

EAZA's Which Fish? Campaign

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pictures: EAZA

Oceans cover approximately 70% of the surface of our planet and provide resources for millions of people. Numerous human activities such as overfishing, destructive fishing methods, marine pollution and climate change are the main threats to the oceans, as that may compromise its ability to continue providing ecosystem services and essential food resources.

Fish and invertebrates are in fact essential for human consumption and to provide income to coastal populations. There is a consensus of the need to conserve and properly manage fish stocks to avoid massive irreversible losses. This campaign, promoted by EAZA (European Association of Zoos and Aquaria) is addressing human interference with the conservation of marine species with commercial interest, focusing on how we work in our institutions and it aims to encourage participants to change their working practices by applying the already shared vision of joining efforts to protect and manage marine biodiversity.

The campaign has three different axes:

A) Human sustainable consumption

Fishery resources should be collected and managed in a sustainable way, in order to guarantee suitable numerical levels over time, respecting the minimum catch sizes, avoiding the catch of young individuals who have not yet been able to reproduce, thus ensuring the maintenance of the species. Overfishing leads to species impoverishment and to the gradual decrease in catches with a growing waste of energy. Compounding the situation of over-exploitation are consolidated food and cultural habits, which do not favor a diversified fishing pressure distributed over different species, focusing the pressure over a limited number of resources, which, even for this reason, could become excessively exploited. Which fish campaign promotes the sustainable Seafood consumption and the dissemination of best practice.

B) Sustainable animal feed

Aside from Human fish consumption the WHICH FISH? Campaign team has also suggested a change of perspective versus those facilities who currently utilize fisheries resources to feed their animals, regardless of being small or large scale. **WHICH FISH?** challenges the aquarium curators by stimulating a reevaluation of the choices of species, quantities and qualities of fish and invertebrates utilized for feeding their animals aiming at increasing the total number of sustainable marine fish and invertebrate individuals/species utilized, within the range of campaign duration and further. The EAAM (European Association for Aquatic Mammals) is included as a campaign partner to extend the reach of this axis.

C) Sustainable acquisition of aquatic species for collection plan

The third topic of the campaign is related to the necessity for zoos and aquaria to guarantee a sustainable acquisition program for fish and invertebrates displayed and maintained, by promoting implementation of sustainable collections and breeding programs. In order to address this issue the WHICH FISH? Campaign Committee has partnered with EUAC (European association of Aquarium Curators), which has developed the EUAC Animal Acquisition Guidelines, a very important and widely shared document that summarizes all the questions an

Aquarium Curator should answer before acquiring new aquatic individuals or species for the zoological collection. **WHICH FISH?** challenges the aquarium curators by stimulating a global programming of individual animal collection that aims at increasing the total number of sustainable marine fish and invertebrate individuals/species in their collection plan.

Why a campaign about sustainable use of fishing resources?

Global fish production peaked at about 171 million tonnes in 2016, with aquaculture representing 47 percent of the total and 53 percent, if non-food uses (including reduction to fishmeal and fish oil) are excluded. Global total capture fisheries production, as derived from the FAO capture database, was 90.9 million tonnes in 2016, a small decrease in comparison to the two previous years. World total marine catch was 81.2 million tonnes in 2015 and 79.3 million tonnes in 2016.

In per capita terms, food fish consumption has grown from 9.0 kg in 1961 to 20.2 kg in 2015, at an average rate of about 1.5 percent per year. Preliminary estimates for 2016 and 2017 point to further growth to about 20.3 and 20.5 kg.

Based on FAO's monitoring of assessed stocks, the fraction of fish stocks that are within biologically sustainable levels has exhibited a decreasing trend, in contrast, the percentage of stocks fished at biologically unsustainable levels increased: actually 31,1% of the evaluated stocks are fished at a biologically unsustainable level, 59,9% are fully fished, only 7% are underfished.

What can you do?

Raise awareness and knowledge in your institution.

ALL VISITORS

- Disseminate campaign information materials to the visitors (the EAZA campaign team and participants provide on whichfish.eu open source information panels, which you can exhibit in your facilities, and an information leaflet).
- Organize public events such as sustainable show cooking, conferences and talks (find ideas and resources on the campaign website).
- Introduce sustainable species in the menu of the restaurants, instead of the more exploited ones.

SCHOOLS/CHILDREN

- Introduce the sustainable sea food topic in your outreach programmes, organize educational laboratories and dedicated events (ideas and resources will be provided).

PUBLIC RELATIONS

- **SOCIAL MEDIA.** Share messages on social media with your community about the campaign.
- **PRESS.** Don't forget good old classic press releases. Whenever an activity takes place, please have your communication department including the EAZA campaign.

CURATORS, BIOLOGIST OR ZOOLOGICAL MANAGERS

- Review your institutional collection plan according to guidelines provided by the campaign team, for a more sustainable supply chain.
- Review the feeding plan of the animals in order to use more sustainable species.

What everybody can do

If you are a fish lover, try to look to the more sustainable species. These are most of the times also healthy and tasty. Just like fruit and vegetables, certain fish species has also a season causing in some months of the year some species are consumable and some not. If everybody contributes and is raise awareness with his or her visitors, we are on the right track to provide a sustainable way of fishing and a sustainable way to keep our aquatic animals

Visit the official campaign website at whichfish.eu to find out more and sign up your institution as an official campaign participant. You do not need to be a member of EAZA, EAAM, or EUAC to join the campaign.



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