



10 May 2010

Hon Fred LI Wah-ming
Chairman
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road, Central
Hong Kong

**Legislative Council Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Meeting on 11 May 2010**

**Re: Report of the Committee on Sustainable Fisheries
LC Paper No CB(2)1472/09-10(03)**

Submission from WWF

WWF has experts working towards sustainable fisheries in many countries around the world, and has been actively involved in the issue in Hong Kong for over ten years. We provided detailed comments on the draft Committee on Sustainable Fisheries report released in Sept 2008, and wish to share with the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene of the Legislative Council (Legco) our initial analysis of the final report being presented to them.

The Committee on Sustainable Fisheries (CSF) report has for the first time defined a framework of measures capable of restoring Hong Kong's highly depleted fish stocks, and of achieving sustainable fisheries*. However, some sectors of the Hong Kong fishing fleet will be adversely affected as the fleet fundamentally needs to be reduced in size and power to allow stocks to recover for the benefit of all of Hong Kong, and those affected will need substantial governmental assistance to transition them to alternative livelihoods.

WWF calls on Legco to support the framework presented in the CSF report and to encourage the administration, notably the Food and Health Bureau, and Environment Bureau, to implement the recommendations, and to match the timetable presented. We call on the administration to make the funding required available for the transition to sustainable fisheries, particularly for vessel buy-out, and fishermen currently fishing in marine parks, and requests Legco to support such use of public funds.

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Investing in sustainable fisheries will have a net financial gain. The long-term economic benefits from prohibiting fishing in marine parks, combined with a ban on bottom trawling in Hong Kong waters have been predicted to result in overall benefits to the fishing community of HK\$ 600 million and to society of HK\$ 2.3 billion.¹

Furthermore, recent events in Hong Kong related to the consumption of shark fin and Bluefin tuna show that the public is increasingly aware of, and reacting positively to sustainable seafood issues. The administration and LegCo would do well to ride this growing momentum in seeking support for the changes needed to achieve sustainable fisheries in Hong Kong.

WWF's Additional Recommendations

WWF firmly believes that inadequate attention has been made to the adverse impact on fisheries from marine development projects, including those under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO). Additional attention should be given to the cumulative impacts of multiple developments, and more fisheries field-surveys should be carried out to provide accurate data as to the impact of specific developments.

Marine aquaculture techniques employed in the Fish Culture Zones (FCZs) are still often outdated and self-destructive. In particular, the use of wild-caught fish from local waters as fish-feed for fish raised in cages (estimated at 5% of all locally landed catch in 2002) is wasteful, transmits disease and parasites, and pollutes the waters of the FCZs. The AFCD has long educated culturists to use less-damaging techniques with some success, but will need to regulate against such practices if marine aquaculture is to have a bright future.

The CSF report includes recommendations of the development of recreational fishing. An assumption seems to be made that recreational fishing will not prevent the recovery of fish stocks and the development of sustainable fisheries, but estimates of the numbers of recreational fishers fishing annually are substantial at upwards of 500,000. A scientific study should be carried out to look more rigorously at the potential impacts of recreational fishing on the development of sustainable commercial fisheries, and make recommendations.

WWF's role

WWF's Eco-fish Farming Scheme, launched in 2006 in Deep Bay promotes the adoption of sustainable use and development in pond-fish farming practices. The project has been hugely successful in achieving a triple win situation – creating new business opportunities for fishpond farmers, promoting wildlife conservation and offering healthy, eco-friendly fish for Hong Kong consumers. As such, the Eco-fish Farming Scheme has much to offer in supporting development of the aquaculture industry.

WWF is currently developing a proposal to trial new types of multi-species floating cage aquaculture with input from AFCD. We hope this may ultimately provide a new model for the mariculture industry in Hong Kong with both commercial and environmental benefits over current techniques.

WWF's Seafood Choice Initiative is making significant progress, with many hotels and restaurants partnering with WWF to launch sustainable seafood menus and promotions. WWF will use these links and growing awareness to promote sustainable seafood products from local waters when they become available.

In conclusion

Some 12 years have passed since a major study commissioned by Government concluded that urgent action was needed to restore fisheries in local waters. Numerous consultations have taken place since then, notably by the Committee for Sustainable Fisheries, and consensus is growing for the package of measures outlined in the CSF report. Experience from overseas suggests that attaining full consensus for fisheries reform will be impossible, but the precarious state of local fisheries and the fishing industry dictates that now is the time for action following the recommendations of the CSF report, and filling in of the details, not more rounds of consultation.

* WWF is currently studying the details of the recently released CSF report. Our initial assessment is that while we are not in agreement with all of the measures proposed, the framework should allow the development of fisheries sustainable from an eco-system perspective, providing the measures related to reducing fishing effort are adequately implemented, and additional measures are taken to protect vulnerable species and habitats.

¹ Sumaila, UR, Cheung, WWL, & L Teh. 2007. Rebuilding Hong Kong's marine fishery. An evaluation of management options. Fisheries Centre, University of British Columbia

Yours sincerely,



Dr Andy Cornish,
Director-Conservation,
WWF Hong Kong