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## "Overfishing and Dolphin Dying" - ARD reveals weaknesses of the MSC seal, but Iglo and Dr. Oetker are faithful to the seal

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The ARD report "The Fish Seal Business" makes the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) label responsible for not standing for sustainable fisheries. We asked manufacturers and distributors how they feel about these allegations. But only Iglo and Dr. Oetker were ready for a statement. Even the MSC itself rejects all criticism.

By [Sarah Hölting](#)

The MSC stands for "sustainable and artisanal fishing" and is considered the largest eco seal for wild fish worldwide. It was founded in 1997 by the WWF and the food industry. Meanwhile, twelve percent of world fish production carries the seal. But how credible is the seal really? To answer that, the ARD reporter Huismann goes to Mexico, Spain, the Maldives and conventions of the fishing industry, meets insiders and reveals

scandalous maladies - of which apparently nobody wants to know anything. Huismann reveals that a Mexican tuna fishery uses ringworm nets as a method of catching fish, killing thousands of dolphins. This fishing method is banned in the US and Europe. Not in Mexico. The MSC licenses the Mexican farms that use this fishing method, according to Huismann anyway. Because the industry claims that they release the dolphins again. But Huismann finds out the opposite: thousands of dolphins would continue to die.

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*Here's the reportage.*

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## Trawls destroy the ocean floor

In addition to killing dolphins, many of the MSC-certified fisheries also use the controversial bottom trawls that sweep across the seabed and devastate the creatures on the bottom of the ocean - creating a muddy desert, and young fish have no chance. And that, even though the MSC demands as a standard that the catch should not endanger the fish stocks.



## MSC carrier dissatisfied with award

*Mohamed Shane'e wants consumers to be educated about window dressing (screenshot: [Ard.de](http://Ard.de) )*

Of course, there are also fishery productions that adhere to the standards honestly and consistently. Like Mohamed Shane'e, Fisheries Minister of the Maldives. He has the MSC seal, but shows in the report but dissatisfied: "We have a dispute with the MSC. If our angling fishery, which is clean and green (...), receives the seal, as well as fisheries using trawls or ringworm nets that catch the cubs, or fish fry that dolphins use for hunting, then the consumer should know that and think How ecological the seal really is. "

**"You have been captured"**



*Daniel Pauly is co-founder of MSC and bitterly disappointed with the lax licensing (Screenshot: [Ard.de](http://Ard.de) )*

Even the former co-founder of MSC, Dr. Daniel Pauly, sadly sums it up: "The MSC should represent the interests of two groups: industry and nature conservation. That's why he was founded. But he does not do that. He has been hijacked by industry. Nobody foresaw that. But this is the only way to explain the behavior of the MSC people. Otherwise you would say they are stupid or evil. I think they are not. They were hijacked. "

## **MSC managing director Howes rejects allegations**

*MSC boss Rupert Howes remains faithful to his seal, he hardly deals with criticism (screenshot: [Ard.de](http://Ard.de) )*



Despite all the abuses Huisman faces MSC CEO Rupert Howes, Howes remains convinced of his standards. His goal is for every third fish product to bear the MSC logo. For each seal, the MSC receives a license fee, which makes 17 million euros a year. He also advertises in Brussels. Howes sells MSC as independent

and not-for-profit, with Huisman finding himself dominated by representatives of the fish and food industry on the board.

## **MSC publishes opinion**

Nevertheless, the MSC remains convinced of its standards and has already responded with an [official statement](#) on the ARD reportage. In this, the MSC is "disappointed that the role, mission and program of the MSC has been widely misrepresented." It should be noted that key film allegations refer to fisheries that are or were not MSC certified. Among other things, "the filming of Mexican tuna fisheries dating back to the 1980s is no longer representative of this fishery. She has reduced her dolphin mortality rate by more than 99 percent on the long road to MSC certification. "In addition, the MSC is regularly developing its certification criteria." The bar is getting higher and higher - it has never been lowered to attract fisheries. "What's more the MSC "with industry, retail, science, Politics and environmental organizations alike. No page has 'hijacked' the MSC. "

## **"The seal certainly takes such a reportage damage"**

Regardless of whether Huismann or the MSC are right - or both sides in parts - the question arises: how much does such a reportage harm the image of the MSC? " The MSC is by far the most well-known seal on the food market, and damaging this seal carries the risk of damaging other seals - just as the consumer might suspect a similar system of deception in other seals. The seal certainly takes such a reportage damage, but is missing for the consumer simply an alternative. Those who do not want to forego fish consumption - which would be very appropriate for some species - will probably have to continue to orient themselves, "says Professor Christoph Schank, who specializes in corporate ethics at the University of Vechta.

## **Trust is good, control is better**

Also Dr. Annabel Oelmann, head of the consumer center Bremen, remains skeptical of the MSC and sees the report as motivation for a more critical view on the part of consumers: "41 percent of Germans trust the MSC seal. Reports such as those of Mr. Huismann should motivate consumers to question seals and also to pay attention to the downsides of the individual seals. "She also advises the MSC to question itself on the basis of such reports and possibly to better check the" neutral observers " who are responsible for writing independent reports on the situation during the fishing season. "The report says MSC is more interested in the financial side than in the welfare of animals and the environment.



## **MSC hides animal welfare or social**

In addition, the consumer advocate refers to the latest issue "test" by Stiftung Warentest from April 2018, in which the MSC seal is again critically questioned. Short conclusion: It is good that there are seals. But they could do much more. "MSC focuses almost exclusively on the protection of fish stocks and marine habitats. Aspects such as animal welfare or social issues are largely ignored. The requirements do not exclude the risk of temporary overfishing. However, Stiftung Warentest recommends the MSC seal ", says Oelmann. Also from the point of view of Greenpeace, there is currently no seal of approval, which one could trust without restriction, although there are more

and more certified fish products. Nevertheless, from the point of view of Oelmann, quality seals are important help for customers, when they are standing in front of the fish counter and are spoiled for choice. "Consumers should look at the criteria and then decide which ones are especially important to them."

## Schank is convinced: manufacturers know the weaknesses of the MSC

With so much criticism, the question arises: Why are dealers and manufacturers getting involved in the use of the MSC seal? Do not you challenge the standards? "The MSC seal is immensely popular, enjoys notoriety and trust. Many manufacturers and traders see this as an opportunity to prove their actual commitment or pretend lack of commitment (greenwashing). The seal is used solely because some of the consumers actually pay attention to it and make the purchase decision dependent on it," says Schank. He is even convinced that manufacturers like Iglo, Costa and Dr. Oetker the almost inherent weaknesses of the MSC seal are well known. Especially since it is obvious that some populations are in critical condition and consumption should be completely avoided. "The standards are thoroughly questioned and I am also aware of critical questions from the manufacturers, especially regarding the sharpness of controls and the careless lending of the seal. It is also trying to influence the MSC. This has meanwhile reached a size at which a certain inertia can be felt.



### Power structures analogous to FSC as a solution

In my opinion, a substantial step would be to focus more on the FSC, "advises Schank. Here there is a chamber system, which provides the representatives of the economy equal partners from the ecology and the social area as well as NGOs or concerned group. "Decisions are far more reflective of this and represent pluralistic issues. The MSC in its present form marginalizes all but the commercial interests, even if certain structures are meant to give a strong position to environmentalists or scientists. It is by no means obvious that leaving the seal is a consistent or even ethically required step. A clear further development or revolution of the seal, for example through parity power structures analogous to the FSC,

## Iglo and Dr. Oetker remain true to the MSC

And the dealers themselves? How do you react to the serious allegations that Huismann makes to the MSC in his report? After all, retailers such as Edeka and Lidl have completely switched their product range to MSC. We have Rewe, Lidl, Edeka, Costa, Iglo and dr. Oetker asked, but only three of them took up a position. **Edeka** thought it the shortest. The grocer merely replies that he "takes the advice seriously" and will pursue it. In addition, Edeka asked for understanding, "that we do not want to comment further here for competitive reasons ...".

Iglo , whose director of corporate and sustainability communications Alfred Jansen writes, reacted in a very different and much more detailed way :

*"With its 20-year commitment to global improvement in sustainable fisheries, MSC has rightly earned credibility. In the opinion of the critics, for example, a unique sustainability seal has been created that consumers trust. Currently only 12 percent of the world's fishing areas are certified, so there is still a lot of room for improvement worldwide. To judge the report fair, we recommend that you look at the [factual answers of the MSC](#) . Of course, from the point of view of Iglo, where potential for improvement is identified, we expect the MSC to be confident in the seriousness of the testing process and to avoid abuses already in the system.*

*In line with the ongoing evolution of MSC certification, Iglo will provide constructive support to the MSC and its integrated international network of experts in reviewing existing audit processes. As part of its own commitment to sustainability, Iglo assumes the responsibility to drive continuous improvement of the seal. The current situation gives no reason to question the seal in principle or even to renounce it. "*

Also **Dr. Oetker** press spokesman Matthias Hanig sticks to the seal and refers to the opinion of the MSC:

*"We understand and share the concern for the overfishing of the seas. For this reason, we have already implemented a large number of measures in recent years in order to responsibly buy the ingredients tuna, salmon and shrimp used on our pizzas. One measure is the cooperation with the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). Consequently, we have followed the report with great interest and take the criticism of the MSC label very seriously. Nevertheless, we are sure that this is still the best possible alternative on the sustainable fishing market.*

*In 2016, the MSC was audited by the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI), an organization comprised of NGOs, governments, independent experts and members from trade and industry, funded by the German Association for International Cooperation (GIZ). The MSC is recognized as GSSI's certification program for sustainable fisheries and has scored by far the highest score of any certification program.*

*We maintain a constructive exchange with the MSC, which is always ready to talk and continuously reviews its standards. All the more regrettable is a somewhat too one-sided presentation, which refers only to individual negative examples, but does not show what improvements the MSC has since its inception more than 20 years ago in the fishery. The comments of the MSC on the criticisms expressed in the report can be viewed [here](#) .*

*Regarding our Dr. Oetker pizzas with tuna, we can tell you that they come mainly from the West Pacific (FAO 71 fishing area) as well as salmon and shrimp from*

*aquaculture. On the other hand, we do not obtain tuna from the catch area listed in the report in the Mexican Northeast Pacific Ocean. "*

**Keywords: fishing , seal of quality , grocer , MSC , MSC logo , trawls , seals**Write a comment now.****

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