

NGO — Retailer Partnership Case Study: Greenpeace and Marks & Spencer

One of the ways that Greenpeace works for change on the oceans is by seeking to shift practices in the retail market place. British retailer Marks and Spencer has long been a leader in this area. M&S started its work on sustainable seafood procurement in 1996, when the company adopted its Policy on Sustainable Sourcing of Fisheries Products, which applies to all the wild and farmed seafood it sells, including fish used as an ingredient. With a clear sustainability mandate and a fisheries scientist heading up the team, M&S had made considerable progress by the time Greenpeace began the research for our sustainable seafood project in 2004.

A key development took place in October 2005 when Greenpeace UK completed Recipe for Disaster, a study of UK supermarkets, ranking them by their seafood policies. Not surprisingly, M&S scored quite well, coming in at the top of the pack.

This was of benefit for both Greenpeace and M&S. M&S finally got public recognition for their great work, and Greenpeace had a strong retailer to hold up as an example of how things should be done. In fact Greenpeace even adapted the company's sustainable seafood tagline — support the best, avoid the worst, help the rest improve!

The period was a watershed for UK retailers. As leading industry commentator Drew Cherry said in Intrafish in March 2006, 'love them or hate them, environmental groups have radically changed your industry... It looks like 2006 will be the year sustainability finally took a firm hold on the seafood industry.' When, eighteen months later, Greenpeace UK followed up with Recipe for Change, M&S again finished at the head of the field. As Greenpeace reported in 2007, M&S undertakes that every seafood product must be obtained from reputable producers, operating within relevant regulations and with respect for the environment. It is this approach that has helped put M&S ahead of the pack and gives the company a market advantage.

Andrew Mallison, Technical Manager at M&S has said 'our customers are aware of environmental issues. When we bring fishermen to our stores to meet customers, one of the most frequent questions our customers ask on these occasions is: "are we overfishing stocks?"'



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Although Greenpeace as an independent campaigning organization does not itself provide corporate endorsements, the ranking of M&S as the most sustainable seafood retailer in the UK has featured prominently in some of the retailer's own advertisements.

As Mallison has said 'We believe our policies on seafood contribute to our continuing to be one of the UK's most trusted retailers.'

M&S has supported our campaign and provided us with a lot of useful information about the seafood industry. In many ways M&S had primed some key suppliers like New England Seafood & Youngs Bluecrest so that they were ready to take on the sustainability challenges we made

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