

## MSC Response to Bloom Report

👤 Marine Stewardship Council 📄 Seafood 🕒 May 12, 2020



### **Conclusions presented in the Plos One paper “Small is beautiful, but large is certified” are wholly untrue, says MSC**

A paper published in Plos One, and the associated communications by the French NGO, Bloom are deeply misleading.

The main accusation, that the MSC has used imagery to present a false picture of our work is wholly untrue. The research is based on 399 photographs, across 8 years, primarily from just one of MSC’s 18 Facebook accounts. We do not believe this analysis to be a relevant or credible indicator for evaluating a science-based certification programme.

Seafood which carries the blue MSC label comes from fisheries which have been independently scrutinised by experts as meeting internationally recognised standards of best practice in sustainable fishing, no matter where it came from.

The MSC works with and promotes sustainability for all types and sizes of fisheries. This is vital if we are to address the global challenge of overfishing.

The percentage of small-scale fisheries achieving MSC certification is currently around 16%. However, this does not reflect the breadth of the MSC's work to support these fisheries. Given their social, economic and environmental importance, we provide small-scale fisheries with funding, training and tools to help them improve their sustainability. It may take many years for most to achieve certification, but we're focused on the long-term.

Bloom implies that "industrial fishing" is always destructive. This gives an over-simplistic image. The sustainability of a fishery is not determined by its size or fishing gear alone. All fishing gear can have negative impacts on marine biodiversity if poorly managed. The important thing is to make sure that whatever the gear and the size of the boat, it is managed and used in such a way as to respect fish stocks and all the surrounding marine species and habitats. These are two of the three pillars of our standard that fisheries must meet to be MSC certified.

The social and economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic underline the importance of balancing the needs of businesses, fishermen and citizens within the limits of what our planet can sustain. The MSC has spent the past 20 years working together with the entire fishing industry, scientists, government and NGOs to strike this balance. Our ultimate objective is for all fishing to be sustainable. This is why we work with fisheries of all sizes: from the smallest to the largest.

The MSC complies with the highest levels of credibility, transparency and best practice in standards setting. This has been demonstrated through our compliance to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation's guidelines for certification and ecolabelling and ISEAL codes for standard setting, assurance and impacts. In 2019, the UK government enquiry into Sustainable Seas found the MSC is the "most rigorous certification in the seafood sector" and a study on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality ranked MSC in the top 10 sustainable food labels in the Netherlands. These reviews take a far more comprehensive review of the MSC's practices than the report presented by Bloom.

### **Additional information:**

- As an international organisation, the MSC has 18 Facebook accounts, and 56 social media accounts in total. These target our audiences in different countries and languages. We also communicate via multiple other platforms such as our website, newsletters and advertising.
- The MSC's communications seeks to represent the diversity of the fishing sector and the organisations that we work with. Within both contexts, there are many more smaller fishing vessels than large ones.
- Small scale fisheries account for roughly 90% of fishers and 50% of the global seafood catch intended for human consumption.
- Small-scale fisheries alone support the livelihoods of more than 80,000 small scale fishers. More information on our work with small scale fisheries is available in the report "Making Waves", published in 2019.
- Details of all fisheries in the MSC programme are publicly available on [fisheries.msc.org](https://fisheries.msc.org). Each is listed with its size and fishing gear clearly identified.
- The MSC supports small-scale and developing world fisheries by providing funding through its Ocean Stewardship Fund and Pathways to Sustainability projects, for which it receives joint funding. The MSC also provides training and tools to allow fisheries to track their progress towards sustainability as part of credible Fisheries Improvement Projects.