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ALLIANCE

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Ensuring Seafood's Sustainable Supply FAO targeting shrimp bycatch and illegal fishing

Editor's Note: Increasingly, the leading voices of the seafood industry and the conservation community are no longer adversaries but allies, working together to ensure a sustainable supply of seafood and a healthy ocean. Seafood Choices Alliance is proud of the central role its members have played in this effort. As part of our commitment to providing the information and insight needed for continued success, we have revised this newsletter (see Director's Corner, page 2). We hope you like the changes and, as always, welcome your feedback.

Trap-caught Alaska spot prawns (for sale above left at Pike Place Market) entail little to no bycatch. Industrial trawl shrimp fishermen in Nigeria, above (right), are working with turtle excluder devices; bycatch has been cut by as much as 30 to 70 percent in the participating fisheries.

We begin this new issue with a global snapshot focused on recent news from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), charged with global monitoring of fisheries.

Reducing bycatch no shrimpy task. A pioneering project that provides bycatch reduction technologies to trawl and artisanal fishermen in twelve countries is succeeding, reports FAO.

"We are seeing some promising preliminary results. Over 60 percent of what is currently caught in the global shrimp fishery is discarded, making it among the most environmentally damaging in the world," says Monique Barbut, the CEO of the Global Environment Facility, funder of the project.

Unwanted catch of marine life taken by shrimp trawls has been cut by as much as 30 to 70 percent in the participating fisheries. FAO is working with the respective governments to expand the technologies' use in the marketplace.

Reeling in illegal fishing. Under FAO's FishCode Program, fisheries authorities are learning to shut the door on illegal fishing activities—the future of fisheries, says FAO, depends to no small extent on wider implementation of effective port controls to combat what is known as illegal, unreported or unregulated fishing operations (IUU).

As ports deploy better-trained people and share information, IUU fishing operations will be forced to go longer distances looking for ports that will accept them. "We need to hit IUU fishers in the pockets," explains Judith Swan of FAO's Fisheries Department. "As they have less and less access to port services, profits will drop, and the incentive to perpetuate illegal activity starts to disappear."

Challenges ahead for aquaculture. "The State of World Aquaculture 2006" released by FAO in September shows that 43 percent of the fish consumed worldwide is now raised on fish farms, up from one of every three fish two years ago.

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Letter from *The Director*



With a growing staff across Europe and North America, we look forward to joining forces with you to grow this ever-evolving marketplace.

WELCOME TO SEAFOOD CHOICES' NEW AFISHIANADO NEWSLETTER

In response to feedback from members like you, we've given *Afishianado* a brand new look and added new content and features. You'll see expanded coverage of seafood species (pages 3 and 4), business developments and innovations, insights from other members (page 5), and, of course, ideas for drumming up more business while conserving the ocean.

We'll continue to provide the latest news as we always have. But now with more emphasis on sustainable species profiles, attention to the global marketplace and policy issues, and presenting regional efforts and views. *Afishianado* will now be published five times a year. This first issue delves into the Southeast region.

These changes come as we prepare for another exciting season. Our annual **Seafood Summit**—in Jacksonville, Florida, January 28-31—will explore “The Business of Sustainability.” At that time we will also

be announcing the recipients of our **2007 Seafood Champion Awards**, and publishing the second edition of our popular **Sourcing Seafood: A Buyer's Guide to Procuring Ocean-friendly Fish and Shellfish**. And don't forget to take advantage of the expanded networking opportunities on our website—please go to **www.seafoodchoices.org** to update your profile and stay abreast of the latest developments.

With a growing staff across Europe and North America, we look forward to joining forces with you to grow this ever-evolving marketplace.

Regards,

Mike Boots
Director

Guest's Corner



Red snapper is down to 3% of historic abundance in the Gulf.

STILL SEEING RED OVER SNAPPER

With half of all the wetlands in the U.S., coral reefs, and miles of seagrasses, the Gulf of Mexico is legendary for productive fisheries. Commercial and recreational fishing are significant economic engines, generating \$800 million in commercial landings and \$5.6 billion in recreational expenditures.

Most are aware that the Central Gulf of Mexico's fishing infrastructure got hammered last year by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The response to those impacts has been scattered and less strategic than hoped. Initially, leaders of management agencies supported plans to help our fishermen rebuild in a smart, sustainable way.

Before the hurricane season, few shrimpers were making a decent living (see page 5) and the Gulf's shrimp and red snapper (down to 3% of historic abundance in the Gulf) fisheries were overcapitalized. Both the regional and federal fishery managers agreed that the rebuilding plan post-hurricanes should help fishermen out of the industry voluntarily. A buyback could help remaining shrimpers make more money, and help the ecosystems of the Gulf that are impacted by

shrimp trawl bycatch—a significant component of which is juvenile red snapper.

Unfortunately, relief agencies didn't fund those plans, and the Gulf Council recently voted to halt action on rebuilding and bycatch management.

What is needed is more protective annual catch levels. GRN is urging a science-based catch limit for next year's season, which would also allow an industry-supported red snapper individual fishing quota to move forward as planned.

It is clear that absence of federal resources for a strategic fisheries rebuilding is a missed opportunity; combined with current inaction, we're continuing over-exploitation of our depleted ocean resources.

Aaron Viles

Campaign Director, Gulf Restoration Network

The Gulf Restoration Network is a network of environmental, social justice, and citizens' groups and individuals committed to restoring the Gulf of Mexico to an ecologically and biologically sustainable condition. Visit www.healthygulf.org for more information. The views represented here do not necessarily reflect those of the Alliance.



all about

ARCTIC CHAR

Arctic char, a close relative of salmon and trout, is found throughout the polar regions of North America and Europe. For thousands of years Arctic char has been an important food source for native groups in northern regions. In recent years, with advances in aquaculture production, char has become a popular item on the plate elsewhere.

While a small amount of Arctic char is supplied from commercial fisheries in northern Canada, the majority of the supply is produced by aquaculture. Iceland and Canada are the primary producers of farmed Arctic char; a small amount of the species is currently farmed in the U.S. and Norway. Supply of char is limited; just 3000 MT were available in 2000 (compared to nearly 1 million MT of farmed salmon). Farmed char commands a premium price, not just because of its limited supply, but also because of its highly desirable characteristics—it has a high oil content and is a good alternative to fresh salmon.

Farmed Arctic char generally receives good rankings from environmental organizations.

Farmed Arctic char generally receives good rankings from environmental organizations. Like tilapia farmed in the U.S., most Arctic char are raised in recirculating systems (and to a lesser extent, flowthrough systems). Recirculating systems are generally considered to be some of the most environmentally friendly. They consist of concrete or fiberglass tanks in which water constantly flows while wastes are filtered out. Pollution from these types of systems is minimal and there is usually no potential for fish to escape or disease and parasites to be spread from the farm to wild fish.

One environmental issue with farming Arctic char is the dependence on wild fish for feed; char is carnivorous and requires a high protein diet. As with trout and salmon, char is fed high levels of fishmeal and fish oil obtained from wild fisheries like anchovies. Numerous scientists and conservation organizations have called into question the sustainability of feeding wild fish to farmed fish, and the industry is working to develop alternative diet formulations. In the future it is hoped that less wild fish will be used in the diets of farmed carnivores, and feed will incorporate more plant-based proteins.

Like salmon, some populations of Arctic char in the wild migrate from coastal streams to the ocean for part of their lives while other populations spend their entire lives in freshwater. Arctic char are brightly colored fish, often displaying red and silver skin that is covered with cream-colored spots. Whether wild or from farms, char has bright red-orange flesh. In the wild this is due to their diet of shrimp and other crustaceans, while on farms colorants must be added to the feed to obtain the red flesh color.

Farmed Arctic char is available year round. It can be found fresh, either as whole gutted fish or as fillets.

For more information about char and other environmentally sustainable choices—and to locate suppliers—refer to the Alliance's **Sourcing Seafood** buyer's guide, online at www.sourcingseafood.org. ●

Seasonal Scoop



The hook-and-line method of catching haddock avoids the high bycatch associated with trawl fisheries.

Because of these better practices, hook-and-line fishermen in the U.S. are allowed to fish in areas closed to other gears.

Want help choosing seasonal eco-friendly seafood? From delectable stone crab to that versatile favorite, blue mussels, to the highly prized mahimahi, what's on the plate this season proves that sustainable seafood = delicious seafood.

Blue Mussels (farmed)—These summer spawners are best in winter and early spring, when firmest. Because they filter plankton, requiring no extra feed, they get high marks for sustainability. For minimal ecological impact, choose blue mussels grown in suspended systems rather than bottom cultures. Farmed mussels have a distinct advantage over wild: higher meat-to-shell ratios and cleaner shells (less grit).

Alaska Pollock—Alaska pollock mature quickly and therefore are not as vulnerable to fishing pressure. In the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands fishery, the largest whitefish fishery anywhere, pollock are caught with mid-water trawls that have little environmental impact. There is some concern about the impact on Steller sea lions and northern fur seals, however, which rely on pollock for food.

Stone Crab—Florida stone crab season runs from mid-October to mid-May. Stone crabs have amazing regenerative abilities; fishermen remove one claw and then return the crab to the ocean. Adults can grow new claws three to four times in a lifetime. Stone crabs are marketed precooked, usually frozen, because the meat will stick to the shell if frozen raw.

Black Sea Bass—The supply of fresh black sea bass peaks from October through April. Found along the

U.S. Atlantic coast, the species is vulnerable to fishing and was overfished in the 1990s. Improved management restored some balance and black sea bass now gets a green light. Commercial fishermen use mostly trawls and fish pots. Black sea bass is a great substitute for red snapper, which is overfished.

Mahimahi (Hawaii troll)—Mahimahi caught in the Hawaii troll fishery (considered some of the best) results in very little bycatch; only a limited amount is “exported” to the U.S. mainland. Other environmentally responsible choices include the small-boat, hand-line fishery off Ecuador and the Peruvian hand-line fishery. Central and South American fisheries run November-March. The Hawaiian troll fishery runs from September-November and March-May.

Haddock (hook-and-line)—Decades of heavy fishing have resulted in haddock being overfished. Fortunately, regulations designed to curb overfishing have helped haddock populations increase in the U.S. and elsewhere. The hook-and-line method of catching haddock avoids the high bycatch associated with trawl fisheries. Because of these better practices, hook-and-line fishermen in the U.S. are allowed to fish in areas closed to other gears. New England haddock is available October-January and April through mid-July.

These and more than 50 other sustainable choices will be featured in the second edition of our popular **Sourcing Seafood** buyer's guide, to be published in January 2007. www.sourcingseafood.org. ●

What's Hot ... On the Gulf Coast



Daniel Link's Grilled Squid with Housemade Chorizo is a hit at Herbsaint.

While places like New Orleans continue to rebuild since hurricanes Katrina and Rita wreaked havoc more than one year ago, many fisheries across the Gulf Coast have rebounded, even thrived. For example, shrimpers have witnessed some of the most plentiful shrimp supplies in more than a decade (see “Gulf Coast Fisheries” next page).

“Louisiana shrimp is very popular and often requested,” shares Michael Jetty, chef and owner of Maison Lacour in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. “We’ve also been serving a lot of redfish during the summer—broiled with herbs de provence, caramelized fennel, seared grape tomatoes and finished with our homemade pilli-pilli sauce.”

Across the Gulf in Longboat Key, Florida, Tommy Klauber, chef of Pattigeorges Restaurant, serves whatever comes in on the day boat. “When it arrives, we serve it fresh, seared with our three-citrus marmalade made from grapefruit, myers lemon and lime.”

Also taking advantage of summer's citrus flavors, Alliance member John Harris at Lilette Restaurant in New Orleans drizzles citrus and extra virgin olive oil on local lump blue crab meat chilled in a sweet corn broth with avocado

“Blending seasonal flavors like these are cool and refreshing for our customers this time of year,” comments Harris. ●



Member Survey

GULF COAST FISHERIES, BUSINESSES RECOVERING

The 2005 hurricane season was the “tipping point” for a shrimp industry already jeopardized. Pictured above, a shrimp trawler is moored while members of the White Boot Brigade show off their shrimp in New Orleans’ Bywater.

For centuries, Louisiana natives have celebrated a culture that thrived on making the most of any situation, whether transforming basic soup ingredients into a spicy gumbo or romanticizing mysterious swamps and bayous. That’s why it is no surprise that while Louisiana residents are still recovering from hurricanes Katrina and Rita, their spirit remains largely unscathed. Nowhere is this more evident than with the shrimp business.

“While chaos reigned during the weeks and months after the storms, under the water shrimp had the opportunity to rest and regroup,” shares Rob Johnson of Inland Seafoods in Kenner, Louisiana. “That, coupled with fewer commercial boats in commission, actually benefited the shrimp supply in our coastal waters.”

John Harris, also an Alliance member and chef at Lilette Restaurant in New Orleans, agrees, “We opened six weeks after the storms and haven’t had trouble getting high quality, local shrimp.”

Just over a year ago, hurricanes Katrina and Rita pummeled southeastern Louisiana and other portions of the Gulf Coast, grounding or destroying numerous shrimp boats, and wrecking valuable ice machines, processing equipment and fueling stations. The few boats in operation after the storms encountered marine debris crowding waters that once supported more than 40 percent of the nation’s shrimp supply.

Unfortunately, the hurricanes only served as the “tipping point” for a shrimp industry already jeopardized by rising fuel costs and lower prices offered by foreign competition. While plentiful shrimp, fewer commercial vessels and a lack of toxicity in regularly tested waters would appear to bode well for the industry, Gulf Coast shrimp fishermen have been unable to rebound in the current economic climate.

“The high cost of gas, ice and salt resulting from Katrina—coupled with low shrimp prices worldwide—makes it hard to turn a profit,” shares Lance Nacio, shrimper and operator of Anna Marie Seafoods in Dulac, Louisiana. “I’m hoping consumers begin taking more of an interest in where their shrimp is coming from, because it is not all the same.” Nacio, pictured above, is part of “The White Boot Brigade.”

Named after the footwear donned by Louisiana fishermen, The White Boot Brigade consists of several families that catch wild brown shrimp and white shrimp in the brackish waters off of Louisiana’s coast. These families employ catch methods that sustain shrimp populations and respect surrounding habitat, including the use of bycatch reduction devices. Sometimes shrimp are hand-picked. The White Boot Brigade then acts as a “traveling fish market,” visiting local neighborhoods and urban areas as far away as New York City, to tout their products and preserve a multi-generational fishing culture.

“Imported shrimp—which makes up a majority of shrimp consumed in our country—often comes from places with less stringent environmental regulations,” comments Cynthia Sarthou, executive director of the Gulf Restoration Network (see Guest Column, page 2). “As a result, we may unknowingly support practices that destroy wetlands, pollute water and generally disrupt nature’s balance.”

One thing is certain, Alliance members (and their colleagues throughout the region) demonstrate a familiar resourcefulness that makes the most of challenging times. ●

Alliance members featured in this story:

- Inland Seafoods
(Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina and South Carolina)
InlandSeafood.com
- Lilette Restaurant
(New Orleans)
LiletteRestaurant.com
- Gulf Restoration Network
(New Orleans)
HealthyGulf.org

Trends to Watch

HOOKED IN ASIA?

Japan is the second biggest consumer of fish worldwide. This summer, Tokyo shoppers at National Azabu supermarket got their first taste of MSC-labeled seafood: Alaska salmon fillets. And in February, the first Japanese fishery applied for certification under the MSC environmental standard.

A shift towards sustainable choices of seafood in Japan could have wide consequences—the country is definitely a market to watch. ●

Events

NOVEMBER

14–16—Health Ingredients Europe 2006. Frankfurt, Germany. Trade exhibition and seminars highlighting health-related market trends and emerging ingredient technologies. www.hi-events.com.

19–22—Aquaculture Canada. Halifax, Nova Scotia. For more information on the 23rd Annual Meeting of the Aquaculture Association of Canada, visit www.aquacultureassociation.ca/ac06

JANUARY

28–31—Seafood Summit 2007. Jacksonville, Fla. Seafood Choices Alliance's signature conference; register now at www.seafoodsummit.org.

afishianado™

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SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY

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"Aquaculture could cover the gap between supply and demand, but there are also many forces which could pull production in the opposite direction," according to the report. One such factor is the lack of investment capital for producers in the developing world. Others include a shortage of land and freshwater, and concerns about environmental impacts and energy costs. FAO also points to doubts about future supplies of fishmeal and oil, used to feed carnivorous species such as salmon, grouper and sea bream.

More information about these and other FAO projects is available online at www.fao.org.

Seafood constitutes a small portion of the global food supply. The challenge for the global seafood industry is to promote seafood as a healthy choice while continuing to improve the environmental sustainability of both fisheries and aquaculture to meet a growing demand for seafood. ●

Log on to www.seafoodchoices.org

Photo Credits: Turtle excluder devices on Nigerian shrimp trawler (page 1), Steve Eayrs for FAO; red snapper (page 2), Adam Laverty, AboutUtilia.com; fisherman with Arctic char (page 3), B&J Flyfishing Adventures; Arctic char with leeks and red onion (page 3), © inkognito as/Wonderfile; White Boot Brigade Festival (page 5), Sarah Elise Lewis; shrimp trawler (page 5), Wolcott Henry.

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