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Alaska salmon gains MSC re-certification

Ben DiPietro

After a two-year delay, Alaska's salmon fishery was recertified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC).



That means products made with Alaska salmon will continue to be able to use the MSC blue eco-label to help consumers identify sources of sustainable seafood for another five years.

The certification was granted initially for a five-year period that was extended twice. The fishery won MSC certification in 2000. Alaska commercially harvests approximately more than 160 million salmon a year.

The Alaska salmon fishery was the first in the United States to be MSC-certified, and the certification has helped expand Alaska seafood sales, particularly in Europe. There are 360 MSC-labeled Alaska salmon products available in 21 countries, MSC said.

The reassessment by Scientific Certification Services (SCS) involved independent experts reviewing technical information, management policies and stakeholder input, and verified Alaska's commercial fisheries for chinook, sockeye, coho, pink and chum salmon continue to be sustainable and well-managed, the MSC said.

"Alaskans take pride in the successful management of our salmon resources to produce long-term sustained-yield, and it is good to have these accomplishments affirmed by the Marine Stewardship Council," said David Bedford, deputy commissioner for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

"The re-certification process has been long, and at times difficult, however we expect that Alaska's wild and sustainable commercial salmon fisheries will benefit from this endorsement," he said. "We look forward to working with MSC to help improve the process and to enhance the

reputation of Alaska salmon around the world."

Some in Alaska's salmon industry were unhappy with how long it took to be recertified, and with how much it cost, especially since the fishery must provide annual reports that could have streamlined the process.

MSC CEO Rupert Howes acknowledged the criticism and says changes are being made to improve the process.

"Lessons have been learnt from all recent re-certifications and the MSC is committed to implementing process improvements in 2008 to promote a more efficient and time-bound process, meeting the same rigorous sustainability standard," said Howes.

Most importantly, the global demand for independently certified and labeled sustainable seafood is growing, said Howes.

"Alaskan salmon is riding the crest of this wave with more labelled products than any other MSC-certified species and recertification will undoubtedly open up yet more marketing opportunities for this unique fishery," he said.

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