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Aldi Stores Limited
Holly Lane
Atherstone
Warwickshire
CV9 2SQ, UK

London, 31 May 2023

Social and environmental responsibility for your canned tuna supply

Dear Sir/Madam,

As long-standing advocates for the protection of the marine environment and the promotion of truly sustainable fishing practices, we are writing to you today to ask you to share and review your purchasing policies and supply chain details for the canned tuna you sell, in order to ensure that you are not implicated in the ongoing overfishing of tuna stocks, especially in the Indian Ocean.

The UK consumes significant quantities of canned tuna. Most of this tuna is skipjack which is frequently caught around drifting fish aggregating devices (FADs) – a type of fishing gear used by purse seine fleets to catch tuna in their millions. Fishing on drifting FADs is harmful regardless of where it occurs. For reasons explained below, it is particularly problematic in the Indian Ocean.

Tuna stocks in the Indian Ocean are some of the worst managed stocks in the world. Both yellowfin and bigeye tuna are overfished, and skipjack has been fished at levels well above scientific advice for the past four years.

Despite this overfishing crisis unfolding in the Indian Ocean, the EU-owned tuna purse seine fishing fleet caught almost 390,000,000 kg of skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye in 2021 – a third of the entire

tropical tuna catch in the Indian Ocean, and an increase of 40% from 2015, when yellowfin tuna was first found to be overfished¹. This has been achieved through increasing the use of drifting FADs.

Drifting FADs are extremely destructive and problematic for a number of reasons:

- Drifting FADs take advantage of the natural tendency of juvenile fish to group together for safety below floating objects, making it easy for the fishing vessels to catch them long before they have had a chance to reproduce. A study by the Global Tuna Alliance found that 97% of yellowfin tuna caught by purse seine vessels around these controversial drifting FADs in the Indian Ocean are juveniles², further impacting the health of this already-overfished stock.
- Other endangered, threatened and protected species also fall victim to drifting FADs, either as bycatch or through entanglement, with a recent study estimating that at least 100,000 silky sharks, which are listed as “vulnerable” on the IUCN Red List, end up as bycatch in the Indian Ocean purse seine industry alone each year³.
- In some regions, the retrieval rate of drifting FADs is less than 10%⁴, leaving tens of thousands of drifting FADs to sink and litter the seabed or wash up on the coastlines of small island nations. The clean-up costs of this debris can be substantial, and there is currently no effective mechanism for obliging the vessel owners and their flag States to shoulder the financial burden of their polluting behaviour.
- In the Indian Ocean, the management of drifting FADs is particularly poor. A new drifting FAD management measure, including a 72-day closure period for drifting FADs, was voted in by a two-thirds majority at the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) meeting in February 2023. Against the will of the majority of IOTC members, the EU has chosen to object to this essential new measure, meaning that its industrial purse seine fleet is exempt from the new drifting FADs regulations, further endangering already-overfished tuna stocks. This objection, which is currently being challenged legally⁵, has been lodged despite similar FAD closure periods being in place in all other tropical tuna regional fisheries management organisations.

Due to the serious issues with this fishing method outlined above, we hereby request the following:

1. That you provide detailed information regarding the species of canned tuna that you sell in the UK (skipjack, yellowfin or bigeye), both branded and own-label, including:
 - a. annual volumes sold for each tropical tuna species and fishing technique (e.g., purse seine on FADs, purse seine on free swimming schools, pole and line etc.);
 - b. the origin of the tuna (e.g., where it was caught and where it was processed etc.).
2. That you provide an explanation of the steps your company has taken or will take to address the many social and environmental impacts associated with tuna caught around drifting FADs, to ensure that the products that you sell (both own-label and branded tuna) are not contributing to the environmental damage caused by drifting FADs.

We ask that you please provide this information by **Friday 23 June 2023**.

¹ Data from the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (2023). Available: <https://iotc.org/data/datasets>

² Global Tuna Alliance (2021). Sustainability of yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) fisheries in the Indian Ocean, with a special focus on juvenile catches. Available: <https://www.globaltunaalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Naunet-Fisheries.2021.V3-new.pdf>

³ I Ziegler (2022). Assessing the impact of drifting FADs on silky shark mortality in the Indian Ocean. Available: <https://iotc.org/documents/WGFAD/03/10>

⁴ L Escalle, B Muller, T Vidal, S Hare, P Hamer & the PNA Office (2021). Report on analyses of the 2016/2021 PNA FAD Tracking Programme. Available: <https://meetings.wcpfc.int/node/12589>

⁵ BLOOM and Blue Marine Foundation launched legal action against the European Commission for its objection to IOTC Resolution 23/02 on drifting FADs. See: <https://www.bloomassociation.org/en/appeal-iotc-objections/>

We hope that we can rely on your support to tackle this important issue and to collaborate with our organisations to shape the future of truly sustainable fisheries.

Please do not hesitate to reach out, should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

BLOOM Association, Blue Marine Foundation and Greenpeace UK.

