

Worldwide Protest Against WWF's Plans to Launch Aquaculture Stewardship Council

Over 70 human rights and environmental groups from around the world have today expressed outrage at the planned launch of the World Wildlife Fund's Aquaculture Stewardship Council.

In a letter sent today to leading members of WWF, campaigners claim that the organisation's plans to certify the industrial production of shrimp and salmon are influenced by the vested interests of the aquaculture industry, and do not reflect or take into account the wishes of local communities and indigenous peoples who live alongside shrimp and salmon farms. They say that WWF continues to reject invitations to meet with representatives of affected communities in six different aquaculture regions across the world.

Campaigners also argue that the planned certification process is inherently flawed in favour of the aquaculture industry. They point to the fact that the certification body run by WWF is part-funded by the food industry¹, and that the individual employed by WWF to run the process, was previously employed as a regional vice-president for a controversial aquaculture multinational, that has been widely accused of labour violations and environmental destruction.²

“WWF needs to explain why they are happy to engage with industry, but have repeatedly rejected calls for meetings from over 70 groups, representing tens of thousands of marginalised people from around the world?” asks Juan Jose Lopez, Coordinator of RedManglar in Latin America.

“How can any process be regarded as legitimate when a large Western Ngo and it's financial backers in the food industry are able to dictate what is best for the livelihoods of people in other countries around the world?” asks Alfredo Quarto, of Mangrove Action Project.

“The proposed certification by WWF promises to legitimise environmentally and socially damaging forms of aquaculture in the name of cheap prawns and salmon. It's high time that WWF stops 'Pandering' to the interests of big business, and instead begins to listen to the voices of real people that rely on the oceans and forests to survive.” says Natasha Ahmad, ASIA secretariat.

Regional Contacts:

Asia: Natasha Ahmad: Asia Solidarity Against Industrial Aquaculture (ASIA), secretariat@asia-solidarity.org 00913322840767

Latin America: Juan Jose Lopez of RedManglar (Latin American Mangrove Network), Colombia redmanglar@redmanglar.org

Africa: Abdoulaye Diamé of the African Mangrove Network, Senegal

1 Last month WWF announced a partnership with SYSCO, the largest food distributor in the US, to assess the sourcing of its farmed fish species, in return for assistance in funding the Aquaculture dialogues http://www.fishupdate.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/12365/WWF_partners_with_SYSCO_on_sustainable_seafood.html _ 17 April 2009

2 The head of WWF's aquaculture dialogue program is Jose Villaon, who previously managed a 470 acre shrimp farm in Mazatlan Mexico, and worked for Marine Harvest in Guayaquil Ecuador as Vice President of Shrimp Farm Production for 11 years.

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Notes to Editor:

The rapid rise in global demand for cheap shrimp and farmed salmon has caused extensive degradation of mangrove wetlands and other coastal ecosystems and subsequent losses in biodiversity. These losses have also destroyed livelihoods among local communities and indigenous peoples in many nations across the global South.

Shrimp: At a time when shrimp is the most popular seafood in the U.S., and growing in popularity in Europe and Japan, most consumers don't realize the extensive problems their appetite for shrimp engenders. 90% of shrimp consumed in the U.S. are imported from countries where mangrove ecosystems have been recently cleared to establish vast stretches of shrimp ponds dug into once productive wetland soils. This causes serious declines in biodiversity and related wild fisheries, shoreline erosion, increased susceptibility to hurricanes and tsunamis, and releases massive quantities of carbon, which had previously been safely stored beneath mangrove roots, thus contributing to climate change. There are also many health issues raised by eating farmed shrimp grown in chemical soups of antibiotics, pesticides and other contaminants. For more information log onto <http://www.mangroveactionproject.org/issues/shrimp-farming/shrimp-farming>.

Salmon: Similar issues pervade the fin-fish aquaculture industries. Salmon farming is one such industry leading to massive escapes of non-native Atlantic salmon into Pacific Ocean waters, while endangering native Pacific salmon and other marine life because of disease and parasite outbreaks, pollution and overuse/misuse of antibiotics potentially causing dangerous pathogens to develop antibiotic resistance. http://www.puresalmon.org/fact_sheets.html

Feed: salmon and shrimp are carnivores, and for every kilo of the product on the supermarket shelf, several kilos of wild caught fish and frequently GMO-sourced soya, are used to feed the farmed salmon and shrimp. The sheer amount of food needed to feed shrimp and salmon on an industrial scale is destroying ecosystems and livelihoods on land and at sea in Latin America, where much of these feedstuffs are sourced from. See: http://www.theecologist.org/pages/ecologist_media.asp?podcast_id=105

Certification: Scientific research carried out in Indonesia to assess the effectiveness of certification schemes on farmed shrimp in the region, found a catalogue of systemic problems associated with certification, and concluded that, "*these systems may never fulfill any of their overarching objectives such as long term sustainability or reduced consumption of non-certified shrimps*"

<http://www.naturskyddsforeningen.se/upload/Foreningsdokument/Rapporter/rap-inter-shrimp-naturland.pdf>

Letter to WWF from 70 International NGO Networks,
Organizations and Individuals
Opposing the Formation of the Aquaculture Stewardship Council

We the undersigned non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and concerned individuals from around the world are deeply troubled by the intentions of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to form the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC). Strong opposition to this latest among many such recent certification initiatives is based upon our years of collective experience in working to counter the negative effects of the industrial aquaculture of shrimp, salmon and other carnivorous marine fin-fish species. We see the ASC as yet another attempt by a Big International NGO to formulate some ill-conceived plan to remedy the problems of unsustainable industrial aquaculture. These kinds of flawed remedies do not involve the local communities and grassroots movements in the process of defining steps to be taken, thereby excluding those peoples most affected by these industries' ongoing assaults on ocean health and coastal integrity.

Current attempts by WWF and other intended certifiers are not supported by local communities and indigenous peoples, the global network of NGOs, academics and citizens who are still demanding a moratorium on further expansion of these socially disruptive and ecologically destructive industries.

Having gained a better understanding of the proposed mechanism for developing global standards for industrial aquaculture, we NGOs and representatives of regional NGO networks and organizations from Asia, Latin America, Africa, Europe and North America must continue to take a strong stance against these various certification schemes. We believe that these attempts at certification are funder and industry driven, and do not allow the voice of the majority of affected stakeholders – local communities and indigenous peoples - to have meaningful input into this so-called "dialogue" and standard-setting process.

The proposed standards that will define the Aquaculture Stewardship Council appear to be largely based upon supporting unsustainable, open throughput systems of aquaculture production, whether for shrimp, salmon or other fin-fish species, and not upon more sustainable closed production approaches, indicating that the proposed ASC's process is aimed in an inappropriate and environmentally dangerous direction.

We demand that WWF halt this initiative to form the ASC and immediately initiate real and meaningful dialogues with affected communities, not just with industry and a few NGOs and academics. There still is a great need for strict social and rights-based standards, not just environmental and technical fixes initiated at the aquaculture farm level. That vital component of the dialogues with the local communities and indigenous peoples is still missing, and their voices are still not heard within those elite circles that are now attempting to form the ASC. We the undersigned now join hands to strongly state our opposition to the ASC process:

- Asia Solidarity Against Industrial Aquaculture (ASIA), Natasha Ahmad, Secretariat, Bangladesh

- Association Amigos da Prainha do Canto Verde, René Scharer ,Switzerland
- Nijera Kori, Khushi Kabir, Bangladesh
- Katrin Aidnell, Bangladesh/Sweden
- International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)
- Red Brasileña de Ecosocialistas, Brazil
- Fórum em Defesa da Zona Costeira do Ceará, Rogério Costa, Brazil
- Instituto BiomaBrasil, Brazil
- Jeovah Meireles - Prof. Dr. del Departamento de Geografia de la Universidad Federal de Ceará (UFC)/Brasil.
- Rede MangueMar Brazil
- Instituto Ambiental Viramundo, Vital Farias, Brazil
- Canadian Wild Salmon Alliance Society, Terry Anderson, Canada
- Centro Ecoceanos, Executive Director Juan Carlos Cardenas
- Centro Salvadoreño de Tecnología Apropiaada (CESTA), Friends of the Earth, El Salvador, Ing. Rafael Vela,
- Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements, Béatrice Gorez
- Elsa Cabrera, Executive Director of Centro de Conservación Cetacea
- First Nations Environmental Network of Canada Steve Lawson & Susanne Hare, Canada
- Fundación Pumalín, Chile
- Proyecto y Parque Pumalín , Hernán Mladinic, Chile
- Fundación Yendegaia, Chile
- Fundación Conservación Patagónica, Chile
- Centro de Conservación Cetácea,Elsa Cabrera, Chile
- Fundación Meliyou, Carlos Cuevas, Chile
- ASPROCIG, Juan Jose Lopez Negrete, Colombia
- RedManglar, Secretariat, Colombia
- FUNDECOL, Muisne - Esmeraldas – Ecuador
- Asociacion De Vecinos Para El Desarrollo Integral De Champerico, Guatemala
- Trópico Verde/ParksWatch Guatemala, Carlos Albacete, Guatemala
- CODDEFFAGOLF, Blanca Estela Herrera, Presidenta, and Jorge Varela Márquez, Goldman Prize, 1999, Honduras
- ARPMDC, Dr. Felix N. Sugirtharaj,, India
- National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF), India
- National Alliance of Peoples Movements(NAPM), India
- World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), Thomas Kocherry, India
- National Alliance of Peoples Movements(NAPM), India.
- Lolong Ulak Karang Padang, Khalid Saifullah, Indonesia
- WALHI, Mukri Friatna, Indonesia
- KIARA (Fisheries Justice Coalition of Indonesia), M.Riza Damanik, Indonesia
- WALHI/FOE Indonesia, Teguh Surya, Indonesia
- KPNNI National Commitee for Fisherfolks Organization, Dedy Ramanta, Indonesia
- COMMIT Center for Ocean Development and Maritime Civilization Studies, M.Karim, Indonesia
- La Ventana,Investigación y Divulgación Científica para el Desarrollo Regional, Mexico.
- RED VENE *Científica para el Desarrollo Regional, A.C., México*
- Red De Organizaciones Y Grupos Ambientalistas De Zihuatanejo . Mexico
- Bios Iguana A.C. Colima, Mexico,

- Marea Azul AC., Marco Antonio Rodriguez Badillo, Mexico
- Niger Delta Project, Patrick Naagbantou, Nigeria.
- Foundation for Agric and Social Transformation (FAST), Ibisime Etela, Nigeria.
- Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development, Nenibarini Zabbey, Nigeria.
- Green Warriors of Norway, V. Kurt Oddekalv, Norway
- African Mangrove Network, Abdoulaye Diamé, Senegal.
- AGAMAR, Natalia Laino, Spain
- Dr. Jose J. Pascual-Fernandez (Director, Instituto Universitario de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales, Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales, Campus de Guajara, Spain
- National Fisheries Solidarity Movement of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka
- Fältbiologerna (Nature and Youth Sweden), Ilektra Avgerinou, Sweden
- Malena Karlsson, Individual, Gudrun Hubendick, Sweden
- The Stockholm Society for Nature Conservation, Gudrun Hubendick, Sweden
- The Swallows India Bangladesh, Ragnar Hallgren & Eva Hägerstrand, Sweden
- Association Amigos da Prainha do Canto Verde, Switzerland
- The JAF Foundation, Dr. Wolfram Heise, Switzerland
- Yadfon Association, Pisit Charmsnoh, Thailand
- WRM International Secretariat, Ricardo Carrere, Uruguay
- Forest Peoples Programme, Maurizio Farhan Ferrari , United Kingdom
- Mangrove Action Project, Alfredo Quarto, USA
- Go Wild Campaign, Anne Mosness, USA
- Foundation for Deep Ecology, USA
- The Conservation Land Trust, USA
- Asociación Ecologista Para La Preservación Ambiental Del Estado Falcon (Aepa Falcón), Addison Fischer, Venezuela
- Foro De Pescadores Falconianos, Venezuela
- Pescadores Artesanales- Venezuela
- Redmanglar Venezolana, Dolores González, Venezuela
- Zolana De Lucha Contra La Desertificacion Y Sequia (Riod), Venezuela

END