



PRESS RELEASE

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New Zealand Hoki Fishery Deserves Praise, Not Condemnation

*Unfair Criticism is Irresponsible and Undermines Efforts
to Improve Fisheries in Worse Condition*

San Diego – The Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP), a non-governmental organization committed to maintaining healthy ocean and aquatic ecosystems, challenges recent media assertions about the sustainability of the New Zealand hoki fishery. SFP rates the fishery as one of the best managed whitefish fisheries in the world, in spite of declines in stock size in recent years.

In the mid-90's an unusually low number of young fish recruited into the fishery (i.e. reached commercial size). The stocks were healthy and the recruitment of young fish naturally varies greatly, so managers kept quotas constant, betting on next year being better. Unfortunately, poor recruitment continued and the stock declined.

With the strong support of leading fishing companies, managers cut quotas deeply, reducing fishing mortality by 50% between 2003 and 2007. With more fish left in the water, the stock was able to rebuild to healthy levels this year. Environmental impacts are also being addressed through habitat and species protection measures. For example, New Zealand has put more of its seas off limits to bottom trawling than any other country.

SFP provides formal annual guidance to McDonald's on their fish sourcing. SFP has consistently given the New Zealand hoki fishery a green light, meaning it is a responsible source of seafood, despite the declines in catches in recent years. Falling catches may often indicate a fishery in trouble, but as noted above, falling catches can also indicate good responsive management.

A careful comparison of stock health and environmental and management performance between whitefish fisheries shows New Zealand hoki is one of the best whitefish fisheries worldwide (see www.FishSource.org). Shops and restaurants should be proud to offer New Zealand hoki.

SFP advises McDonald's to source from well-managed fisheries like New Zealand hoki, while encouraging their supply chain to work on improvements in other whitefish fisheries that are less well-managed and are in trouble.

The fruits of this pragmatic strategy are now abundantly clear: hoki has returned to target levels and previously less well-managed fisheries are being transformed and returned to health. In the case of Eastern Baltic cod, stocks are rebuilding to target levels after more than a decade below biologically safe limits. The world's oceans would be far healthier if all whitefish fisheries were managed as well as New Zealand hoki.



New Zealand has good science and good management capacity, and should be on the cutting edge of fisheries management and marine conservation. So it is fair that critics should be pressing for further improvements over those required by global standards such as those of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). But they should not do so by asserting the fishery is unsustainable, or poorly managed, or that the MSC is a fraud. Hoki's example is inspiring other fisheries to improve their management. Unfair criticism undermines these efforts. Critics should argue the fishery is good, but could be even better.

The mission of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership is to maintain healthy ocean and aquatic ecosystems, enhance fishing and fish-farming livelihoods and secure food supplies.

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