

FOR PUBLICATION

April 12, 2007

Dear Sir/Madam,

As companies and organisations committed to healthy oceans, we do all we can to promote, buy and sell seafood from sustainable sources. But we also recognise that a sustainable seafood market depends on responsible fishing practices and good fisheries management. For this, we rely on governments and regulators. We are therefore deeply alarmed at the tragedy about to unfold in the Mediterranean.

In less than a month, the bluefin tuna fishing season in the Mediterranean will begin. In recent years, high-tech fishing fleets have hunted down, often illegally, ever-declining numbers of these ocean giants. Last November, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas set quotas for the 2007 fishing season at levels more than twice that recommended by its own scientists. As a consequence, it seems highly likely that the magnificent bluefin tuna, the fish behind the finest sushi in the world, will disappear from the Mediterranean.

To avoid a disaster comparable in scale to that of the collapse of cod stocks on the Canadian Grand Banks in the 1990s, with catastrophic impacts on employment and incomes, we need our governments to take urgent action. Fisheries management in Europe must take a new path towards sustainability. Throwing a lifeline to bluefin tuna is the starting point.

We call on the European Commission and Member States to set aside half of the quota for bluefin tuna fishing this year, thereby bringing fishing levels in line with scientific advice, and to put in place a sensible management plan to bring bluefin tuna and the fishery back from the brink. Not to do so would be amoral and irresponsible, and an admission that we are incapable of managing a common resource of value to all.

Yours,

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Mrs. Sam Fanshawe, Marine Conservation Society, UK
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