

## Consumers misled by environmental claims on seafood products

Major retailers including Tesco, Asda, The Co-operative, Lidl, Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury's, and Waitrose have been found to have misleading environmental claims on stocked products such as tinned tuna, haddock, cod, and farmed fish.

A report by the leading environmental law organisation ClientEarth, *Environmental claims on supermarket seafood*, shows that claims such as 'sustainably sourced'; 'protects the marine environment'; and 'responsibly farmed' were misleading or unverified on 32 products out of 100 examined. ClientEarth says 22 of these claims are misleading, based on information provided by the retailers on the source of the products. For the further 10 no evidence has been provided to allay ClientEarth's concerns that they are misleading.

'Dolphin friendly' labels featured on tinned tuna that was caught in areas where there was often no threat to dolphins, masking and failing to mention the harmful effects the tuna fishing method used had on other threatened species such as turtles and sharks.

James Thornton, ClientEarth CEO, said: "It would be shocking to find out that the free-range chicken you bought was actually battery farmed. Discovering the fish you're eating, which is labelled as responsible or environmentally friendly, actually led to the deaths of threatened species also leaves a bad taste in the mouth.

"Consumers need to be able to trust labels but in reality claims such as 'sustainably sourced' or 'responsibly farmed' are often misleading. The purchasing power of consumers is critical to stopping overfishing. In the EU alone 88 per cent of stocks are overfished and retailers know that widespread concern about this leads people to buy one product over another.

"We would like all supermarkets that have the misleading claims on the products we've identified to remove them as soon as possible or to prove them with evidence. If they don't do this, complaints can and will be made to the Office of Fair Trading arguing breaches of consumer protection laws."

Crucially, ClientEarth is calling for better regulation of fish labelling. EU standards must be introduced for environmental claims about fish products in the same way as there is, for example, for the term 'organic'. Many supermarkets are taking measures to ensure that their fish is well caught, and farmed, but apply different criteria in their decision-making, which makes choosing truly sustainable fish products difficult for consumers.

A further recommendation of the report is that the UK Advertising Standards Authority extends its remit to cover packaging and labels as well as published advertisements.

To read the recommendations as well as examples in ClientEarth's report see attached.

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**Notes to editors:**

ClientEarth is an environmental law organisation working in the public interest. Based in Europe and operating globally, we address issues including deforestation, energy efficiency, biodiversity protection, and the transparency and enforcement of environmental law.  
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