



World first cod fishery receives MSC environmental certificate

10 February, 2006 - THE Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) has announced that the freezer longline Pacific cod fishery in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska has become the first cod fishery in the world to obtain MSC certification as a sustainable and well-managed fishery. Cod products of this fishery will now be entitled to carry the MSC eco-label on retail packaging or restaurant menus. Seattle-based Bering Select Seafoods Company, client for the certification, reports that it will begin deliveries of MSC-certified product later this month, with the first delivery going to UK-based seafood company Young's Bluecrest.

Rupert Howes, the MSC's Chief Executive, comments on the certification: "The dwindling of Atlantic cod stocks has divided scientists and producers for a long time. With all the media coverage highlighting the issue, the public is increasingly concerned. Now, an independent assessment team has certified an alternative source, the Pacific cod freezer longline fishery. This puts consumers' minds at ease as they can easily identify a sustainable source of their favourite fish."

The Pacific cod freezer longline fishery is currently composed of 39 vessels, harvesting a total of approximately 116,000 metric tonnes of Pacific cod off the coast of Alaska in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands during 2005. The fish is marketed primarily in Europe and Japan, with additional customers in the US, Thailand and China. "With several Atlantic cod fisheries under pressure to reduce harvests, we are seeing strong demand and firm prices for longline-caught Pacific cod," says Paul Gilliland, managing

director of Bering Select. "We are dedicated to the principles of the MSC and we are excited to play a part in bringing informed choices in seafood buying to the marketplace. Six vessels have already signed up to participate in the MSC certification program for this fishery, and we believe the current level of demand will result in an additional 10 to 20 freezer longliners producing MSC-certified Pacific cod over the next year. Future growth is possible as consumers weigh in at fish counters in key markets."

Cod's popularity led to the devastating collapse of the Atlantic cod fishery in New England in the 1990s, and today some populations of Atlantic cod remain at historic lows. However, US government data indicate that Pacific cod stocks in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands are abundant.

An independent assessment of this Pacific cod fishery was conducted by an internationally recognised team of experts led by Scientific Certification Systems, Inc. (SCS) of Emeryville, California, which examined the status of the fish stock, the impact fishing has on the marine environment and the effectiveness of the fishery management system. Dr. Chet Chaffee, of SCS, comments on the assessment: "The fishery obtained excellent results, which is consistent with our previous experience in the region for fisheries managed by the North Pacific Council and National Marine Fisheries Service. The fishery stock is maintained at levels that ensure the productivity of Pacific cod and the safety of the ecosystem."

The MSC eco-label offers consumers a quick and easy way to make the best environmental choice when buying



seafood. It empowers consumers to reward responsibly managed fisheries and voice support for healthier oceans and stable fishing communities.

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