

MSC slaps down critical report labeling it a 'sham'

By [Neil Ramsden](#) May 6, 2020 10:15 BST

In a [new report](#), NGO Bloom claims it has uncovered the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) as a "sham", which has certified "mostly...industrial, destructive fisheries".

It, alongside co-authors from the universities of New York (United States) and Dalhousie (Canada), analyzed all MSC-certified fisheries since the origin of the label.

"Results unequivocally reveal the extent of the MSC label fraud", it claimed. "Bloom and co-authors have calculated that industrial, high-impact fisheries represented 83% of MSC-certified catches between 2009 and 2017 but only 32% of the MSC's photographic illustrations, while, in contrast, small-scale, low-impact fisheries represented only 7% of the certified volumes but 47% of the illustrations."

Nicolas Guichoux, chief program officer at the MSC, told *Undercurrent News* Bloom's paper fails to consider the full breadth of the MSC's work and the diversity of the fishing sector.

"The main accusation is that the MSC has used imagery to present a false picture of our work to the world. This is wholly untrue. We do not consider analysis of the photographs used on the MSC's Facebook account to be a relevant or credible indicator for evaluating a science-based certification program."

Working with, and promoting sustainability for, all types and sizes of fisheries is vital in addressing the global challenge of overfishing, he said.

The percentage of small-scale fisheries achieving MSC certification (currently around 16%) does not reflect the breadth of the MSC's work to support these fisheries, he added. "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."

"As anyone working in this sector will understand, the sustainability of a fishery is not determined by its size or fishing gear," he said. "All fishing gear can have negative impacts on marine biodiversity if these are 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 stocks, habitats and all the surrounding marine species. These are two of the three pillars of our standard that fisheries must meet to be MSC certified."

He further noted the MSC complies with "the highest levels of credibility, transparency and best practice in standards-setting", demonstrated through its compliance to the UN FAO's guidelines for certification and ecolabelling, and ISEAL codes for standard-setting.

"In 2019, the UK [government inquiry 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."

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