



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Growing issue of sustainable aquaculture feeds present threats and opportunities – seafood retailers risk charge of ‘blue-washing’**

The issue of sustainable aquaculture feeds is growing in importance and poses significant threats and opportunities to the seafood supply chain according to a briefing published today [28 October 2009] by not-for-profit group Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP). The briefing – based on data from the SFP fisheries database Fishsource ([www.fishsource.org](http://www.fishsource.org)), a telephone survey with key stakeholders and extensive web research – concludes that there is a high level of activity around the issue including:

- The emergence of individual policies on aquaculture feed by retailers including the direct prohibition of fishmeal and oil derived from certain fisheries.
- A renewed enthusiasm among campaign groups to engage on the issue.
- The development of aquaculture certification standards that will incorporate criteria for the sustainability of feed fisheries along with business-to-business systems to give assurance around the sustainability of fish stocks .

But the briefing also identifies real threats to stakeholders including:

- Confusion around the final certification standards that will emerge in the market-place.
- A danger for retailers and processors that have corporate commitments to source seafood from fisheries certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) that they will source aquaculture products fed on non-MSC fish. These circumstances are likely to lead to attacks by campaign groups and charges of ‘blue-washing’ – publicly claiming to have high sustainability standards for wild-caught fish while selling aquaculture products fed on fish from unsustainable fisheries.
- Reputational risks for all parts of the aquaculture supply chain from using feeds derived from fisheries that are the target of campaigns – for instance, northern blue whiting.



- Confusion among campaign groups around the role of the Marine Stewardship Council in assuring sustainable aquaculture feeds. Some are pressing for the fish content of feeds to only come from MSC certified fisheries while others are actively working to stop MSC certifying any further forage fisheries that supply fishmeal and oil.
- Real practical difficulties in achieving visibility down the entire aquaculture supply chain. Retailers and processors might be in a position where different species meet different certification standards causing problems for those organisations that need to maintain consistency across their sustainability communications.

The briefing makes three recommendations for businesses currently attempting to understand this complex issue:

- Achieving a good working knowledge of the entire supply chain including the origin of marine species used in feed formulations.
- Adopting specific policies around aquaculture, and particularly feed ingredients, and communicating these policies to other stakeholders.
- Playing an active role in creating pressure for the improvement of aquaculture sustainability and particularly the management of fisheries that provide fish meal and oil.

Blake Lee-Harwood, SFP coordinator for aquaculture feeds, said:

“The issue of sustainable aquaculture feed is looming large on the horizon and we’re seeing a familiar pattern in terms of industry response. Some of the most progressive retailers are already taking early action to engage with this issue while others are in total denial. It’s clear from what’s going on that all players within the aquaculture supply chain need to start thinking about the sustainability question and develop policies that will prove robust and defensible in the future.”

### **Notes for Editors**

[1] The briefing can be found at the SFP website – [www.sustainablefish.org](http://www.sustainablefish.org)

[2] Sustainable Fisheries Partnership is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to maintaining healthy ocean and aquatic ecosystems, enhancing fishing and fish-farming livelihoods and secure food supplies.

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*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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