

The Co-operative Nets Top Marine Accolade



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Industry: [Food & Beverage](#)

[The Co-operative Group](#) has been ranked top in the Marine Conservation Society's (MCS) Supermarket Survey 2011, scoring 84% and earning a gold award for sustainable seafood.

As one of the most sustainable seafood retailers in the UK, The Co-operative was praised for its product labelling, [Responsible Fish Sourcing Policy](#) and sustainability initiatives.

The retailer doesn't sell any of the products identified by MCS's "Fish to Avoid" list and all its own-brand tuna is now caught using the pole and line method. Pole and line fishing is a more selective fishing method which results in less by-catch*, which reduces the impact of fishing on the biodiversity of a region.

According to The Co-operative Ethical Consumerism Report, which is published this week (Thursday 15 December), last year, UK sales of fish from sustainable sources grew 16.3 per cent, from £178m to £207m, twice the rate for total fish sales which increased 8.2 per cent.

[The Co-operative Food's](#) Responsible Fish Sourcing Policy governs the sourcing of all its own-brand wild and farmed seafood including all food products, which contain fish, from ready meals to sandwiches. Each own-brand product is assessed to confirm the source is a responsible fishery, examining the individual species based on fishery location and method of catch; species' resilience to fishing; by-catch estimates and whether species are endangered.

In 1998, The Co-operative was one of the first organisations to register support for the Marine Stewardship Council and has continued to work closely with them to promote responsible, environmentally friendly fishing practices.

Since then, The Co-operative has provided £200,000 to support UK fisheries to pursue Marine Stewardship Council certification. To date, 12 UK fisheries have benefited from this fund, including the entire Sussex inshore fishery comprising of 26 fisheries.

In 2009, the retailer supported the MCS's Marine Reserves Now! campaign to lobby to adopt a policy manifesto commitment for 30% of UK waters to be Highly Protected Marine Reserves by 2020.

More recently, The Co-operative joined the battle to save the European eel with an innovative river navigation scheme designed to reverse the dramatic decline in eel numbers. Together with its partner The Rivers Trust, The Co-operative is building specially-designed passes, enabling eels to navigate physical barriers such as dams, weirs and flood defences which prevent them from reaching the slow-moving, upstream waters they require to grow to maturity.

In light of its work with UK fisheries, The Co-operative was also highly commended by MCS for the Best Sustainability Initiative.

Sean Toal, Acting Chief Executive at The Co-operative Food, said: "To top the Marine Conservation Society Supermarket Survey demonstrates our commitment to responsible sourcing and sustainable seafood. Our Responsible Fish Sourcing Policy, engagement in seafood sustainability initiatives and the work we have done to eliminate 'Fish to avoid' identified by MCS scored particularly highly."

For more information about The Co-operative's Responsible Fish Sourcing Policy visit <http://www.co-operative.coop/join-the-revolution/our-plan/Environment/Nature-conservation/>.

Additional Information:

* The term "bycatch" is used for fish caught unintentionally in a fishery while intending to catch other fish.

About The Co-operative Food:

The Co-operative Group is the UK's largest mutual business, owned not by private shareholders but by over six million consumers. It is the UK's fifth biggest food retailer, the leading convenience store operator

and a major financial services provider, operating The Co-operative Bank, Britannia and The Co-operative Insurance. Among its other businesses are the number one funeral services provider and Britain's largest farming operation. As well as having clear financial and operational objectives, the Group has also set out its social and sustainability goals in its groundbreaking Ethical Plan, which specifies almost 50 commitments in these areas. The Group operates 4,800 retail trading outlets, employs more than 106,000 people and has an annual turnover of more than £13bn. Further information is available at www.co-operative.coop

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