

## Consumer campaigns 'don't save fish'

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ABC/AFP

Consumer campaigns to protect threatened fish species have failed and alternative ways are needed to save threatened marine species, according to a new Canadian report.

A team at the [University of British Columbia Fisheries Centre](http://www.fisheries.ubc.ca/) (<http://www.fisheries.ubc.ca/> ) in Vancouver publish their research online in the journal *Oryx: The International Journal of Conservation* (<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=ORX> ) .

"Marine fisheries are unsustainable," say Dr Jennifer Jacquet and colleagues.

### Consumer confusion

The new report says programs aimed at helping consumers choose sustainable fish are popular with consumers and businesses in western countries, and may raise awareness.

But the programs have failed to reach their goals, and are beset by "consumer confusion, lack of traceability and a lack of demonstrably improved conservation status for the fish that are meant to be protected," it says.

The report examines the impact of consumer guides to ocean-friendly seafood, and noted that one of the first such programs, wallet cards produced by the Monterey Bay Aquarium in California, had resulted in no overall change in the market and no decrease in fishing pressures on the at-risk species it targeted.

The report suggests that government and consumers should instead focus on making big wholesalers and retailers stop selling threatened fish species.

It recommends national subsidies for fishing industries be axed and international standards be set for "sustainable" seafood labels.

And the report calls on farmers and agricultural feed makers to stop using fishmeal for cheap protein.

### A third of fish fed to animals

More than a third of fish caught worldwide are used to feed factory-farmed animals, say the researchers.

"Currently, 30 million tonnes of fish (36% of world fisheries catch) are ground up each year into fishmeal and oil, mostly to feed farmed fish, chicken and pigs," they say.

"Decreasing the amount of fish used for the production of animal feed should be a top priority of the sustainable-seafood movement."

"Pigs and chickens alone consume six and two times the amount of seafood as US and Japanese consumers."

Jacquet says it is not necessary for pigs and chickens to be fed fishmeal.

"We should feed them what they were meant to eat," she says.

Jacquet says the food industry uses fishmeal as a "cheap protein source" to achieve fast growth rates in food animals "but with the oceans as stressed as they are, that's not going to work for a long term plan".



The campaigns are marked by consumer confusion, lack of traceability and don't seem to protect the fish they are meant to, the researchers found (*Source: AMCS*)

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- Marine hotspots key to saving fisheries (</science/articles/2003/08/18/926785.htm> ) , Science Online, 18 Aug 2003
- Overfishing may wipe seafood off menu (</science/articles/2006/11/03/1780487.htm> ) , Science Online, 03 Nov 2006

The [Australian Marine Conservation Society \(http://www.marineconservation.org.au\)](http://www.marineconservation.org.au) , which produces a sustainable seafood guide for Australia, agrees with the recommendations of the report.

"Consumer campaigns alone won't work but they are important in raising awareness," she says spokesperson, Ingrid Neilson.

"It's also important to reduce fishing pressure and the best way to do that is by having more marine parks."

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