



The Rt. Hon. Andrew Lansley MP
Secretary of State for Health
Department of Health
London
SW1A 2NS

20 May 2011

Sustainable seafood and the new Government Buying Standards

Cc: Defra: Roy Norton, Dominic Pattinson, Tom Stafford, Anna Mayne, Georgina Collins

Dear Andrew Lansley MP,

Further to the success of Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's Fish Fight, and the huge public concern demonstrated about sustainable fish, we believe that 'Government Buying Standards' (GBS) for fish represent an ideal opportunity for Whitehall to "put its own house in order" when it comes to the seafood it buys.

It is our understanding that the Home Affairs Cabinet Committee (HACC) has been given responsibility for ratifying the introduction of GBS for food bought by public sector institutions in central government; including the Ministry of Defence and other government departments. We wish to express our concern about the unacceptably weak seafood commitment of the GBS consultation documents circulated by Defra in December 2010. The proposals set out in this document would mean that four out of every ten fish bought by public sector institutions in central government would be excluded from binding sustainability standards. We think this is unacceptable.

Given the worrying status of fish stocks and marine ecosystems globally, and increasing levels of public concern, we believe that GBS must ensure that 100% of seafood bought by central government meets sustainable seafood standards, such as those already adopted for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Anything less than 100% would mean that GBS was promoting lower seafood sustainability standards than those adopted in the catering services of public and private-sector organisations; including the London Metropolitan Police, Transport for London, McDonald's, cats fed on Whiska's cat food, and even the fish served to sea lions at Edinburgh Zoo! They would also not match the seafood standards for London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic catering, on which several of our organisations advised, and to which Defra contributed. All these organisations are committed to using 100%

demonstrably sustainable seafood, including MSC certified fish, and fish from the Marine Conservation Society's 'fish to eat' list.

In a letter dated 15 March 2011, Minister Jim Paice MP stated that he is "positively considering" our requested improvements to the seafood criteria in GBS, but that a final decision was now subject to "cross-Government agreement", which we understand to be the Home Affairs Cabinet Committee. Our respective supporters – numbering hundreds of thousands of concerned citizens – have a keen interest in this issue and are eagerly awaiting the outcome of your decision.

We will continue keenly to follow the development of GBS but if you would like to provide an update or to contact us in the meantime, please contact Alex Jackson, co-ordinator of the Good Food for Our Money Campaign, on 020 7837 1228 or by email on: alex@sustainweb.org.

We support the government's aim to be "the greenest government yet" and hope that the final seafood criteria included in GBS reflects this laudable aim.

Yours sincerely,



Alex Jackson (for correspondence)
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campaign, run by Sustain,
alex@sustainweb.org



Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall
Fish Fight



Juliette Williams
Director
Environmental Justice
Foundation



Tom Pickerell
Director
Shellfish Association of GB



Peter Duncan
Aquaculture and Fisheries
Programme Manager
Marine Conservation Society



Willie MacKenzie
Oceans campaign
Greenpeace UK



Charles Clover
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