Wild-Caught Fish

Sustainability Snapshot

THESIS
BY THE SUSTAINABILITY CONSORTIUM

Product Description

Wild-Caught Fish includes food products composed primarily of fish harvested from the ocean or inland waters. Product types include salmon, tuna, cod, pollock, herring, and mackerel.

Mission

The mission of The Sustainability Consortium (TSC) is to improve the sustainability of products when they are made, purchased, and used, with a focus on manufacturers and the retail buyers who decide what products to carry in stores. The information in this document is drawn from our detailed research on known and potential social and environmental impacts across product life cycles. TSC acknowledges that other issues exist, but we have included here those that are most relevant to the decision making of retail buying teams and manufacturers. The topics are listed alphabetically for ease of reading; the order does not represent prioritization or other criteria.

Managing the Supply Chain

Biodiversity

Various species of fish, mammals, and turtles can be accidentally caught and killed during fishing operations. Fishing operators can use certifications and implement programs, practices, and technologies to reduce these biodiversity impacts. These strategies should also address impacts related to sea floor disturbance, chemical and trash pollution, and dwindling fish populations.

Climate and Energy

Electricity and fuel use during fishing operations and distribution releases greenhouse gases and can pollute the air and water. Fishing operations and manufacturers should track energy use, implement efficiency programs, and optimize the transportation routes used to distribute their products.

Pollution

Use of chemicals to prevent unwanted sea life from growing on equipment and boats can have negative effects on workers, aquatic animals, and plants. Use of chemicals can also release greenhouse gases. Fishing operators should use programs, practices, and technologies to reduce chemical use and prevent ocean pollution.

Use of Resources

Food Waste

Fish that are not stored and handled properly after harvesting can spoil or be damaged. Care should be taken to avoid spoilage from harvest to sale. Trimmings and spills at processing facilities are a waste of resources and food. Manufacturers should use efficient equipment, and food leftovers should be used for other purposes, such as animal feed or energy recovery.

Packaging

Packaging design should be optimized to ensure that packaging performs its essential functions of containment and protection while minimizing use of materials, energy resources, and environmental impacts across the life cycle of the packaged product. Under-packaging and over-packaging can both lead to increased impacts. These impacts may be mitigated by using more energy-efficient manufacturing, creating packaging materials from renewable resources, designing packaging to be recyclable, and encouraging consumer recycling.

Workers and Communities

Community Rights

Fishing operations can impact fish habitats and may cause conflicts with other users over access to land, water, and fishing grounds. Fishing operators should consult with communities about their operations and avoid restricting community access to fishing grounds. Computers and technology should be used to monitor the number of fish taken and ensure that fish habitats are not harmed. Manufacturers should purchase fish that are certified for sustainability.

Workers

Fishing industry workers, especially women and migrants, may face unfair pay, discrimination, and limited freedoms. They may also be exposed to harmful chemicals or other industrial hazards. Fishing operators should implement programs that protect labor rights and ensure the health and safety of their workers.

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