

International NGO Network Opposes WWF's Decision To Form Aquaculture Stewardship Council

Press release

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Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from around the world are deeply concerned about the intentions of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to form the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC). Strong opposition to this latest among many such recent certification initiatives is based upon years of our collective experience in working to counter the negative effects of the shrimp aquaculture industry and to spotlight the major flaws in current certification processes. We see the ASC as yet another attempt by a Big International NGO to formulate some ill-conceived plan to remedy the problems of unsustainable industrial shrimp farming. These kinds of remedies do not involve the local communities and grassroots movements in the process of defining steps to be taken, and therefore exclude those peoples most affected by the industry's ongoing assaults as readily evidenced in such locations as Lampung, Indonesia or Muisne, Ecuador, in Khulna, Bangladesh or Choluteca, Honduras.

Our concerns were delivered in person in both Guayaquil, Ecuador by the Latin American Network, RedManglar last October, and by ASIA, Red Manglar and MAP in Bangkok, Thailand last November during WWF's so-called "Shrimp Aquaculture Dialogue." Our stated concerns still apply, and the attempts by WWF and other intended certifiers of farmed shrimp are not supported by the global network of NGOs, local communities, academics and citizens who are still demanding a moratorium on further expansion of this socially disruptive and ecologically destructive industry.

Whereas, having attended the "Shrimp Dialogue" in Ecuador and Thailand, and having gained a better understanding of the proposed mechanism for developing global standards for industrial shrimp aquaculture, we NGOs and representatives of regional NGO networks and organizations from Asia, Latin America, Africa, Europe and North America must continue to take a strong stance against this and other shrimp certification attempts. We believe that these attempts at certification are funder and industry driven, and do not allow the voice of the majority of affected rightsholders - local communities and indigenous peoples - to have meaningful input into this so-called "dialogue" and standard-setting process.

As well, the proposed standards that will define the Aquaculture Stewardship Council are largely based upon supporting an unsustainable, open throughput system of aquaculture production, and not upon a more sustainable closed production approach, indicating that the proposed ASC's process is aimed in an inappropriate and environmentally dangerous direction.

Despite the overwhelming evidence of its devastating effects on both coastal ecosystems and local peoples, the industry continues to expand into new lands and countries, such as Brazil, Nigeria and Kenya, while leaving behind degraded land and impoverished communities.

We demand that WWF halt this initiative to form the ASC and immediately initiate real and meaningful dialogues with affected communities, not just with industry and a few NGOs and academics. There still is a great need for strict social and rights-based standards, not just environmental and technical fixes at the shrimp farm level. That vital component of the dialogues with the local communities and indigenous peoples is still missing, and their voices are still not heard within those elite circles that are now forming the ASC.

We are attaching [the Lampung Declaration](#) issued by our global network in 2007 which states our further concerns and demands regarding shrimp farming including our most urgent demand for a global moratorium on further expansion of the shrimp aquaculture industry.

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