



A unique group of leaders who are fast-tracking solutions to the most pressing challenges facing the ocean



## Securing sustainable food from the ocean

### Context

Friends of Ocean Action is exploring the role of the ocean and other aquatic resources in adequately, safely and sustainably feeding the planet now and into the future. Food production systems are struggling to meet the world's current nutritional needs – as is evident from the extent of malnutrition suffered across the globe, in both undernutrition and obesity. In addition, there is already considerable pressure on both terrestrial and oceanic ecosystems from today's levels of food production. For example, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 33.1% of fish stocks are currently fished beyond biological sustainability. The impacts of climate change on, for example, fish stocks, are also of concern and often hard to predict. Meeting human nutritional needs is likely to continue to prove challenging as the global population increases and becomes more urbanized.

The aquaculture sector is considered by many to be one way of meeting this increase in demand. In fact, the

aquaculture industry is currently growing faster than any other major food production sector, providing more than half (53%) of the fish produced for human consumption. Such rapid development can, however, come with significant environmental and social impacts. Efforts are underway to understand and mitigate the negative impacts of unsustainable fishing and aquaculture practices through research, innovation and technology but accelerated progress is needed to address the increasing challenges of meeting global nutritional needs in a sustainable way.

Friends of Ocean Action recognizes the need for a systemic approach to fisheries management, the use of sustainable aquaculture practices and the protection of marine ecosystems as key factors in the long-term ability of the ocean to produce the food that humanity needs. Moreover, diversifying food production and mitigating the impacts of current food systems with innovative approaches also offer an opportunity beyond meeting food demands. They can also play a major role in securing jobs and contributing to the sustainable management of natural resources and economic stability of countries, in both the short and long term. In this way, food from the ocean and other aquatic sources plays a crucial role in achieving a number of the Sustainable Development Goals.



Fresh fish on the market. © Goran Bogicevic/Alamy

## What the Friends are doing

Friends of Ocean Action is working with Stanford University's Center for Ocean Solutions, EAT, Stockholm Resilience Centre and UN FAO, to address some of these issues. The group has identified that, in order to develop innovative approaches to the challenge of sustainable seafood, more research is needed to better understand the inherent complexities of seafood production and the implications of expanding it. Such research will need to recognize the link between environmental sustainability (both terrestrial and oceanic) and human health. To this end, Stanford University's Center for Ocean Solutions and Stockholm Resilience Centre, in partnership with EAT and Springer Nature, plan to undertake a "blue food assessment." Over the next two years, the assessment aims to expand scientific understanding of the role of blue food for planetary health and human well-being and outline pathways for a transformation to sustainable and healthy blue food for all people on the planet, now and in the future.

In parallel, Friends of Ocean Action is developing a Blue Food Coalition to mobilize action and advance progress on the role of the ocean and other aquatic sources in

adequately, safely and sustainably feeding the planet. Its two main aims will be to:

- Connect blue food science with business and policymakers, partly through socializing the research coming out of the Blue Food Assessment with key stakeholders from those sectors,
- Embed blue food into the global food system agenda in the lead-up to the 2021 UN Food System Summit and beyond.

The Blue Food Coalition plans to launch at the UN Ocean Conference in June 2020. Stakeholders are being drawn from along terrestrial and oceanic food production supply chains, as well as governments and civil society. The coalition will take a global approach while recognizing the regional variances in production and demand that make seafood production such a complex industry. Friends of Ocean Action believes that a healthy ocean means healthy people. Food from the ocean and other aquatic sources can play a key role in sustaining future generations, provided the health of the ocean itself is protected.

**For more information, please contact:**  
[Ocean2020@weforum.org](mailto:Ocean2020@weforum.org)



Fish stand, seafood on display, Mercado de Bolhão, Porto, Portugal. © Imagebroker/Alamy