

Namibian fishery is second in Africa to be certified as sustainable

Issued by [MSC](#)

19 Nov 2020

MSC certification opens the door to more European markets, following strenuous conservation efforts. The [Namibia Hake Trawl and Longline Fishery](#) has become the first fishery in Namibia, and the second in Africa, to meet the globally recognised standard for sustainable fishing set by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), an environmental not for profit.



The certification recognises progress made by the Namibian government and fishing industry in rebuilding hake stocks¹, which in the past were decimated by overfishing by foreign fleets². To be MSC-certified, a fishery must show the fish stock is healthy, that it minimises its impact on the environment and has effective management in place³.

A global surge in consumer interest in sustainably sourced products means demand is outpacing supply. MSC certification will ensure the fishery can continue to export to markets in southern Europe and will help it expand into retail markets in northern Europe. Supermarkets and brands in these markets often prefer the fish and seafood they stock to be MSC-certified.

Fishing is the third largest sector of Namibia's economy, with hake making up the majority of the sector and directly employing more than 10,000 people. The bulk of hake industry jobs go to women, who clean, fillet and pack the fish for export in factories around the ports where the hake is landed. MSC certification is expected to help the sector grow, benefiting the economy, communities and creating more jobs.

Dr A Kawana, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Government of Namibia:

*“ As custodians of our natural resources, it is our responsibility to manage Namibia’s fisheries in a way that ensures the long-term health and biodiversity of the oceans and, at the same time, allows our fishing industry to maximise the value of the resource for the current and future generations of the Namibian people in line with the provisions of article 95(l) of the Namibian constitution. We have worked hard to rebuild hake stocks that were historically overfished. MSC certification of the Namibian Hake is an independent endorsement that our efforts are working, and a signal to retailers, brands and fish lovers around the world that the Namibian Hake is sustainable and it is here to stay.”*⁴

Peter Pahl, chair of the Namibian Hake Fishing Association, said:

“ Demand for sustainable hake is growing, especially in Europe. Having MSC certification will help the Namibian hake industry stay competitive and meet demand in our existing markets, as well as expand into new markets where retailers and brands preferentially stock MSC-certified fish to meet their consumers’ expectations. Now we have certification, we hope to see our numbers grow, benefiting Namibians, communities, the economy and, of course, the oceans. ”

Nomad Foods, which owns the Birdseye, Findus and Iglo brands and has committed to source 100% of its fish and seafood from sustainable sources by the end of 2025, welcomed the certification.

Stefan Descheemaeker, CEO at Nomad Foods, said:

“ As the world’s largest buyer of certified wild-caught white fish, and a proud co-founder of the MSC, we have a key role to play in encouraging fisheries to continuously improve their practices to ensure the health of fish stocks, vulnerable species and ocean habitats. This requires a long-term view and collaboration across the supply chain. With more than 95% of our raw material already externally certified, we are increasing our focus on fish species that make up the remainder of our portfolio, including Namibian hake. We have supported the Namibia Hake Trawl and Longline Fishery on its certification journey for a number of years and expect to be one of the first companies to bring products made from MSC-certified Namibian hake to European consumers. ”

The Namibian Hake Fishery, which operates on a much larger scale than many fisheries in the global south, will add up to 160,000 tonnes of sustainable hake into the supply chain.

Michael Marriott, MSC programme manager: Africa, Middle East and South Asia, said:

“ The Namibian hake fishery’s achievements are a great example of how the MSC programme works in partnership with governments, scientists and the industry to drive change. Around 60% of all seafood is caught in the global south, where it is a vital source of protein. Interest and engagement in our programme has been growing sharply across emerging economies. We want to work with more fisheries and governments in the region and hope that more will be encouraged by the Namibian hake’s success. ”

Overfishing in Africa

More than a third of fish stocks around the world are overfished, yet sustainable fisheries are more productive and resilient to change according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation. The World Bank has estimated⁵ that the amount of fishing in African waters would need to be reduced by over 50% in order to reach an equilibrium that protects both fish stocks and profits.

The Marine Stewardship Council works with fisheries around the world to combat overfishing, including the South African Hake fishery - which became the first fishery in Africa to achieve MSC certification in 2004.

Sustainable hake recipes

Why not try out some of MSC's delicious, certified sustainable hake recipes today – from [traditional Namibian hake *potjie* \(stew\)](#) and [hake fried in *bokkom* butter](#) to [grilled hake with lentil herbs](#) and [hake *viskoekies* \(fish cakes\)](#).

Discover more interesting facts and recipes at this [Foodie's Guide to Sustainable Hake](#).

About the Marine Stewardship Council

The [Marine Stewardship Council \(MSC\)](#) is an international non-profit organisation, which sets a globally recognised, science-based standard for sustainable fishing and seafood traceability. Since its inception over 20 years ago, the MSC has been on a mission to end overfishing and have strived to make seafood sustainable for future generations to enjoy.

The MSC blue fish label on a seafood product means that: it comes from a wild-catch fishery, which has been independently certified to the MSC's science-based standard for environmentally sustainable fishing; it is fully traceable to a sustainable source. It can be found on more than 100 species of seafood in 100 countries.

www.msc.org

1. [The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020](#): on recovery of Namibian hake stocks FAO SOFIA pg 52:

<http://www.fao.org/3/ca9229en/ca9229en.pdf>

2. Before Namibia gained its independence in 1990, hake in Namibian waters was heavily overfished by foreign fleets. The maximum annual reported catch for the region peaked at close to one million tonnes, causing stocks to plummet. Since independence, the Namibian government and industry have worked hard to combat overfishing and rebuild stocks. Stocks are now healthy and are being fished at a sustainable level.

3. The assessment process identified 15 goals for improvements around stock, bycatch and management that the fishery must meet within the next five years, to keep its certification.

4. [Namibian Constitution](#)

5. [The World Bank: Africa Programme for Fisheries](#): "According to [available estimates](#) [...] For Africa, it is estimated that the aggregate fishing effort would need to be reduced by over 50% to reach a profit-maximizing equilibrium, which would allow additional 1.9 million tons of catch per year and an increase in profits from US\$.3 billion in 2012 to US\$10.3 billion annually."

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