

Fishing Responsibly Q&A

Is sustainable fishing a lie?

- There is an undeniable truth that we need to take greater care of our fish stocks, which have been depleted through decades of overfishing. The good news however, is that they can recover and replenish if they are responsibly managed for the long term, and we have seen that this is possible in the past.
- For example, the Patagonian toothfish in the Southern Oceans was once endangered. However, thanks to intervention from organisations like the Marine Stewardship Council, it has since been allowed to recover following the implementation of a properly managed, fully monitored and sustainable fishery.
- The key is recognising that we need to act and we are working tirelessly with the industry to help prevent any further decline.

What are you doing about discarded fishing gear?

- In 2018, we signed up to the Global Ghost Gear initiative, which aims to protect marine life and minimise plastic pollution from abandoned fishing equipment. We're also working with the fishing industry to find a use for lost and discarded fishing equipment.
- We have also recently donated a significant amount to the Blue Marine Foundation, which has developed a cost-effective beacon for fishermen to stop fishing gear becoming plastic pollution in the marine environment. The Blue Marine Foundation has now trialled over 100 beacons at sea with fishermen in the south west of England which has proven to be a simple-to-use solution to ghost gear.
- We continue to collaborate with industry experts, not-for-profit organisations and fisheries to find solutions to protect our oceans and to ensure they continue to thrive for future generations.

Does Waitrose have any links to whaling?

- No - We have worked hard to ensure we do not have any links with businesses directly or indirectly involved with the whaling industry.

Does Waitrose continue to back certification labels such as the MSC?

- While Seaspiracy questions the value of certain certifications, schemes like the MSC play a critical role in protecting our oceans as consumer demand for sustainable seafood products helps to drive reform of the fishing industry, incentivising the take-up of sustainable fishing practices.

- The MSC standard is based on a specific science-based set of requirements for sustainable fishing. The process of awarding a blue label is independently verified and carried out by expert assessment bodies. Only fisheries that meet rigorous requirements get certified - which gives assurance to customers that what they are buying has been sustainably caught.
- In addition to MSC certification, we stipulate that all the fish that is included in our own-label products must be responsibly caught or farmed. This means our suppliers must only source fish from fisheries or farmed aquaculture operations that are responsibly managed.

Is Waitrose concerned about the inference that MSC certified fisheries have unacceptable levels of bycatch?

- Fisheries certified to the MSC Standard must provide evidence that they are actively minimising bycatch. Those that can't provide substantial evidence risk losing their certification or being suspended and this is regularly monitored and closely regulated.

How much of Waitrose's own label fish is certified sustainable?

- We are working towards 100% independent certification of the fish we sell (currently we sit at 91%) to offer further guidance to our customers.

Does Waitrose source from large factory-scale fishing vessels?

- Seaspiracy focused almost entirely on larger fishing vessels. However, much of the fish offered in Waitrose is sourced from smaller boats often independently owned or from very small-scale fleets which focus on sustainable methods.
- Waitrose excludes certain fishing methods from its supply chain, such as pulse fishing, beam trawling and the use of fish aggregation devices which allow trawlers to decoy fish into high concentrations for easier catch. We also have a focus on line caught fish including all our tuna.

Does Waitrose have concerns about the welfare of farmed fish following the allegations from this film?

- Every industry faces challenges and the footage shown in the film is reflective of this.

- However, these are issues that we are acutely aware of and concerned about, and we're working closely with our Scottish producers, NGOs and other groups to work towards significant new standards for the welfare of farmed fish.