



February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Dear colleagues at the Department for Education (DfE) School Food Review,

This is a letter of complaint. In autumn 2012, 450 concerned citizens, helped by Sustainable Fish City ([www.sustainablefishcity.net](http://www.sustainablefishcity.net)) and backed by several leading marine conservation groups, wrote to the DfE asking you to champion mandatory sustainable fish standards for food served in all schools.

Your Department's response, stated: "*The Department believes that schools should be able to make their own decisions about their day to day running. Schools and local authorities are responsible for their school meals service and for procuring the food served. [...] Schools and local authorities can access a range of contracts and frameworks, which include many sustainable fish products. Available products include: multiple species of fish such as oily fish; uncoated fish, fish fingers and prawns. Details of the frameworks are available from Pro5 website: [www.pro5.org](http://www.pro5.org).*"

Sustainable Fish City has since investigated the contracts published on the Pro5 website and found that fish sustainability information is either not available, or not a prerequisite of contract criteria in three of the four contracts. None of the Pro5 fish suppliers have a fully sustainable fish policy, and none of them were able to give adequate assurance of the sustainability or otherwise of their fish – whether white, oily, uncoated, fish fingers, prawns or tuna – all products frequently selected by school caterers. Additionally, in the case of tuna, whilst 'dolphin friendly' tuna was available, this is not a sustainability standard, and is likely to involve fishing methods destructive to other wildlife, unless there is additional certification or evidence to show that it has been caught and managed in a verifiably sustainable way.

As health and marine conservation organisations, we are shocked at the irresponsible misinformation and complacency shown by the Department of Education in the face of this critical sustainability issue – surely out of step with Defra's objectives to conserve precious fish stocks. We ask you to:

- Apologise in writing to concerned citizens who wrote to you in support of sustainable fish standards for school meals, regarding your provision of irresponsible misinformation to those citizens about sustainable fish available through Pro5 contracts, and setting the record straight.
- Require that all contractors that have the privilege of being promoted by Government via the Pro5 website and the Department for Education to adopt a full and verifiable sustainable fish standard for all fish and seafood products, plus verifiable assurance – as a priority – that they have removed all red-list (Marine Conservation 5-rated) fish from their catalogues.
- Champion mandatory sustainable fish standards for food served in all schools, just as the Government has done for its own catering in government departments, for MPs, in Whitehall, Number 10, HM prisons and some parts of the armed forces. See: <http://sd.defra.gov.uk/documents/GBS-guidance-food.pdf>

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience. Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kath Dalmeny", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kath Dalmeny, convenor of the Sustainable Fish City campaign and Policy Director of Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming.

Cc: Michael Gove MP; Owen Paterson MP; Richard Benyon MP; Andrew George MP; David Laws MP; Stephen Twigg MP; Mary Creagh MP; Henry Dimbleby; Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Fish Fight

