



MEDIA RELEASE

Put Toothfish on Your Table

Under embargo until 2pm Pacific Standard Time USA (GMT – 8hours) Monday 8 April

Independent review by Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch program* has confirmed a number of toothfish fisheries are now rated as either 'Best Choice' or 'Good Alternative', up from its previous ratings of 'Avoid'. Seafood Watch is the most well-known and trusted source in North America for consumers and businesses seeking information about environmentally responsible seafood choices.

"Assessment of the suite of toothfish fisheries took almost a year," said Dr. Tom Pickerell, Senior Science Manager at Seafood Watch. "In order to be confident in our results, we have a rigorous process that ensures that all the relevant data are analysed and our findings peer reviewed. While some may consider a recommendation to buy toothfish somewhat controversial, we are confident in our analyses and the industry has demonstrated that it is possible to harvest this species in a responsible manner."

Martin Exel, Chair of COLTO, said that "...Collaboration between industry and conservation, working with scientists and managers to address problems, has produced extraordinary results. It's one of the most exciting outcomes in global fisheries – a model of how well fisheries management actions can work."

A major collaborative action to eliminate illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) toothfish fishing, to devise new methods to reduce seabird bycatch, and to ensure sustainable management of toothfish, was started 15 years ago by industry, conservation groups, and national governments.

There has been a 95% decline in IUU catches of Patagonian toothfish since then. There are remnants of IUU fishing for Antarctic toothfish in high seas areas of the Indian Ocean, outside national jurisdictional controls, which are still being addressed. COLTO operators continue as prime deterrents to IUU operations in those remote regions.

In Chile the use of bird mitigation measures called 'cachaloteras' on longline fishing vessels reduced the bycatch of albatross to zero. In New Zealand, development of integrated weighting line virtually eliminated seabird bycatch for auto-line toothfish vessels, globally.

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The positive outcomes from the Monterey Bay Aquarium confirm separate independent reviews of toothfish fisheries, including by national governments, the 25 member-nation resource conservation agency CCAMLR, and by the Marine Stewardship Council.

“Put toothfish on your table” is the message, said Martin. Toothfish are sustainable, healthy and delicious. People should eat toothfish with confidence, particularly where catch documentation and tracking schemes can prove where the toothfish on your plate has come from.

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**see www.seafoodwatch.org for copies of the Toothfish (aka Chilean Seabass) science report.*

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Background

COLTO is a not-for-profit industry organisation working to achieve sustainable management of toothfish fisheries globally. Membership represents over 75% of all legal toothfish catchers in the world, from 12 countries.

Facts, photos, and member details can be found at www.colto.org

Some of the incredible results achieved in the past 15 years of collaboration include:

- Measures to avoid seabird captures are rated world leading for international agencies with a recent documentary titled “*Seabird Smart Fishing – a Collaborative Approach*” produced by Southern Seabird Solutions Trust, highlighting toothfish fisheries www.southernseabirds.org;
- CCAMLR records show near zero by-catches of seabirds in all fisheries www.ccamlr.org ;
- Ecosystem impacts of fisheries are taken into account in the CCAMLR management regimes;
- CCAMLR records demonstrate, and COLTO fact sheets explain, that illegal fishing in all but one area of toothfish fisheries is virtually eliminated, while compliance and surveillance patrols remain vigilant and active to prevent any return of illegal fishers; and
- Four toothfish fisheries (*South Georgia fishery, Ross Sea Fishery, Heard and McDonald Islands fishery and the Macquarie Island fishery*) are certified as well managed and sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council www.msc.org with a further three fisheries under full assessment (*Kerguelen Island fishery, Falkland Islands fishery, and the Argentina fishery*).

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