

# Eco-certification/ MSC

## WHAT IS ECO-CERTIFICATION?

Eco-certification is a market-based measure intended to improve the sustainability of fisheries. It aims to raise consumer awareness and retailers' demands for sustainable products. Third party eco-certification is becoming increasingly critical in maintaining the industry's reputation with the domestic and international public, and access to the global markets.



*BC's Pacific halibut*

## WHAT IS MARINE STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL (MSC) CERTIFICATION?

Of the numerous approaches to third party fisheries eco-certification, MSC, an independent, global, non-profit organization based in London, England, is currently the only program that fully complies with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations guidelines for eco-certification of fisheries.

MSC certification is only available for commercial wild harvest fisheries; however, other international groups are developing other standards for aquaculture. As of March, 2010, there were 69 MSC-certified fisheries and 120 fisheries undergoing full assessment in the MSC program worldwide.

## WHAT, ACCORDING TO MSC, IS A SUSTAINABLE FISHERY?

MSC defines a sustainable fishery as a fishery that:



- conducts its fishing activity at a level which is sustainable for the fish population and is not overexploiting the resources
- minimizes environmental impact by managing its fishing operations to maintain the structure, productivity, function and diversity of the ecosystem on which the fishery depends
- practises effective management by meeting all local, national and international laws, by having a management system in place to respond to changing circumstances, and by maintaining sustainability

## WHY IS THERE A MOVE TOWARDS MSC CERTIFICATION?

The export markets for BC commercial fisheries/seafood are increasingly looking for MSC certification as a prerequisite for market access. Current drivers behind the move towards requiring MSC certification involves major seafood retailers in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Switzerland. There is also growing interest from Asia, Japan in particular.

## HOW DOES A FISHERY GET MSC CERTIFICATION?

The MSC has developed standard principles, criteria and chain of custody requirements. To be certified for the MSC eco-certification label, the client (e.g., a fishery industry or association) must hire an accredited certifier to conduct the independent third party assessment of its fishery. Certificates are usually valid for 5 years and the fishery is audited annually to ensure that it continues to meet the MSC standards, and is addressing any conditions attached to the certificate. Once a fishery has been certified, all companies in the supply chain – from boat to plate – must have MSC Chain of Custody certification to ensure that the products can carry the MSC label.

As the management agency for BC's commercial fisheries, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has a critical role in providing the required information for the third party assessment of BC fisheries and in addressing any required improvements to the fishery.

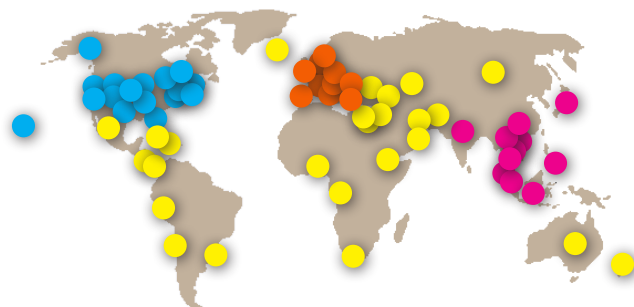
### BC FISHERIES AND SEAFOOD SECTOR

The BC fisheries and seafood sector includes the commercial wild capture fisheries, finfish and shellfish aquaculture, and fisheries and aquaculture processing. The sector provides over 15,000 jobs and contributes approximately \$1.4 billion (2005) to the BC economy. Harvests from BC's well-managed culture sites and capture fisheries provide seafood processors with over 90 different species of fish, shellfish and marine plants.

### OUR GLOBAL MARKETS

Over 90% of BC's seafood is exported to more than 60 countries. The total export value in 2009 was \$883 million.

- United States - \$518 million (59%)
- Asia - \$280 million (32%)
- European Union - \$45 million (5%)
- All others - \$40 million (4%)



### WHAT DOES ECO-CERTIFICATION MEAN FOR BC FISHERIES?

Attaining MSC certification will ensure that the BC seafood industry remains strong in an increasingly competitive global market. By supporting certification for most of its major fisheries, BC is also leading Canada in third-party eco-certification, and drawing international attention to its commitment to environmentally responsible and sustainable fisheries.

### FIVE BC FISHERIES ARE NOW MSC CERTIFIED

BC's Pacific halibut, hake, albacore tuna, sablefish and sockeye salmon have been awarded certification under the MSC's certification program. Products from these fisheries are now eligible to bear the MSC ecolabel that states that the products are from well-managed and sustainable sources.

### LINKS

Marine Stewardship Council: <http://www.msc.org/>

BC Seafood Industry Year in Review: [www.env.gov.bc.ca/omfd/reports/index.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/omfd/reports/index.html)

BCSeafood.ca: [www.bcseafood.ca](http://www.bcseafood.ca)