

The Sensible Environmentalist

Eating Fish Versus Marine Protection

(NAPSA)—**DEAR DR. MOORE:**

We're told to eat more fish because it's healthy, and yet over-fishing is a huge global problem. Aren't we putting too much pressure on fish stocks?



Dr. Moore

You're right on all counts—which is why, after years of focusing on forest and other types of land use sustainability, the world is putting an increasing emphasis on sustainable oceans and fisheries.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is one of the key players and has worked for years to convince the world that global fish stocks are in trouble. One role of the FAO is to bring countries together to find global solutions that also account for local needs.

At the same time, the Marine Stewardship Council (www.msc.org) works with individual fisheries. Created in 1997 by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and seafood giant Unilever, the Council has developed an environmental standard against which to assess and certify sustainable fisheries—similar to the way various organizations assess and certify sustainably managed forests. For example, certified fisheries are required to monitor fish populations to ensure that stocks aren't being depleted. They also have to minimize the environmental impacts of their fishing technologies. Now fully indepen-

dent, the Council has certified 11 fisheries and allows 220 seafood products to carry its eco-label.

The WWF estimates that a billion people around the world depend on fish from the world's oceans as their primary source of protein—and there are good reasons for the rest of us to eat more. Among other things, species such as salmon and tuna are high in omega-3 fatty acids which are proven to reduce heart disease and heart attacks.

So, how can a sensible environmentalist consume more fish without being part of the problem?

First, we can choose certified seafood products where available. We can avoid species that are over-fished—recognizing that this can be complicated, since populations that are dangerously low in one part of the world may be thriving in another. We can also support aquaculture (farming fish and shellfish), which reduces pressure on wild stocks and the creation of marine protected areas that are off-limits to fishing. The goal is balance, between the need to protect fish populations and marine environments, the health benefits of consuming fish and the economic needs of communities that depend on fishing to survive.

Dr. Patrick Moore has been a leader of the environmental movement for more than 30 years. A co-founder of Greenpeace, he holds a PhD in ecology and a BSc in forest biology. Questions can be sent to Patrick@SensibleEnvironmental.com.