



# Briefing Paper Nature Module

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Note. This paper is a position paper designed to present the case for increased scrutiny and benchmarking of supermarkets' policies and performance on biodiversity and landscapes, and to present methodologies for how that benchmarking may be carried out. It is written by the coordinator of the Nature Module and does not necessarily represent the views of members of the alliance of organisations involved in the Race to the Top project, or the project's Advisory Group. It is a working document which is being regularly updated.

## Introduction to the 'Race to the Top' project

### Why is this project needed?

Questions are increasingly being asked about the integrity and safety of our food, the impact of its production on the environment and animal welfare, and the fairness of trade between consumers and workers along the food chain. In the UK and across Europe, there is an opinion that society should be much more directly involved in setting the farming and food agenda, rather than leaving it solely as the domain of government policy and market forces.

Supermarkets exert a huge influence on the rural economy in the UK and overseas, by setting farming standards and by seeking ever greater efficiencies for customers, competition and shareholder value. Their product range and siting policies affect the health of our communities and the environment. Customers trust the supermarkets to look after the environment and be good corporate citizens.

### How will Race to the Top work?

The aim is to track the social, environmental and ethical performance of UK supermarkets, and catalyse change within the UK agri-food sector and beyond. An alliance of farming, conservation, labour, animal welfare and sustainable development organisations has developed several indicators of supermarket performance. These will provide comparative data to track progress towards fairer and greener food over the next five years.

By identifying and promoting best practice by supermarkets, the project will point to key issues for public policy, consumers, investors, retailers and campaigners. It will also provide objective data and analysis. An advisory group of independent experts provides advice and quality control.

There are seven groups of indicators:

- Environment
- Producers
- Workers
- Communities
- Nature

- Animals
- Health

Race to the Top will benchmark the major supermarkets annually using these indicators, and publish the results along with case studies of best practice by supermarkets and their suppliers. The RTTT project allows a consolidated, constructive relationship between civil society and supermarkets, rather than the single-issue action-and-reaction dynamic that has characterised civil society scrutiny to date. The project explores the boundary of corporate responsibility, the role for legislation, and responsibilities of consumers.

This briefing paper covers the **Nature** module and relates to the indirect impacts on **biodiversity and landscapes** of activities within retailers' supply chains. Other briefing papers are available which describe the other modules. Each seeks to identify the key issues within the module, and what actions UK supermarkets can take on these issues. There are many other issues which could be included within each module, but those identified are considered by the Race to the Top alliance of organisations to be highly significant representative issues on which retailers can act. Each of the issues is accompanied by an indicator that will be used to track positive supermarket action. It is hoped that these indicators will help to track supermarket progress towards a fairer and greener food system, and that they will provide a basis for discussion on how further progress towards this goal can be achieved.

### **Introduction to the Nature module**

Individuals and businesses alike are becoming increasingly aware of the environmental impacts of their actions. Campaigners have drawn the public's attention to local, national and global environmental threats, and the links between these and their everyday decisions. Publicity around issues such as genetically modified organisms and organic food has contributed to a greater awareness of where our food comes from and the crucial importance to the environment of how it is produced.

The increasing use of the term 'biodiversity' signifies the recognition that one of the most crucial aspects of the environment is the diversity of life on our planet. Biodiversity is commonly defined as "*the variability among living organisms and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.*" It therefore embraces the variety of all life on earth. At the Earth Summit in 1992, 150 nations signed the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), agreeing to act to conserve biodiversity, to use its components sustainably, and to share its benefits equitably. The convention recognised the important contribution that the private sector can make towards these aims, by developing their own biodiversity strategies in line with local and national biodiversity priorities.

Food retailers have some direct impacts on biodiversity, for example from the construction of new stores and from the effects of transport. These impacts should be identified and minimised through corporate policy such as environmental management systems. Under the *Race to the Top* indicator framework, these direct impacts are covered in the Environment module. But retailers also have significant influence over the indirect impacts of activities within their supply chains on biodiversity and landscapes. For food production and retail, the key impacts of the CBD will be increased onus on producers and retailers to confirm that their products have been produced in a 'biodiversity-friendly' manner (WBCSD / IUCN, 1997). It is these indirect impacts that this module addresses.

Food production practices can have a major impact on biodiversity, both positive and negative. This applies both to domesticated crops and livestock grown all over world, and to products sourced from the wild, such as fish. As the gatekeepers of the modern food

system, retailers are in a prime position to encourage their suppliers to adopt more sustainable production methods, to bring real biodiversity benefits.

By encouraging more sustainable land management practices, retailers can in turn help to conserve countryside character. Agriculture has done more to shape the UK countryside than any other industry, and many of the landscapes and habitats we value today are the by-products of past land management practices. However, the intensified drive for food production from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards has led to major changes, such as hedgerow removal, land drainage, widespread use of agri-chemicals, ploughing up of flower-rich grassland and overgrazing of moorland. Much of our landscape is now more open and uniform. Retailers can help to reverse these trends by encouraging their suppliers to adopt land management practices that help to maintain the environmental quality and diversity of the countryside.

However, simply adding extra conditions of supply to already demanding production specifications is not the whole answer. All actors in the food system must recognise the need to reward and share the costs of higher standards. In many cases this might involve lobbying governments to provide incentives. Sometimes it may be a question of informing consumers about the impacts of different production practices so that they can make a reasoned choice in favour of sustainable food products, paying premiums where necessary. In all cases, retailers should aim to work with suppliers towards long-term improvement of standards, and to provide support for the shift to more sustainable practices where appropriate. Finally, retailers and other stakeholders, including their critics, must be prepared to have a rational and realistic debate about how standards can be raised in an equitable and long-lasting manner.

This module seeks to identify key issues which impact on biodiversity and countryside character, and what actions UK supermarkets can take to minimise these impacts. There are many other issues that could also have been included here, but these are considered by the *Race to the Top* alliance of organisations to be highly significant representative issues on which retailers can act. Each of the issues is accompanied by an indicator that will be used to track positive supermarket action on biodiversity and landscapes.

## **INDICATOR 5.1**

**Issue:** Environmental issues within the supply chain

**Indicator:** Corporate commitment to addressing nature conservation issues within the food supply chain

A measure of the retailer's commitment towards environmental issues is the raising of buyers' awareness of the issues facing the environment in relation to food production, which can encourage better delivery of the retailer's own corporate environmental aspirations, improve relations with primary produce suppliers and contribute towards environmental delivery on the ground.

In addition, this indicator also considers the issue of Genetically Modified (GM) crops. There are serious concerns that growing of GM crops could be damaging to wildlife. At the present time, there is a moratorium on the commercial growing of GM crops in the UK, whilst the Government considers the results of the farm-scale trials published in Autumn 2003. The potential environmental impacts of growing GM crops (either in the UK or elsewhere) is a significant issue for some consumers.

This indicator is measured by asking retailers:

- Whether there is a policy of training produce buyers in environmental and land management issues.
- Whether there is a policy of ensuring consumer choice of GM / GM free foods.

## **INDICATOR 5.2**

**Issue:** Environmental issues within the supply chain

**Indicator:** Producer suppliers<sup>1</sup> with retailer-supported farm environment audits and/or plans.

### **Why is this issue important?**

The impact of food production on the environment in general, and on biodiversity and landscapes in particular, is highly significant. Over a third of the world's land area (FAO, 2002) and three quarters of land in the UK (MAFF *et al*, 2001) is used for agricultural purposes. It follows that how this agricultural production is managed can make a huge difference to biodiversity and landscapes. Although farming practices are defined by a wide range of constraints, regulations and incentives, many of which are beyond the control of supermarkets, there is "*substantial potential for producers and retailers to provide consumers with a choice of produce which has been produced in a biodiversity friendly way*" (DETR, 1998). In particular, UK supermarkets can help to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity and countryside character both in the UK and internationally (where appropriate), by encouraging and helping their suppliers to assess and change their farming practices.

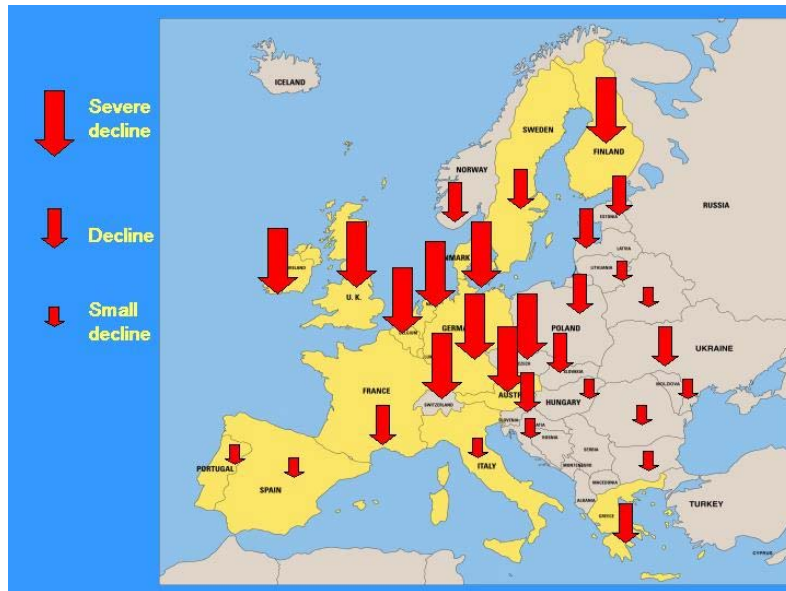
There is increasing evidence to suggest that the intensification of agriculture has damaged biodiversity, and there have been several instances of species becoming extinct (e.g. corn bunting in Northern Ireland). Agricultural landscapes with a low degree of variability have been developed, through specialization and intensification. The use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides, combined with changes in groundwater tables, cropping patterns and stocking densities, have led to large scale losses or degradation of populations of domestic and wild species and agro-ecosystems. These include species that support agriculture through pollination or natural pest control.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Producer suppliers' includes primary growers and packer suppliers. For the purposes of the 2002 questionnaire it refers to producer suppliers in the UK only.

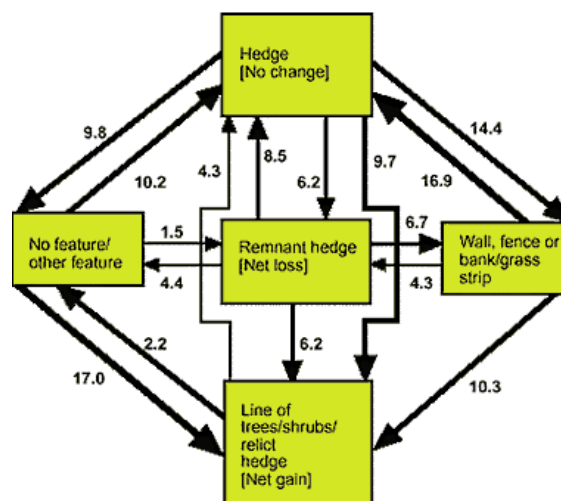
This damage to biodiversity can be seen in simple terms by looking at the rapid decline in farmland birds in Europe over the last two decades. The UK Government has adopted the status of bird populations as an official 'Quality of Life' indicator. The intensification of agriculture over the last three decades has done more damage to Europe's bird species than any other single factor, including the effects of climate change, pollution and deforestation (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Farmland bird population declines in Europe (Donald *et al*, 2001)**



Changes in the hedgerow stock of England and Wales are presented as a proxy for changes in countryside character (Figure 2). Whilst the declines reported for the 1980s have been halted, and in some cases reversed, it is important to note that the calculation of net change obscures large transfers into and out of each category. Newly created or restored features are unlikely to have same value in terms of ecology, landscape and historical significance as long-established features.

**Figure 2. Transfers between woody linear landscape features in England and Wales, 1990 to 1998.** The weight of arrow is proportional to the size of the transfer. Numbers are length of feature in '000 km (CEH, 2000).



The UK Government recognises that it is not enough to deal with biodiversity conservation by setting aside certain key areas for special treatment. *“In many cases our wildlife and their habitats are dependent on agriculture and sympathetic land management. We need to move towards policies which result in good conservation practice being an integral part of modern farming practices throughout the country ... we therefore need to look to contributions from the whole of the farmed countryside rather than just special parts of it”* (DETR, 1998).

By encouraging more sustainable land management practices, retailers can in turn help to conserve and/or reinforce locally distinctive land uses. Nearly all of the land area in the UK is managed, three-quarters by those who produce food. The Countryside Agency has mapped England’s landscape into 159 distinctive countryside character areas, based on distinctive features which are often a result of regional farming patterns. Together with insensitive development and extraction activities, widespread intensification of agriculture is cited as a threat to almost all the countryside character areas. The key features associated with intensification from the landscape viewpoint are the expansion of monocultures, the loss or fragmentation of field boundary features and woodlands, improvement or overgrazing of extensive grazing land, and drainage and canalisation of rivers. Retailers can help to reverse these trends by encouraging their suppliers to adopt land management practices that help to maintain the environmental quality and diversity of the countryside.

Retailers should not be entirely responsible for encouraging farmers to protect and maintain the countryside’s biodiversity, landscapes and historic heritage - here there is a clear role for public policy and appropriate agri-environment schemes. However, retailers can play a significant role in encouraging and supporting farmers who supply their produce to adopt more biodiversity and landscape friendly practices by integrating additional requirements into their existing farm assurance schemes. This applies both to retailers’ preferred direct suppliers and to indirect suppliers, who supply through primary marketing organisations, although it is recognised that the more complex the supply chain, the more difficult it is for retailers to encourage suppliers to implement environment plans on their farms.

### **What should retailers do about this issue?**

Retailers should develop with their producer suppliers a strategy and timetable for ensuring that all primary produce<sup>2</sup> sold is sourced from farms that are complying with environmental standards, and in particular a requirement for a whole farm environment audit and/or plan. This indicator is measuring policy not practice. Recognising it would be unrealistic and unreasonable to expect retailers to have information on all their producer suppliers, retailers are asked to verify the principles or criteria behind any initiative to maintain and/or enhance on-farm biodiversity and countryside character<sup>3</sup>.

In the future, retailers sourcing primary produce from approved producers operating under the jurisdiction of the British Farm Standard (BFS) will be able to cite this as an alternative to completing all the questions under Section 5.2. This option is, however, dependent on all the farm assurance schemes operating under the BFS adopting meaningful baseline conservation standards (section 5.2.1a) and a requirement for Crop Protection Management Plans (CPMPs, a key component of the Voluntary Initiative, Section 5.2.1b). The BFS schemes currently address some environmental protection issues, but by and large do not deal with nature conservation issues. Retailers have a key role to play in lobbying for the adoption of baseline conservation standards and CPMPs. Schemes such as EUREP-GAP and the LEAF Marque may also be included, dependent on a requirement for a farm environment audit and/or plan.

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<sup>2</sup> Includes organic and non-organic primary produce (including fresh horticultural produce, meat and dairy products but excluding all fish), sourced from the UK and where applicable overseas, and sold under own brand labelling.

<sup>3</sup> For further details of the term ‘countryside character’ see the Countryside Agency’s website: [www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk)

In many cases, the measures recommended in the farm environment audit and/or plan need not add significantly to the farmer's costs – many farmers may be unaware of the value of their land for biodiversity and/or landscapes or the ways in which they could help it to be maintained and enhanced at no cost, or even gain, to themselves. However, there will be cases where farmers clearly do incur additional costs in developing and implementing the farm environment audit and/or plan, including those costs related to inspection and verification. Although the government clearly has a role to play here, retailers need to recognise these costs and seek a way to compensate farmers (see '*Limitations of this indicator*' below). At present, the food chain does not financially reward those farmers who take steps to directly conserve farmland biodiversity and countryside character.

#### **Case Study 1. Working towards best practice with the EUREP GAP Protocol**

A group of European food retailers (including the UK retailers Tesco, Sainsbury's, Marks and Spencer, Asda, Safeway, Somerfield and Waitrose) has agreed a protocol for suppliers of fresh fruit and vegetables that includes a requirement for suppliers to aim to enhance environmental biodiversity on the farm through a conservation management plan and to consider the conversion of unproductive sites to conservation areas. This may be regional rather than at individual farm level.

*"Each grower should have a management of wildlife and conservation policy plan on their property. This policy should be compatible with sustainable commercial agricultural production and minimise environmental impact of the agricultural activity. Key elements of this plan should be to:*

- *conduct a baseline audit to understand existing animal and plant diversity on the farm. Conservation organisations can help conduct surveys to measure biodiversity and identify areas of concern.*
- *take action to avoid damage and deterioration of habitats.*
- *create an action plan to enhance habitats and increase biodiversity on the farm."*

This is a positive attempt to introduce whole farm conservation audits and plans into the supply chain, particularly as it has moved from being a suggested requirement to a '*minor must*' requirement. However, it is not a requirement, and there is no indication of support from the retailer to help the grower develop and implement the plan. EUREP ([www.eurep.org](http://www.eurep.org)) is currently developing standards for livestock farming, including dairy and red meat production.

#### **How will the indicator be measured?**

Retailers will be asked to state:

- Whether they require producer suppliers to have a **farm environment audit** as specified in any Code of Practice or contract with the wholesaler / integrator / co-operative.
- Whether they require UK producer suppliers to be able to demonstrate compliance with the '**Voluntary Initiative**<sup>4</sup> **on pesticides**, in particular the requirement for a Crop Protection Management Plan; or whether they require international producer suppliers to be able to demonstrate compliance with the principles of the 'Voluntary Initiative'.
- Whether they require producer suppliers to include **specific environmental criteria** as specified in any Code of Practice or contract with the wholesaler / co-operative.
- What proportion of all sales of primary produce are sourced from producer suppliers that have farm environment audits and/or plans (this information should be available either from contract producers or from the first tier suppliers / wholesalers / co-operatives).

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<sup>4</sup> The Voluntary Initiative on Pesticides includes a range of measures on pesticide use, some (e.g. competency of spray operators, recording pesticide applications) are already included as standards in BFS schemes (but only for the arable sector), others (e.g. crop protection management plans) are not. It is important that all UK producers, irrespective of the sector, comply with the VI's principles. More information is available at [www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk](http://www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk)

- Whether they provide any support to producer suppliers to help them to develop and implement the farm environment audits (and plans), financial or otherwise.

This information will be verified (where possible) using data from farm conservation advisory bodies (e.g. FWAG); accreditation bodies (e.g. Checkmate International, EUREP), and by consultation with farmers / farmer representatives (e.g. NFU).

### **Limitations of this indicator**

This indicator highlights the crucial question of who should pay for basic biodiversity / landscape conservation standards within the food system. Some argue that where higher standards add costs to our food, the consumer should pay - yet this needs to be supported by vigorous public education to convince the consumer that this is justified, if these higher standards are to be met outside a few premium-priced niche products. Others argue that biodiversity / countryside character protection is a public good that should be financed from the public purse through taxation and agri-environment schemes. It is likely that the best way forward will be through a combination of these, but retailers can play an active role in this debate by demonstrating what can be done through the market, explaining to consumers and suppliers the importance of protecting biodiversity and countryside character, and identifying where there still needs to be additional government support. Another potential implication of this indicator is that it may add weight to any move by the retailers towards reducing their number of suppliers, in order to minimise costs and administration.

### **INDICATOR 5.3**

**Issue: Sustainable fisheries**

**Indicator: Wild and farmed fish<sup>5</sup> from sustainable sources**

#### **Why is this issue important?**

Fisheries and aquaculture remain very important as a source of food, employment and revenue in many countries and communities. Europe is experiencing a general trend of increased fish consumption, reflecting a number of factors: people spending more on eating out, changing dietary habits, new food products and changing lifestyles.

It is now a legal requirement<sup>6</sup> that most fish products for sale must indicate:

- The commercial names of the species;
- Information on the method of production such as 'caught at sea', 'caught in freshwater', or 'farmed or cultivated';
- Where the seafood was caught or in the case of products caught in freshwater or farmed, the member state or third country of origin.

#### **Wild fisheries**

Many of the world's (marine) fisheries are currently overexploited or have unacceptable impacts on the wider environment. The institutional framework of the fisheries industry, including common access and subsidised fleets, is being seriously questioned. Globally, more than sixty per cent of marine fisheries are fully or over-exploited (FAO, 2002). In 1992, one of the world's richest cod fisheries, the Great Banks off the Newfoundland coast, was virtually wiped out by over-fishing. Not only was the marine environment severely damaged, but some 40,000 jobs were lost. In the North East Atlantic, forty of the sixty main commercial fish stocks, including all nine species listed for the North Sea, are believed to be '*outside safe biological limits*' (OSPAR Commission, 2000). This means that 67% of stocks are

<sup>5</sup> All questions apply to all wild and farmed (organic and non-organic) fresh, chilled, canned, frozen & smoked fish or fillets and shellfish sold (own label and branded).

<sup>6</sup> Specific origin labeling for all fresh, chilled, frozen and smoked fish or filets and shellfish sold at retail came into force on 1 January 2002. These requirements are set out in Regulations (EC) No. 104/2000 and (EC) No. 2065/2001.



seriously depleted, or are in danger of becoming so. Current fishing practices are not only threatening the sustainability of fish stocks, but some also have a significant impact on other wildlife such as albatross, sea turtle and dolphin.

However, there are also many fisheries which are well managed and sustainable. Retailers currently source seafood products from all over the world and it is a major challenge to establish whether the species they are sourcing and the fisheries which supply these species are sustainable and well managed. Considerable resources and expertise would be required to ensure that every species sourced met community expectations for sustainability. One approach is to focus in the short term on some urgent issues for which there are well known solutions. This would help ascertain the practicality of the system being developed and enable retailers to provide some feedback to help design a more comprehensive system in the future. The focus for 2002 will be on fish stocks in the North East Atlantic and the issue of long-lining and seabird bycatch.

### ***Background to longlining and seabird bycatch***

Longlining is an increasingly common fishing method used around the world to target a wide variety of species. As the name suggests it involves setting a long fishing line (sometimes up to several tens of kilometres) which has attached to it hundreds to thousands of hooks. Sometimes the line is set on the seabed (demersal longlining) and sometimes it is set to float either at depth or near the surface (pelagic longlining). Obviously the species taken will vary according to depth and where in the world the fishing activity is taking place. Tunas and marlins are common targets for pelagic longlines whilst cod and halibut are common targets for demersal longlines.

Longlining is a relatively selective fishing method for the target species. The species taken can be influenced by depth fished, bait used and hook size/type, amongst other factors. Due to the fact that the fish taken are handled individually the fishing vessel can focus on quality - hence the reason why sashimi grade (i.e. high value) fish are more commonly take by longline.

Like all fishing methods, longlining may take species that are of either no economic value or may be of conservation significance. Various species of seabirds take the longline hooks while attempting to snatch bait and some, such as albatrosses, are globally threatened (according to IUCN criteria). The number and species of seabirds taken varies from fishery to fishery and place to place. However, albatrosses, especially those at risk, are more common in the colder waters of the world's oceans.

Technically speaking, reducing or even eliminating seabird bycatch is relatively easy. Mechanisms for doing this include closed areas (seasonal, area based), on board fish handling practices (better disposal of waste products) and technical solutions (underwater setting devices, bird scaring devices), amongst others. In recent years not only has the plight of certain seabirds become well known but there has been a considerable amount of effort devoted to finding solutions. Moreover, some industries and governments have been very proactive in putting into place measures to reduce seabird bycatch. Unfortunately, those that fish outside the law do not respect bird protection measures. Ensuring that retailers source products from fisheries that are doing the right thing will ensure that the products available from longlining are available without some of the unacceptable impacts.

In a study carried out by the Royal Agricultural College on behalf of the RSPB and IIED, the authors found that in terms of sourcing from the wild, multiple retailers considered sourcing fish to be an important issue. All of those reviewed supported the Marine Stewardship Council but only Sainsbury's and Tesco currently sell any Marine Stewardship Council certified fish products (see Case Study 3). Most claimed they do not sell certified products as they were not yet widely available. To overcome this many rely on warranties from their

suppliers in relation to legal fishing practices and assurances that fisheries are at least working towards sustainable management practices.

#### **Case Study 2 The Marine Stewardship Council**

MSC is an independent, global, non-profit organisation based in London. In a bid to reverse the continued decline in the world's fisheries, the MSC is seeking to harness consumer purchasing power to generate change and promote environmentally responsible stewardship of one of the world's most important renewable food source. Accordingly, its aims are:

- increase the overall sustainability of the world's seafood supply;
- increase the percentage of the global seafood market certified to the MSC Standard;
- increase awareness of the MSC eco-label.

The MSC has developed an environmental standard for sustainable and well-managed fisheries. It uses a product label to reward environmentally responsible fishery management and practices. Consumers, concerned about overfishing and its environmental and social consequences will increasingly be able to choose seafood products which have been independently assessed against the MSC standard and labelled to prove it. This will assure them that the product has not contributed to the environmental problem of overfishing. Though operating independently since 1999, the MSC was first established by Unilever, the world's largest buyer of seafood and WWF, the international conservation organisation in 1997.

#### **Farmed fisheries**

As marine fisheries have begun to plateau, and in some cases crash, in terms of production, aquaculture production has shown the opposite tendency. Between 1994-99 alone, aquaculture grew from 18.5% to 26.2% of total fisheries production (FAO, 2002). In the UK, fish farming represents the second largest livestock sector after broiler chickens. The vast majority of the 70 million farmed fish produced annually in the UK are reared intensively, with serious welfare implications (Lymbery, 2001). This situation is replicated across Europe. The sheer scale and intensity of fish farming, including shellfisheries, not only causes serious welfare problems but has environmental implications too (SWCL, 1997)<sup>7</sup>. These range from smothering of the seabed under fish pens by organic matter (faeces and uneaten food), the indirect effects of the use of various chemicals and medicines, illegal control (by some) of wild predators such as fish-eating birds and otters, physical disturbance from harvesting shellfish and 'genetic pollution' from escapees breeding with wild salmon having a detrimental effect on the survival of wild populations. Fish farming is also inherently inefficient in terms of food production – over 3 tonnes of wild-caught fish are needed (as food) to produce one tonne of farmed salmon (Lymbery, 2001). The environmental sustainability of the industrial fisheries that harvest wild fish to supply fish meal to fish farms has yet to be determined.

More positively, aquaculture could reduce the strain on some species of wild fish – for example, in 2-3 years time wild cod stocks should benefit as supplies of farmed cod become more available. UK retailers have a role to play in sourcing UK farmed fish from fish farms that have audited and where necessary reduced their environmental impacts, particularly in relation to the siting and design of fish farms, pest & disease control, fish farm escapes, nutrient enrichment and the origins and sustainability of the fish meal used. Some steps are already being taken to reduce food wastage (thereby helping to address the issue of seabed fouling), whilst non-lethal measures to control seals are now in wide use. There are now signs that the industry is taking a more strategic approach towards dealing with the environmental issues.

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<sup>7</sup> Scottish Wildlife & Countryside Link (1997) *Leaping In The Dark: A review of the environmental impacts of marine salmon farming and proposals for change.*

### **What should retailers do about this issue?**

It is clear that many of the world's marine fisheries are overexploited or have unacceptable impacts on the wider environment. However, there are also many fisheries which are well managed and sustainable, some driven by market-based initiatives (e.g. Marine Stewardship Council). Retailers currently source seafood products from all over the world, and it is recognized that it is a major challenge to even ascertain whether the species they are sourcing and the fisheries that supply these species are sustainable and well managed. The focus for 2002 will be on fish stocks in the North East Atlantic and the issue of long-lining and seabird bycatch.

Aquaculture is also an important issue. The UK salmon farming industry is predicted to expand rapidly over the next 5-10 years. At the same time, there is likely to be significant growth of new farmed species (e.g. cod, haddock). This future development must be sustainable. To be sustainable it must be guided by a strategic approach to location, design and pollution control. Retailers have a role to play in sourcing UK farmed fish from fish farms that have audited their environmental impacts, particularly in relation to the siting and design of fish farms, pest & disease control, fish farm escapes and nutrient enrichment.

### **How will this indicator be measured?**

Retailers will be asked to respond to a series of questions on wild and farmed fisheries:

#### **Wild fisheries**

- Whether there is a policy for sourcing from sustainable fisheries.
- To provide details of any measures taken to ensure that the fish sold is sourced from legal sources.
- To list the top five fish species sold (by volume, using scientific names) and which region the fish is sourced from.
- For fish caught in the NE Atlantic, what proportion is sourced from fisheries within safe biological limits (according to the best available statistics).
- To list three fish species (that are sold instore) that are caught by long-lining methods, and mitigation measures to ensure bycatch of albatrosses is minimised.

#### **Farmed fisheries**

- Whether any of their UK supplier fish farms signed up to industry environmental standards such as the Scottish Quality Salmon Environmental Management System or the Soil Association Accreditation for Organic Fish Farms.

#### **Limitations of this indicator**

The root cause of overfishing of wild species is the lack of incentive to manage this wild resource sustainably. This must be tackled by national and international policy rather than pinning all hopes on market solutions. On the other side of the coin, fish farming can be extremely intensive and have negative impacts on both environment and welfare issues. Retailers have a role to play in changing the perceptions of suppliers and customers, and in helping their suppliers to shift to more sustainable practices. Until adequate sources of independently certified sustainable fish products are available, retailers will need to carry out their own supplier audits. Retailers will therefore need to collaborate with conservation organisations to ensure that audits are appropriate and that targets are realistic.

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