

Introductory Speech Our Oceans Conference Panel Sustainable Fisheries Panel  
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When it comes to make our global fisheries more sustainable no species is more iconic than tuna, and in particular the bluefin tuna. We are talking about one of the most globalised organisms on the planet and a world heritage in global fisheries. It was the first large scale fishery and production in human mankind with a history that goes back more than two and a half thousand years. Bluefin is not only a biologically impressive machine, travelling many thousands of kilometers each year crossing our oceans, it is also one of the most highly valued fish in a complex global production chain.

The challenge of this century will be how to manage the huge source of healthy protein of wild seafood. If we look at the broader tuna species we have to deal with a fishery of 5 million tons of tuna a year, with a total market value of 42 billion dollar. To keep this fishery productive in a sustainable way we need the participation of more than 100 governments in the five tuna regional fisheries management organisations. These countries define fishing activity and plans for sustainable management, negotiate access rights to tuna fishing grounds and decide who benefits from the exploitation of tuna. Parallel and interrelated to this we see the development of all kind of new, market related governance initiatives, where a range of stakeholders in the value chain from businesses to NGO's and from states to certification bodies create partnerships to improve sustainability.

In this fascinating development of new management configurations, the bluefin tuna is an iconic fish that serves as an example to steer sustainable tuna fisheries, and therefore fisheries in general. When I started to get serious involved into tuna fisheries, the prospects for the Atlantic bluefin where grim. Fisheries biologists seriously warned for a total collapse of the East-Atlantic and Mediterranean stock due to the expansive market demand of sashimi and sushi in Japan. The Med was a chaos of corrupt overfishing, large IUU fisheries, failing statistics and a tuna management organization (ICCAT) which acronym was generally known as International Conspiracy to Kill all Tuna.

But almost a decade later, there is some good news to tell. The East-Atlantic bluefin stock not only survived, but is doing better. ICCAT and the European policy stopped an ongoing decline. Scientific advises where respected. Measures taken to limit the fisheries and guard the reproductive part of the stock became effective. We start to see that management can work.

The bluefin might serve as a turn-around point in sustainable management of fisheries. It can be exemplary for other tuna management organisations, like in the case of the Northern Committee where the Pacific bluefin still is in an alarming state of endangerment. In this enormous challenge to make global wild fisheries sustainable, fight IUU fishing, and create transparent chains of custody that help markets and customers to push for a sustainable demand, it shows that we can make fisheries management possible, even in gloomy scenarios. If we learn of the bluefin, we might safe our global, wild fisheries in a sustainable way.

Thank You

