



Protecting Ocean Wildlife in Tesco's Seafood Supply Chain

Tesco and Seafood Sustainability

Tesco is an international retailer, with headquarters in the UK. It is the UK's biggest fishmonger, with seafood offerings across the chilled, frozen, canned, and food-to-go categories.

The health of our oceans and fish stocks is a key part of Tesco's sustainability agenda, and it is a leader across the industry, working toward the goal of achieving 100-percent sustainable seafood.

All of Tesco's seafood is responsibly sourced, with certification as part of a wider marine agenda. Tesco works with NGOs and other partners to assess risks and drive improvement in its source fisheries (<https://www.tescopl.com/sustainability/taking-action/environment/marine/>).

Tesco is a member of the Global Tuna Alliance (GTA). The GTA was founded in 2019 with Tesco as a member and part of the steering committee. The GTA is an independent group of retailers and supply-chain companies working to ensure that tuna ultimately meets the highest standards of environmental performance and social responsibility.

In addition, Tesco was pivotal in the creation of the North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy ([NAPA](#)) group, a coalition of buyers advocating for improvements in the herring, whiting, and mackerel fisheries in the Northeast Atlantic.

Tesco supports the Global Ghost Gear Initiative to help address ocean pollution from lost or abandoned fishing gear and Fishing for Litter in Scotland. It also partners with Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) and is a member of the Sustainable Seafood Coalition.

To reduce the environmental footprint of aquaculture and release pressure on marine ecosystems from production of fish feed used in aquaculture, Tesco is promoting alternative sustainable feed ingredients such as algal oil.

Fisheries and Bycatch

Bycatch, the catch of non-target species, is one of the most significant issues affecting the biological sustainability of marine fisheries. In particular, bycatch of endangered, threatened, and protected (ETP) species continues at a global and ecologically significant scale, despite an increase in the number of certified fisheries and improvement projects, and public attention to this issue.

Fisheries bycatch is a primary driver of population decline in many ETP species. These populations are at very low levels and are formally listed as endangered, threatened, or protected by international, national, and/or local jurisdictions.

Sharks and rays, seabirds, marine mammals, and sea turtles, all of which are ecologically important to ocean habitats, are at high risk of capture and harm in commercial fisheries. Many of these species are distributed across large geographic areas and overlap multiple fisheries. Many also have life-history characteristics that make them vulnerable to fishing-related mortality, such as slow growth, long reproductive cycles, and production of small numbers of offspring.

One-third of the world's sharks and rays are threatened with extinction according to International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List criteria.

15 of the 22 species of albatross are threatened with extinction.

Less than 350 North Atlantic right whales remain in the world.

Fisheries bycatch is recognized as the greatest threat to all seven species of sea turtles.

Bycatch Audit of Tesco's Supply Chain

[Sustainable Fisheries Partnership \(SFP\)](#), in conjunction with Birdlife International, and Whale and Dolphin Conservation, conducted a review and assessment of the fisheries [disclosed by Tesco in the Ocean Disclosure Project](#). The three organizations collaborated to develop criteria to identify fisheries that could be considered high-risk for interactions with sharks and rays, seabirds, marine mammals, and sea turtles.

These criteria include:

- The conservation status of the relevant bycatch species, as determined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- Bycatch rate and evidence of impact at a population level, or high likelihood of bycatch, based on gear type and overlap with susceptible species.

- Scale of the specific bycatch problem, e.g., across the world versus limited to one fishery.
- If the fisheries impact species with a very small range.
- If the fisheries include cross-taxa bycatch.
- If Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification has been suspended due to non-compliance with elements of Principle 2 in the MSC Standard.

Key Findings and Recommendations

This audit identified the fisheries in the Tesco supply chain that present the highest bycatch risks to sharks and rays, seabirds, marine mammals, and sea turtles.

As part of the review, SFP consulted with Tesco to identify overlaps with its top-selling seafood items, to determine areas where the most impacts could be made by advancing improvements to reduce ocean wildlife bycatch. The following are the top findings of this analysis.

- Tuna fisheries utilizing longlines and purse seine gears utilizing fish aggregating devices (FADs) pose a significant risk to sharks and rays, seabirds (longline), sea turtles (longline), and marine mammals (purse seine).
- Alaskan salmon set/drift gillnet fisheries pose a significant risk to seabirds.
- Argentine shrimp and Indonesian prawn fisheries could potentially pose a risk to sea turtles.
- Icelandic cod gillnet fisheries pose a significant risk to seabirds and marine mammals.
- Canadian lobster pot and trap fisheries pose a risk to marine mammals.

Tesco commits to working with its suppliers to improve fishery management and implement the recommendations to address the above issues. In response to the audit's findings related to tuna fisheries, Tesco provided the following additional information:

“While Tesco does not allow tuna caught using fish aggregating devices (FADs), there is an understanding of the need to improve the management and use of these devices. As a result, Tesco is working with its supply chain to spot areas of focus and track action in line with its new Seascope approach to sourcing following WWF's tuna checklist.

Similarly, through its Seascope approach to sourcing tuna, Tesco is aiming to roll out 100 percent observer coverage and bycatch mitigation measures across its supply chains.”

In addition, a number of common and important themes emerged from this audit. These were presented to Tesco with recommendations that the company can pursue with its suppliers across various fisheries. Tesco understands that the issues identified in this report signal a need to fully address risks to ETP species across all of its sourcing. These themes include:

- Levels of bycatch monitoring are generally poor. Higher levels of observer coverage are needed.
- There is an urgent need for a significant increase in the levels of bycatch incident reporting, which should be regular, detailed, and standardized. Data on bycatch should be in the public domain and available to all stakeholders.
- Currently, there is minimal effort to continuously improve bycatch reduction. Bycatch prevention and mitigation should aim to adopt, advance, and innovate new and best practices at all times.
- There is a clear need for a systematic examination of alternative gear options in fisheries where there are high bycatch risks, e.g., moving away from gillnet fisheries to cleaner fishing methods.

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