

The Ghent University Sustainable Seafood Project and the role of educational institutions in raising awareness about sustainable seafood

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Here we report on the efforts that were taken by Ghent University towards sustainable seafood purchasing with which we hope to enthuse other universities, colleges, secondary schools and research institutes to follow this example.

In 2012, the ecological sustainability of seafood purchasing at Ghent University was evaluated and goals were set to adopt better buying practices in the future. In a second step, awareness was raised among students and university personnel about the consequences of overfishing for fish stocks and marine habitats. This was done through a series of events concentrated in the first Ghent University Sustainable Seafood Week from 7 to 11 May 2012 (more info on www.ugent.be/duurzamevis). At the end of the Sustainable Seafood Week, the rector of Ghent University signed a charter on sustainable seafood in which Ghent University commits to sourcing all seafood from sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the shortest term possible.

Large educational institutions could potentially play a key role in the sustainable seafood movement because of two reasons. First, they are often large purchasers of seafood and can therefore urge their suppliers to adopt better practices. Second, educational institutions have a great influence on public opinion. By taking up responsibility, universities and colleges may contribute to shifting purchasing decisions towards sustainable choices.