

Network of the Global Agenda Councils

Seafood Traceability: A Key to Sustainable Livelihoods, Durable Trade and Secure Communities

Statement by Members of the World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on Oceans

Fishing, fisheries and seafood are vital to communities around the world. The way we fish, how we manage fishing vessels along our coasts, and how fish products reach consumers affect livelihoods, ecosystems, international trade and security.

With massive fishing fleets trawling the world's oceans and with nearly 40% of fish entering international markets, seafood is a vastly transnational commerce. Fish exports generate more net earnings for developing countries than exports of coffee, cocoa, bananas, rubber, meat and rice combined.

But despite an increasingly high-tech and globalized industry, marine fishing remains the last large-scale "hunter and gatherer" activity. We are still struggling to organize and regulate ocean-based fishing for long-term sustainability. Overfishing has reached crisis proportions, with more than two-thirds of stocks fished up to or beyond their biological limits. Moreover, 20% or more of fish catch results from "illegal, unreported or unregulated" fishing, and thus escapes basic fisheries management.

Global systems for tracing the origins of fish products "from bait to plate" remain underdeveloped, and are urgently needed. Without adequately harmonized, verifiable and business-smart solutions to improve the traceability of fish and seafood products, a valuable food source will continue to be degraded.

As representatives of businesses, civil society groups, governments and academic institutions gathered together under the auspices of the World Economic Forum, we see an urgent need for a global system to ensure that wild-caught seafood and other fish products are legal, healthy, fully traceable and accurately labeled. We recommend that stakeholders from industry and civil society work together with policy-makers worldwide to develop and implement such a system as soon as possible, as a means to achieve sustainable fisheries, durable livelihoods, profitable trade and secure coastlines.

Through organized dialogue and planning, progress can be made towards fulfilling this vision. The World Economic Forum can play a significant role in facilitating the design and adoption of crucial innovative business practices and regulatory systems. With appropriate attention given to the needs of private industry and public policy, sustainable, profitable and equitable commerce rooted in responsible fishing is achievable.

Signatories

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