

Study: Marketplace alone can't protect seafood supply

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Market-based solutions such as seafood eco-labels are not enough to protect the world's seafood resources and a reliance on government regulation is still necessary.

This is one of the conclusions presented in a new paper published in *Oryx*, an international journal covering conservation.

A variety of academic researchers and environmental groups, including Greenpeace, joined in the writing of the paper.

While arguing in support of the need for consumer involvement in promoting sustainable seafood choices, the authors suggest market-based solutions alone will fall short of their intended goal of protecting global seafood resources.

"There is simply too much cheating in the marketplace (e.g. mislabelling), too much misleading information, too many inconsistencies and, so far, too few results," the report said.

"Just as consumers experienced fatigue in the 1990s after corporate eco-advertising amounted to little action or outcome, so may this decade witness the same fatigue in sustainable seafood campaigns," said the report.

The report spotlights both Sainsbury's and Wal-Mart, charging both mega-



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The report spotlights both Sainsbury's and Wal-Mart, charging both mega-retailers, although publicly committed to sourcing only sustainable seafood, are both falling short of their promises.

"For instance, in 2002, Sainsbury's in the U.K. committed to sourcing all its wild fish from sustainable sources by 2010. But after working closely with the [Marine Stewardship Council], MSC-certified fish only amount to 1 percent of total fish sales," the report's author's said. "In 2006 Wal-Mart pledged to source all its capture fish from the MSC by 2010, a goal Wal-Mart is not likely to meet."

To avoid what the author's term "bluewashing" - ocean-themed public relations ploys designed to improve corporate images -- sustainable seafood campaigns must be goal-oriented and communicate whether or not goals are met.

The authors recommend sustainable seafood initiatives could work higher in the demand chain, begin connecting seafood to climate change, campaign to divert small fish away from livestock feed and into consumer markets, and work to eliminate harmful fisheries subsidies.

"Working with household consumers alone cannot save fish. Although government regulations are far from perfect, the successes of government efforts to improve fisheries have been more obvious and measurable. Even within a market-based approach there is a need to ensure that information is correct and that conservation efforts are not obstructed by harmful subsidies. In other words, working with consumers and retailers also brings the imperative of working with governments," the report concludes.

The report's authors include:

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