotions and out-of-home advertising campaigns were put on hold as countries went into lockdown. Instead, we quickly switched to digital communications. We are well-placed to do this as we already co-ordinate and collaborate with our colleagues in 30 locations across the globe.

Our network of ocean ambassadors helped by bringing people great new recipes to try out at home; and we made available a range of educational

resources to support parents with home-schooling. We also gathered some extraordinary stories (see page 10) from our partners in the seafood supply chain, talking about the lengths they are going to get seafood to consumers, including some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

At the start of 2020, the independent research organisation GlobeScan carried out our biennial consumer survey. It is the biggest survey of seafood consumers globally, with more than 26,000 seafood consumers across 23 countries taking part, and there is much to be positive about from this year's survey results.

One of the striking findings in the research is that people believe sustainable seafood matters. Ocean health is one of the major issues that people care about, and among those who are concerned, overfishing is high up on the agenda.

Global recognition of the MSC has been rising steadily and significantly from

when we first did the survey in 2016. Our visibility in China, for example, has increased dramatically among the urban middle class who are increasingly concerned about sustainability. Our savvy team in China has been busy, and this is reflected in the survey results.

It is also encouraging that we score highly on trust, with more than three-quarters of consumers saying they trust the little blue label. And we are seeing awareness turning into action: people are choosing MSC seafood because they want to actively make a difference.

This resonates with the broader recognition that in a post-pandemic world we need to 'build back better' and that sustainability will be at the heart of that for many organisations. Consumers' choices will be more price sensitive and there will be tough economic choices. Equally, people want to make positive choices about the future and the pandemic has added to a global awakening about the importance of looking after our natural resources.

Consumer Insights survey 2020

23 countries

26,535 people

20,876 seafood consumers

1 in 3

people (34%) put the health of the oceans and/or declining fish populations in their top 3 environmental concerns.

Sustainability is now ranked higher than price in the motivators that seafood consumers say are important to them. It is the main motivator after quality issues (freshness, safety, health, taste). Traceability – "knowing where a product comes from" – was also seen as increasingly important.

37% → 46%

Globally, the proportion of the public who recall seeing the MSC label has risen from 37% in 2016 to 46% in 2020, with the biggest rise among 18-24 year-olds.

4 out of 10

consumers (41%) say they notice ecolabels on products when shopping (25-34-year olds are the most ecolabel-conscious).

76%

Over three-quarters of respondents say they trust the MSC label, up from 69% in 2018.

"I want better information so I can be confident I'm not buying unsustainable fish or seafood products."

88% agree

"Supermarkets/grocery stores should take all unsustainable fish and seafood products off their shelves."

76% agree

"Restaurants should ban all unsustainable fish and seafood from their menus."

78% agree

Campaign highlights



Virtual reality experience of MSC certified fishing trips © Gaëtan Bardat



Sustainable Seafood Roundtable in Singapore © MSC



Think Fish Week © MORREC



Besserfischer campaign poster © MSC



Polish feline influencers @ whisky.and.cola



Banana prawns at Coles © MSC



West Coast groundfish fishery briefing © MSC



South Korea MSC partnership with Korea International Film Festival © MSC Korea

10 years in France

In October 2019, we celebrated 10 years in France with a campaign highlighting our impacts over the last decade. Sixteen French fisheries are now engaged in the program, representing a fifth of the country's seafood catch, and have made more than 80 improvements. More than 3,300 labelled products, representing more than 50 species, are available for French consumers. Thanks to a series of marketing campaigns and educational programs, including our annual Sustainable Seafood Week (Semaine de la Pêche Responsable), awareness of the MSC label is now at 50% in France.

Singapore supports UN SDGs

The Second Sustainable Seafood Roundtable was held in Singapore in December 2019, attended by international hotel chains, restaurants and major suppliers and distributors in seafood supply chains. The UN Global Compact Network Singapore executive director, Esther Chang, spoke about what Singapore can do to help meet Sustainable Development Goals 12 and 14. MSC certified fisheries from Australia and Indonesia shared the inspirational, first-hand experience of the work they do to ensure sustainable seas in the future.

Benelux thinks fish

Think Fish Week continues to go from strength to strength in the Netherlands and Belgium. This year marked the seventh edition in the Netherlands, where a record 37 commercial partners participated in the campaign, and the fifth in Belgium, with 15 partners. Displays in supermarkets, radio and print advertisements, blogs, food-truck events in Brussels and Antwerp, and a Dutch TV news report showing how a shrimp fisher's MSC certified catch reaches consumers, all helped take the sustainable seafood message to a mass audience.

Besserfischer

In Germany, Austria and Switzerland, a 360° digital campaign sought to improve understanding of what the MSC does, with multimedia content looking at marine protection, sustainable seafood cooking, well-managed fisheries and the science-based approach of our program. It used the hashtag #besserfischer, which literally translates as "better fisher" but is a play on the German word "Besserwisser" – a know-it-all. The wordplay supports the purpose of the campaign – that people who opt for the MSC label do know better.

Polish pets

Poles love pets, with more than 8 million pet dogs and 6 million pet cats in the country. More than 50 MSC certified pet food products are available in the country now – three times more than three years ago. We ran a campaign to coincide with World Animal Week in October, highlighting how choosing MSC certified pet food can help animal lovers protect marine life. Thanks to collaboration with celebrities and influencers, our campaign resonated strongly in social media receiving very positive feedback from Polish consumers.

Christmas prawns

Prawns are a Christmas tradition in Australia: 40% of all prawns sold in the country are eaten over the festive season. The good news is that more than half of the wild prawns caught in Australian waters are now MSC certified. We teamed up with supermarket Coles and Australia's four certified prawn fisheries to urge people to buy sustainable Australian prawns during the Christmas season, which increased consumer trust in the MSC label by 15% in Australia.

Groundfish to Capitol Hill

In Washington, D.C., we hosted a briefing with the Ocean Caucus Foundation spotlighting the tremendous progress made by the West Coast groundfish fishery. The audience, which included legislative decision-makers and NGOs, heard how the fishery, which was once declared a federal disaster, managed to recover and achieve MSC certification.

South Korea's student volunteers

In South Korea, a team of student volunteer supporters have been helping us create social media content and support MSC events and campaigns. The program started with four students in 2018: this year we have 30. Also helping to raise the profile of sustainable seafood in South Korea was our partnership with the Korea International Ocean Film Festival, where we ran a film and hosted a talk and networking event.

Our funding and donors

We are especially grateful for the significant support we receive from a range of charitable funders, including trusts, foundations and statutory bodies, from across the globe. This year has been no exception. We received significant and new generous support from the A.G. Leventis Foundation for work in Greece, the MAVA Fondation pour la Nature for our work in the Mediterranean and west Africa, and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation for support of our data-limited fisheries project.

We would also like to thank the Dutch Postcode Lottery for its continued support of the Fish For Good project in Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa, as well as ongoing core support; the Walton Family Foundation for its continuing generous support for projects around the world; the Adessium Foundation for supporting our work in the Mediterranean; the David and Lucile Packard Foundation for its generous core support and for our work in Japan; and WWF Sweden for its support for our project in the Southwest Indian Ocean region.

We also continue to receive generous core support from the Remmer Family Foundation, Triad Foundation and Holzer Family Foundation.

We would like to thank the following organisations for their support:

US Foundations

David and Lucile Packard Foundation
Walton Family Foundation
New Venture Fund
Remmer Family Foundation
Triad Foundation
Holzer Family Foundation

UK Trusts and Foundations

A.G. Leventis Foundation

NGOs

Resources Legacy Fund / Sustainable Fisheries Fund
WWF-Sweden

Other European Foundations

Adessium Foundation (Netherlands)
Dutch Postcode Lottery
MAVA Fondation Pour la Nature (Switzerland)
The Swedish Institute (Sweden)

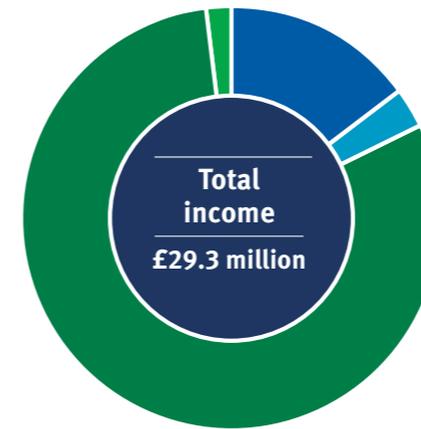
Statutory donors

DEG (Deutsche Investitions und Entwicklungsgesellschaft mbH) (Germany)
GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH) (Germany)
European Maritime and Fisheries Fund in the United Kingdom and Finland

Corporate

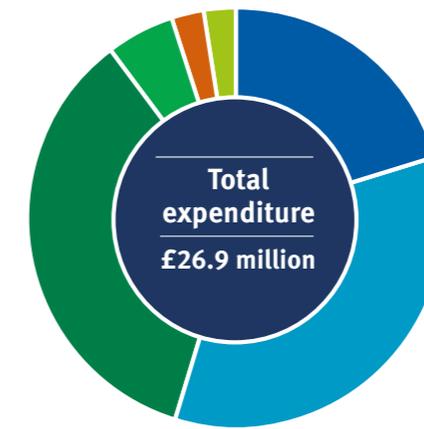
Findus (Sweden)
Project UK (various)

Our finances 2019-20



Where the money comes from

- 14.9% Donations and legacies
- 2.9% Other trading activities
- 80.5% Income from charitable activities (logo licensing)
- 1.7% Income from investments



Where the money goes to

- 20.4% Policy and maintenance of Standard
- 34.5% Education and awareness
- 35.0% Commercial and fisheries servicing and outreach
- 5.3% Logo licensing
- 2.5% Ocean Stewardship Fund
- 2.3% Expenditure on raising funds

Total funds at 31 March 2020: £32,854,000

Compared with total funds of £32,080,000 on 31 March 2019.

Other gains and losses in the year not shown under income or expenditure amounted to a loss of £1,781,000

Report by the Trustees on the summarised financial statements

The summarised financial information is extracted from the full statutory trustees' annual report and financial statements which were approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf on 28 July 2020. An unqualified audit report was issued in relation to the full statutory trustees' annual report and financial statements by our auditors Crowe U.K. LLP on 11 August 2020.

The auditors have confirmed to the trustees that, in their opinion, the summarised financial information is consistent with the full financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2020. This summarised financial information may not contain sufficient information to gain a complete understanding of the financial affairs of the charity. The full statutory trustees' report, financial statements and auditors' report may be obtained in writing from Finance Director, Marine Stewardship Council, 1 Snow Hill, London, EC1A 2DH, United Kingdom.

Signed, on behalf of the Trustees:

Werner Kiene,
Chair, MSC Board of Trustees
11 August 2020

Governance 2019-20

The MSC Board of Trustees

The MSC Board of Trustees is the MSC's governing body. With advice from the Technical Advisory Board and Stakeholder Advisory Council, it sets the strategic direction of the MSC, monitors progress and ensures the MSC meets its objectives.

Dr Werner Kiene
Chair

Mr Paul Uys
Chair, Marine Stewardship Council International Board

Dr Simon Jennings
Chair, Technical Advisory Board

Ms Amanda Nickson
Co-Chair, Stakeholder Advisory Council

Ms Stefanie Moreland
Co-Chair, Stakeholder Advisory Council

Mr Eric Barratt

Mr Jean-Jacques Maguire

Mr Jim Leape

Mr David Lock

Mr Giles Bolton

Ms Maria Damanaki

Welcome to new members:

Ms Amanda Nickson

Ms Maria Damanaki

Thank you to departing members:

Mr Peter Trott
Co-Chair, Stakeholder Advisory Council (until end July 2019)

Ms Lynne Hale

Mr David Mureithi

Mr Felix Ratheb

The Technical Advisory Board

The Technical Advisory Board advises the MSC Board of Trustees on technical and scientific matters relating to the MSC Standards, including developing methodologies for fishery and supply chain certification and accreditation and reviewing the progress of fisheries certifications.

Dr Simon Jennings
(UK) Chair

Dr Christopher Zimmermann
(Germany)

Dr Keith Sainsbury
(Australia)

Mr Sergey Sennikov
(Russia)

Mr Adam Swan
(UK)

Ms Lucia Mayer Massaroth
(Germany)

Dr Tim Essington
(USA)

Dr Victor Restrepo
(USA)

Mr Alex Olsen
(Denmark)

Dr Juan Carlos Seijo
(Mexico)

Dr Florian Baumann
(Germany)

Ms Michèle Stark
(Switzerland)

Mr Jose Augusto Pinto de Abreu
(Brazil) (Co-opted Member)

Dr Rebecca Lent
(USA) (Co-opted Member)

Thank you to departing members:

Dr K Sunil Mohamed



Marine Stewardship Council International Board

The Marine Stewardship Council International (MSCI) Board provides oversight of the MSC's ecolabel licensing and fee structure.

Mr Paul Uys
MSCI Chair

Dr Werner Kiene
MSC Board of Trustees Chair

Mr Eric Barratt

Ms Valentina Tripp

Mr Jeff Davis

Mr Rupert Howes
MSC Chief Executive

The MSC Stakeholder Advisory Council

The MSC's Stakeholder Advisory Council provides advice to the MSC Board of Trustees and input into the MSC's review processes and provides a formal channel through which stakeholders can provide their views to the MSC. It includes representatives from the seafood industry, conservation community, market sector and academia. The membership reflects diverse experiences, geographies and interests in relation to the work of the MSC.

Ms Amanda Nickson

Co-Chair, The Pew Charitable Trusts, USA

Ms Stefanie Moreland

Co-Chair, Trident Seafoods, USA

Ms Christine Penney

Clearwater Seafoods, Canada

Ms Yumie Kawashima

Aeon, Japan

Ms Agathe Grossmith

Carrefour, France

Ms Heather Brayford

Government of Western Australia, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Australia

Ms Carmen Revenga

The Nature Conservancy, USA

Mr Johann Augustyn

SADSTIA, South Africa

Mr Ivan Lopez Pesquera

Ancora, Spain

Mr Marco Quesada

Conservación Internacional, Costa Rica

Mr Rory Crawford

Birdlife International/RSPB, UK

Mr Tor Larsen

Norwegian Fishermen's Association, Norway

Mr Peter Trott

Fishlistic, Australia

Dr Ghislaine Llewellyn

WWF International, Australia

Ms María José Espinosa Romero

Comunidad y Biodiversidad A.C (COBI), Mexico

Thank you to departing members:

Dr Darian McBain

Dr Louise Heaps

“

The MSC is supported by a network of exceptional staff. Operating across multiple countries, they bring a wide range of skills and expertise – from fisheries management and marine science, to communications and marketing, to industry outreach, to corporate services. In these exceptional times, they have adapted with enormous flexibility to new ways of operating to enable us to continue our work. On behalf of MSC's Board and executive team, I would therefore like to extend a huge thank you to all our staff: their efforts have contributed to the continuing success and influence of MSC in safeguarding our oceans and seafood supplies for this and future generations.

Rupert Howes, Chief Executive,
Marine Stewardship Council

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Share with friends and colleagues

Please consider the environment before printing

All data in this report is correct as of 31 March 2020, unless otherwise stated. The reporting year is 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

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Registered Charity number: 1066806. Registered Company number: 3322023

Find out more:

info@msc.org

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