



# Sustainable Seas®

## The Sustainable Seas Perspective: Why Responsible Fishing Supports Global Food Security

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**This document will address the views of those who believe no seafood is sustainable and that the oceans should be left alone, without being fished at all.**

Sustainable Seas deeply respects the wide-ranging consumer views regarding best practices for feeding the human race, retention of natural resources, preservation of oceans, ethical treatment of animals and human wellness through dietary discipline. Those are all broad issues, each of which deserve their own unique discussion.

Sustainable Seas' principles to promote a healthy planet embrace reduction of conventional agribusiness models of monoculture and concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). But Sustainable Seas' primary mission is to influence how the oceans are harvested with a view to stopping destructive practices that produce wanton discard mortality of magnificent ocean creatures. This document addresses the views of some who feel that no ocean harvest is sustainable and that the solution for the oceans is to not consume seafood at all.

We respect the decision of those who choose to discontinue consuming seafood. Vegan and vegetarian diets are choices made possible today by a diverse food supply and distribution resources. We respect individuals who make these choices. However, the [UN FAO 2014 annual report](#) shows that billions of people around the world, especially in underdeveloped countries, are fully dependent on seafood harvest for food security and vital employment opportunities. Please consider these statistical quotes:

1. This significant growth in fish consumption has enhanced people's diets around the world through diversified and nutritious food. In 2013, fish accounted for about 17 percent of the global population's intake of animal protein and 6.7 percent of all protein consumed. Moreover, fish provided more than 3.1 billion people with almost 20 percent of their average per capita intake of animal protein. In addition to being a rich source of easily digested, high-quality proteins containing all essential amino acids, fish provides essential fats (e.g. long-chain omega-3 fatty acids), vitamins (D, A and B) and minerals (including calcium, iodine, zinc, iron and selenium), particularly if eaten whole. Even small quantities of fish can have a significant positive nutritional impact on plant-based diets, and this is the case in many LIFDCs and least-developed countries. Fish is usually high in unsaturated fats and provides health benefits in protection against cardiovascular diseases. It also aids fetal and infant development of the brain and nervous system. With its valuable nutritional properties, it can also play a major role in correcting unbalanced diets and, through substitution, in countering obesity.
2. An estimated 56.6 million people were engaged in the primary sector of capture fisheries and aquaculture in 2014, of whom 36 percent were engaged full time, 23 percent part time, and the remainder were either occasional fishers or of unspecified status.
3. Women accounted for 19 percent of all people directly engaged in the primary sector in 2014, but when the secondary sector (e.g. processing, trading) is included women make up about half of the workforce.

Suffice it to say that hundreds of millions, if not billions of people, do not have the option to abandon seafood harvest. For them, it means economic survival and nutritional wellness for themselves and their families.

Sustainable Seas is realistic to accept wild capture of ocean resources is here to stay. It was practiced for millennia in harmony with the output of the ocean resources, and that has been the focus of Sustainable Seas. How can seafood harvest stay within the capacity of the resources to continue in healthy stock status? This centers on two things:

## **OVERFISHING**

Capacities and efforts must be controlled. This is largely being well done within many countries' exclusive economic zones (EEZ – 200 mile coastal waters). The more difficult control is within the international waters outside 200 miles. This is a matter for regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) to oversee.

## **WRONGLY FISHING**

This is possibly a greater problem than overfishing. As methods become more and more effective to attract and take fish, greater mortality discards occur. Pole and line fishing is an example of SELECTIVE FISHING that results in virtually no by-catch discard mortality.

Sustainable Seas aims to educate consumers to choose fish from selective fishing. Consumer choice influences retailer stocking on shelves; retailer purchases sway company production policies, which in turn, affect fishing practice. This is why change in fishery harvest is a top-down proposition. Consumer demand drives change, and it is education that influences consumer choice. Since Sustainable Seas' inception, even two of the largest brands in the U.S. have launched secondary brands that meet higher standards of sustainable sourcing. As can be seen by the bi-annual Greenpeace brand and retailer sustainable rankings, real progress is being made in shifting away from the most egregious practices.

Frankly, as Sustainable Seas succeeded in shelf-space growth, the many participants in the category took notice and imitated the principles established by Sustainable Seas. So, leadership has yielded positive change and that change is accelerating. It is the hope of Sustainable Seas for the store shelves to be stocked with ONLY selectively and properly caught tuna and other sustainably sourced species.

It may be counterintuitive that consuming seafood is a way to preserve ocean ecosystems, but it is within the grasp of industry to respond to consumer preference and retain both economic viability and ocean environmental health. The wild oceans produce superabundant resources that make vital nutritional supplies for the benefit of all life on the planet. Humans are uniquely equipped with the intelligence to access these resources sustainably. It is our hope to influence the forces in place to manage this pristine environment properly and retain the vigorous wildness of this planet.