



Shopping for Seahorses

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www.conservationtales.com/seahorses

Seahorses are in decline around the world, and scientists are concerned. One of the factors threatening seahorses is commercial fishing. Much of the seafood we eat is caught in nets like trawls, seines and hoop nets. These nets catch large number of fish and other marine animals, and fishermen bring all of these animals into their boats. Usually the nets catch many species, including some that the fisherman cannot use or sell. Those fish are called “bycatch.” Most of the fish in the bycatch die, and are thrown back into ocean.

Seahorses are just one species in the bycatch. Both scientists and fishermen are looking for ways to reduce the bycatch as one way to protect ocean habitats. In many places, fishermen now use different type of nets that either avoid the bycatch or let more of the bycatch species escape. Another strategy is to raise fish in inland farms using “aquaponics,” a way to grow shrimp, fish and other seafood in large tanks. These fishing methods are all included in what the industry calls “sustainable” fishing practices.

In this activity, you will learn how you and your family can help support sustainable fishing by looking for products at the grocery store that use these sustainable practices.

Link – You can read more at the Marine Stewardship Council (<https://www.msc.org/>) website.

Driving Question: *How much of the seafood in my local grocery store is caught using “sustainable” fishing practices?*

Objectives:

- I can explain what “sustainable fishing” is.
- I can identify products in the local stores that are sustainable.
- I can suggest ways to encourage stores to carry more sustainably caught fish.

Prediction: In this box, write your Prediction:

What seafood products do you think your local stores have that are “sustainable?”

Hypothesis: In this box, write a reason for your prediction:

Why did you choose the products in your prediction?

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The Marine Stewardship Council has begun putting labels on seafood caught using sustainable methods! You can see some examples of these labels at the right. We call these “MSC labels.”



For this activity, you need to go shopping... for MSC labels! No need to buy anything, but take the MSC Data Table with you to the store. Bring a notebook or clipboard and pen or pencil.



Print a copy of the MSC Data Table on the next page. Fill in the date, the store name, and then look for seafood products. You may find them in the seafood department, the frozen food section or canned meats.



Look for seafood products on the shelves at your store that have the MSC logo indicating that the fish are caught using “sustainable” methods. For each product you find, put a tally mark in one of the two columns – “MSC Label” or “No Label.” If there are many cans, boxes or fish from the same brand or product, only count it ONCE!

There are optional columns you can fill in, too! If you’d like compare brand names or types of fish, or if you’d like to examine how prices compare for sustainable fish, those columns will help you collect more data! Talk with your teacher about which optional columns you will fill in!



After you collect your data, share it with the class to see if your store is the same as others in your area. Then write your responses to the “Noticing Patterns” section on page 4.

Data Table: Seafood with or without MSC Labels at the Grocery Store

[illegible]

Noticing Patterns and Making Inferences

- a. Is MSC labeled food more common or less common at your store? Why do you think that is?
 - b. Are certain kinds of fish or seafood more likely to have MSC labels? Which ones? Which species are LESS likely to have MSC labels? Discuss why you think you saw this pattern?
 - c. Were there any brand names that had more MSC labels than others?
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Taking Action

Part of the challenge of helping our environment is knowing what might be causing a problem. But once we understand a problem it is important to think of ways to make a difference.

Discuss the following action plans with your class and consider which ways would make the most difference in your home or community.

- *Talk with your parents about which products to buy or avoid. Include an explanation to your family about why you are making this suggestion!*
- *Write a letter to the manager of your local grocery store asking that more sustainable seafood be available. Explain why this is important to you as a customer, and how their choices impact animals like seahorses.*
- *Are there other actions you and your classmates can think of that might help protect seahorses from fishing nets?*