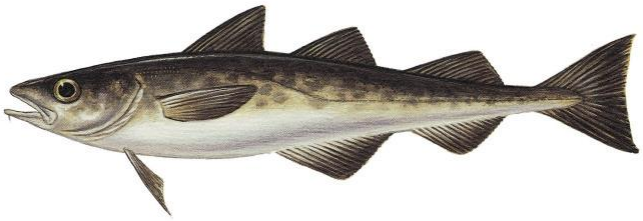
WWF FACTSHEET 2014





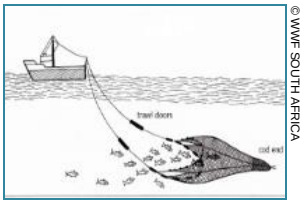
# ALASKA POLLOCK

## Smart Fishing Initiative

| QUICK FACTS | |
|---|---|
| **Commercial names** | Walleye pollock, Pacific pollock and Alaska Pollock, Минтай |
| **Scientific name** | *Theragra chalcogramma* |
| **Physical facts** | Maximum size: 91 cm<br>Maximum weight: approx. 3,9 kg<br>Maximum age: 15 years |
| **Diet** | Juveniles feed primarily on krill, zooplankton and other crustaceans. As they increase in size, older pollock also feed on fish including juvenile pollock. |
| **WWF sustainability rating** | **MSC-certified** USA Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska pollock fisheries<br>**MSC-certified** Russian Sea of Okhotsk Mid-water Trawl Walleye Pollock fishery<br>Japanese Alaska pollock fishery is not rated by WWF<br><br>WWF ratings<br>unsustainable/ second choice / sustainable/ not rated MSC-certified |
| **MSC share 2013** | 48.3 % of the global Alaska pollock catch |
| **Commercial use** | Sold to consumers as fillets or breaded and battered portions, frequently used as main fish ingredient for surimi (e.g. imitation crab). Consumed globally, most notably in the Asia-Pacific region, North America and Europe. |

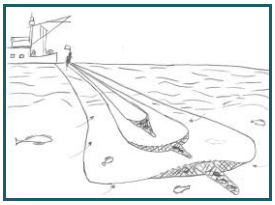
## CATCH METHODS

The majority of the global catch is taken with mid-water and bottom trawls.



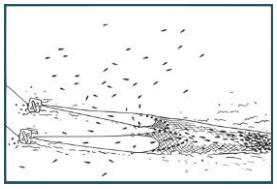


MIDWATER-TRAWL



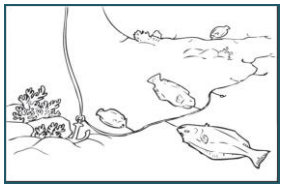


DANISH SEINE





BOTTOM-TRAWL





BOTTOM-LONGLINE

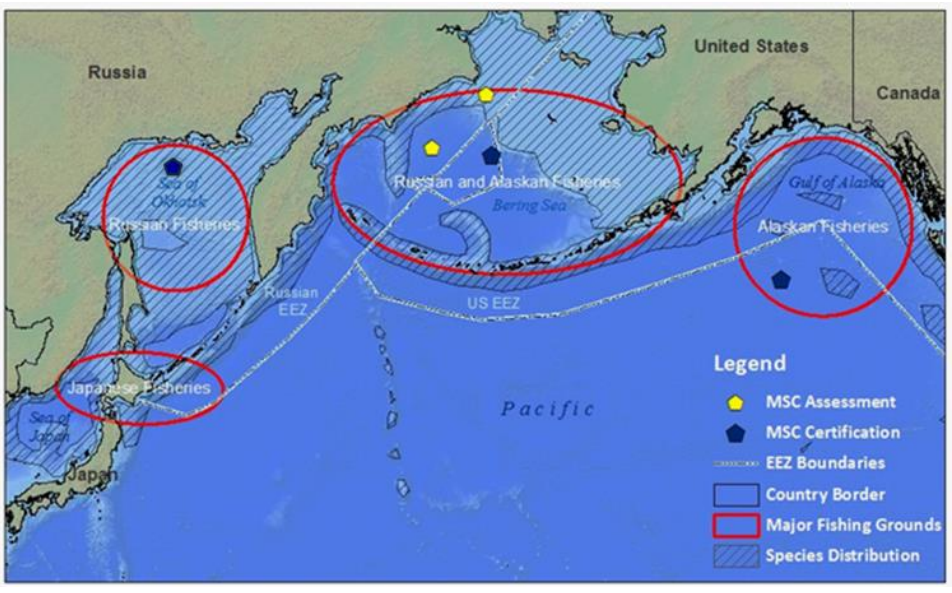
## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

| | | USA | Russia | Japan |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Bycatch & discard** | Bycatch and discard of juvenile pollock | no | yes | uncertain*1 |
| | Bycatch of non-target species bycatch usually is low, but reduction measures are often necessary due to high catch volumes in Pollock fisheries. Bycatch species and rates vary by region: common non-target bycatch species include cod, flounder, salmon, small pelagics, rockfish, squid, skates and sharks. | yes*2 | yes | uncertain |
| **Habitat impact** | Mid-water trawl, Danish seine (only in Russia) and bottom longlines (only in Japan): **possible** impacts to vulnerable seafloor habitats by gear contact with the bottom. | yes | yes | yes |
| | Bottom trawls impact the bottom **significantly** and can reduce habitat diversity and productivity, and alter seafloor habitat. | yes*3 | uncertain | yes |
| **Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) species** | Low levels of marine mammal and seabird bycatch in pollock trawls and potential for indirect impacts on ETP species that feed on Alaska pollock: The IUCN red list rates the Western Steller sea lion as endangered, the northern fur seal as vulnerable and ribbon seals as data deficient, all of which feed extensively on Alaska pollock. | yes | yes | yes |
| **Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing** | Previous incidence of IUU fishing has been documented in Russian waters. Presumably this has decreased in the last ten years due to legislative changes and stricter enforcement. However, uncertainty remains due to current low level of observer coverage in the Russian fisheries. | no | uncertain | uncertain |

*1 current information is insufficient
*2 1100 mt squid bycatch in Bering Sea in July 2014 exceeding the annual TAC for squid. Voluntary measures were put in place by the fishery to avoid areas of high squid bycatch for the remainder of the season.
*3 less than 10% of vessels in the USA Gulf of Alaska pollock fishery use bottom trawl gear.

## GEOGRAPHY

The fisheries are managed under national jurisdiction within each EEZ. Main grounds for the Alaska pollock fisheries are located in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA), Aleutian Islands (AI) and South-Eastern part of the Bering Sea (EBS) - USA; Sea of Okhotsk (SOO) and Western part of the Bering Sea (WBS) – Russia; and the Western North Pacific (WNP), Northern part of the Sea of Japan (SOJ), Southern part of the Sea of Okhotsk and the Nemuro Strait (NS) - Japan.



## FISHERY MANAGEMENT

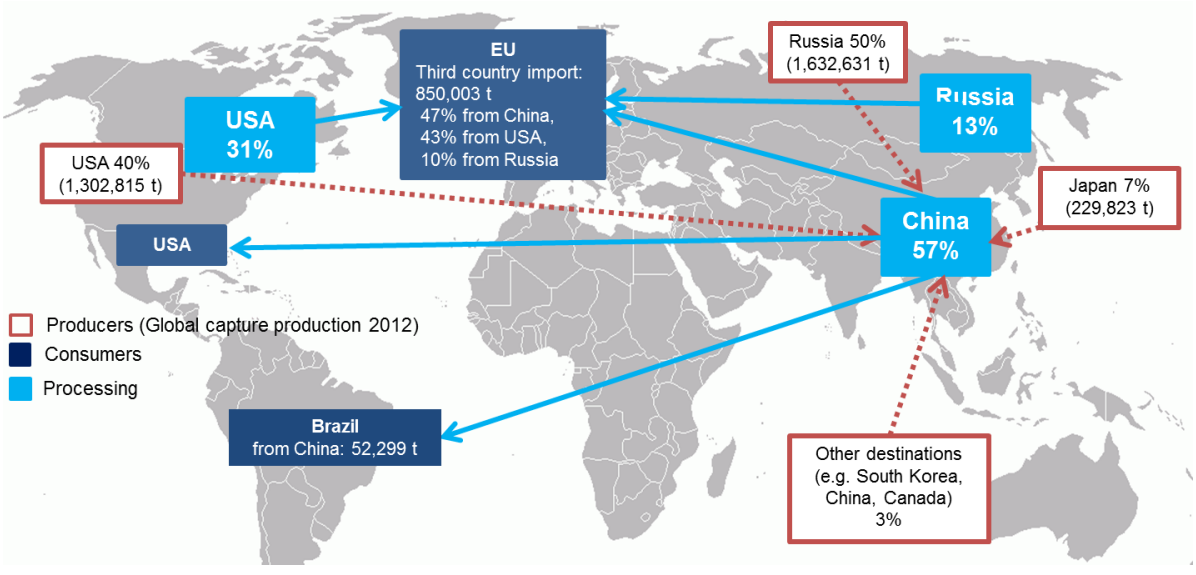
| Management measures | USA | Russia | Japan |
|---|---|---|---|
| A science-based fisheries management plan is in place, which includes well-defined harvest control rules and defines a system for the allocation of fishing rights | yes | yes | partially*4 |
| Total Allowable Catch (TAC) in **2014** (in 1000 metric tons) | total: 1,396<br>(EBS:1,267<br>AI: 19<br>GOA:110) | total: 1,214<br>(SOO: 821<br>WBS: 393) | total: 257<br>(WNP: 171<br>SOJ:13<br>SOO/NS: 73) |
| Fisheries comply with the management plan | yes | uncertain*5 | yes*4 |
| Closed areas are in place to protect juvenile or spawning fish, sensitive habitats or protected species | yes | yes | yes |
| Unsustainable fishing gear is restricted*6 | yes | yes | no |
| Measures to minimize bycatch of non-target species are in place | yes | yes | no |
| Fisheries have an efficient fishery observer and vessel monitoring system to fully control IUU fishing | yes | uncertain*7 | no |
| MSC certification | yes | yes (1 unit)<br>2 units still in assessment*8 | no |

*4 The Japanese fishery management does not include explicit harvest control rules, e.g. no target reference point
*5 Current fishery monitoring information is insufficient for a definitive determination.
*6 WWF considers bottom trawling an unsustainable fishing gear.
*7 Sea of Okhotsk fishery: conditions set during the MSC certification process involve improvements to the fishery observer program, e.g. a higher level of observer coverage to determine catch and bycatch rates.
*8 Uncertain whether certification process of the Bering Sea and Navarinsky units will continue.

## ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF ALASKA POLLOCK (based on 2012 data)

- The second largest fishery in the world (after the Peruvian anchoveta fishery).
- 37% of global whitefish catch, 3.27 million tons annually.
- employs 76,000 people in Russia and the USA (as of 2011).
- 57% of Alaska Pollock is processed in China (as of 2011).

### GLOBAL ALASKA POLLOCK TRADE FLOWS IN 2012



## WWF ACTIONS TO PROTECT ALASKA POLLOCK

**USA:**

- Advocate for measures to reduce salmon bycatch and mitigate impacts on Steller sea lions and their critical habitat.
- Advocate for measures to protect sensitive benthic habitats
- Active stakeholder in the MSC current recertification process for the US pollock fisheries.

**Russia:**

- Propose effective measures to combat IUU fishing including satellite-based vessel monitoring systems (VMS) and independent fishery observers.
- Advocate measures to prevent negative impacts from oil pollution in the Alaska pollock fishing and spawning grounds in the Sea of Okhotsk.
- Active stakeholder in the MSC surveillance process for the newly certified Sea of Okhotsk pollock fishery and the ongoing assessment of the Western Bering Sea and Navarinsky Basin pollock fisheries.

**Japan:**

- Advocate a precautionary and transparent Alaska pollock fisheries management.

## WHAT CAN RETAILERS DO?

- Partner with WWF to introduce improvements in the Alaska pollock fisheries in Russia, Japan and USA.
- Join WWF in efforts to ensure transparent fish trade of Alaska pollock products.
- Source products from MSC certified fisheries and display MSC logo on the products.
- Encourage suppliers from Russia and Japan to obtain MSC certification.

## WHAT CAN GOVERNMENTS DO?

**USA:**

- Implement stronger rules to reduce salmon bycatch, to minimize impacts on endangered species such as Steller sea lion, and protect sensitive benthic habitat.

**Russia:**

- Enforce measures to ensure transparency of the fishery operations, including a comprehensive vessel monitoring system, onboard fishery observers, monitoring and minimization of trawling impacts on marine ecosystems, and availability of scientific data and reports.

**Japan:**

- Comply with scientific recommendations and quotas to achieve healthy stocks and to improve the monitoring system to prevent illegal fishing activities.

For more information or a detailed background paper please contact WWF Whitefish Manager Tatjana Gerling.

## Our Smart Fishing Vision and Goals:

**Vision:** The world's oceans are healthy, well-managed and full of life, providing valuable resources for the welfare of humanity.

**2020 Goals:** The responsible management and trade of four key fishery populations results in recovering and resilient marine ecosystems, improved livelihoods for coastal communities and strengthened food security for the Planet.







**For more information**

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