

UBC Social, Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Student Report

Sustainable Seafood - Phase II - Executive Report

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Moving Towards Sustainable Seafood at UBC - Phase II

Executive Summary Changes Made as of May 2007

Customers at the University of British Columbia are accessing more sustainable seafood when eating on campus or planning a catered event. The UBC Sustainable Seafood project is a consortium of UBC Food Services, AMS Food and Beverage, Green College, Fisheries Centre, Faculty of Land and Food Systems and UBC Sustainability Office. The partnership of staff, students, and faculty explores how to make UBC seafood purchases as ecologically, economical, and socially sustainable as possible. The research, initiated under the SEEDS programme, identifies UBC's sourcing and volumes, and measures them against recommendations in seafood choice programmes, with geographic modifications.

As of May 2007, project partners have agreed that UBC food service providers will make changes in obtaining (and, therefore, in selling) eight types of seafood, here outlined broadly:

- **Avoid shrimp products, or at least choose shrimp from local trap fisheries.** Shrimp trawling produces substantial bycatch, farmed shrimp consume more protein than they ultimately yield, and both types of sourcing destroy habitats. When shrimp products are perceived as necessary, local trap fisheries are a better choice.
- **Avoid both wild bivalve shellfishes and non-native farmed species.** Native populations may be at risk of overexploitation and introductions of non-native species may degrade local ecosystems. However, bivalve aquaculture has minimal impact to ecosystems when native species are produced and marketed nearby.
- **Avoid purchasing either snapper or rockfish** (often also labelled as snapper). Many snapper and rockfish populations cannot withstand high rates of exploitation because they gather in groups, mature late, and are long lived (some > 100 years). Moreover, their nonselective fishing methods catch many other fish species and/or damage habitat.
- **Avoid purchasing tuna caught via long-line fishing.** Long-line tuna fishing leads to the bycatch of endangered species of seabirds and turtles.
- **Avoid purchasing rainbow trout and steelhead reared in net pens or floating cages.** Marine and freshwater open-water aquaculture both expose ecosystems to farm runoff and escaped farm fish. Trout should be sourced from local aquaculture operations that minimise the discharge of farm wastes and escape of domestic fish to the wild.
- **Avoid purchasing swordfish.** Like tuna, swordfish are captured via long-line fishing leading to high bycatch. Additionally, it is not clear if swordfish populations can persist under the current level of global exploitation.
- **Avoid purchasing monkfish.** The destructive gear used for monkfish capture causes habitat damage. Bycatch associated with the monkfish fishery is considered high.
- **Avoid purchasing sevruga caviar.** Populations of wild sevruga sturgeon (and other Caspian Sea sturgeon) are so small that sustained exploitation may lead to their collapse.

By making its seafood purchasing more sustainable, the University of British Columbia is, *de facto*, leading its customers to reduce the ecological, economic, and social impacts of their consumption. The next step is to determine a nuanced recommendation for salmon purchasing, hopefully one that uses UBC's potential leverage (with c. 50,000 people on campus per day) to effect change in fishing and farming practices.

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