

# Why we need sustainable seafood practices

Over-fishing and other irresponsible fishing practices have taken their toll on marine life.

Widespread oceanic habitat damage and near extinction of some species are two such effects. Immediate corrective steps are required to save marine mammals, sea turtles, countless species of fish and to preserve delicate habitats, such as coral reefs.

Organisations like Greenpeace have been taking action since the 1970s to curb environmentally unfriendly fishing practice. The most famous of these was the Save the Whale campaign. Today, there are numerous initiatives in place to preserve marine species. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) awards internationally recognised certification to fisheries that use responsible practices and harvest fish from sustainable populations. Most of the world's leading food retailers have committed themselves to selling only those seafood and fish products that bear MSC certification.

Another initiative, this one local, is the Southern African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI). It is a WWF programme that divides popular species into three categories to raise consumer awareness. The green category is for fish from healthy and well-managed populations. The orange category is for fish species that may experience a compromised and/or unsustainable supply. It may be that they are rare, they are over-fished, they are harvested in an environmentally unfriendly way or that there is simply not enough known about the species to accurately predict its recovery from these activities. The final category, red, includes fish that are illegal in South Africa; they cannot handle commercial fishing pressure.

Recognisable MSC logos (or the equivalent) should be visible on all relevant fish products sold in stores. This will ensure the survival of species and the sustainability of supplies for this popular food.