

Federal Environment Ministry advocates sustainable fisheries

Ministry canteen now eco-certified

The Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Environment Ministry, Astrid Klug, received a certificate today indicating the successful eco-certification of the staff canteen at the Federal Environment Ministry. Ms Klug noted: "By introducing to our canteen eco-certification according to the principles established by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) for sustainable fishery, the Federal Environment Ministry is living up to its responsibility and implementing in an exemplary way its own call for sustainable fisheries by increasingly using eco-certified fish products.

Besides climate change, the most damaging impact on marine ecosystems is still imposed by the fishing sector. Seventy five per cent of global fish stocks suffer from over-exploitation or are threatened with over-fishing. The use of non-selective and destructive fishing methods, e.g. bottom trawl nets, has an impact even on species that not fished for commercial purposes. In fact marine life as a whole is affected - not only fish but also marine birds, marine mammals, sharks and rays as well as benthic fauna and flora and their habitats.

Eco-certification of fisheries and fishing products is a suitable contribution on the road towards sustainable fisheries which does not harm ecosystems. Sustainable fishing methods help to safeguard marine biodiversity and contribute to a sustainable use of this natural resource which serves as an important source of protein for billions of people.

The staff-canteen of the Federal Environment Ministry in Bonn is the first in Germany to be able to offer fish dishes featuring the MSC label. "By introducing the eco label the Federal Environment Ministry wants to set an example in the catering trade and demonstrate that it is possible for every individual consumer to influence fishing practices" the State Secretary went on to say. Fisheries featuring the MSC label contribute to securing sufficient fish stocks for the future, keeping marine habitats intact and protecting threatened species. Independent experts verify the compliance of fisheries with the MSC criteria.

The Marine Stewardship Council is an independent non-profit making institution which was founded in 1997 to offer a solution to the global problem of over-fishing. Together with scientists, fishing experts and environmental NGOs the MSC developed an environmental standard for the assessment and labelling of fisheries. Consumers will be able to identify fish products from certified businesses by the blue MSC label. Further information can be found www.msc.org.

In May Germany will host the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Bonn and marine biodiversity will be an item on the agenda. From 19 to 30 May approximately 5000 participants from 190 countries will meet to negotiate measures for the conservation and maintenance of global biodiversity.

