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### **Sealord Thinks We're Dumb**

It's a pretty harsh statement, however Sealords latest TV ad is all about buying canned yellowfin tuna with the tag line "Smart Choice". Now that's dumb!

Yellowfin tuna are almost extinct in New Zealand waters. Yes that's right ... extinct! This statement may be fuel for debate - and hopefully it is. Scientists, governments, and companies like Sealord talk about the depletion of yellowfin stock in New Zealand in ways that serve their purposes.

Here are some facts to help you decide for yourself:

Figures from the NZSFC catch records show that from 1993 to 1999 an average of 1653 yellowfin tuna a year were landed or tagged. By 2004 it was down to 776 – a 53% decrease. In 2008 half that again, and for the last two years only 20 yellowfin have been reported.

Commercial catch numbers have decreased by 96% in the last eight years, down to three tonnes in 2011 (versus a total catch allowance of 263 tonnes – another conversation to be had here!)

Yellowfin tuna while not yet classified as being "overfished" in the wider Western and Central Pacific Ocean (where 95% of fish are caught), it is on the brink of overfishing. The size of yellowfin stock in the region has halved since 1990 and the most dramatic effects of this are being felt in New Zealand. Sealord are actively marketing their commitment to sustainable fishing however they fail to recognise the issue on their website, that says "the species we use for our products (Skipjack and Yellowfin) have healthy populations in the Western Pacific."

Right now however, Sealord are still adding to the issue of at risk yellowfin tuna stocks worldwide by selling skipjack tuna caught using fish aggregation devices (FADs). Research proves that 15-20% of the catch from purse seiners fishing on FADs is juvenile tunas, including yellowfin and bigeye just a few months old.

The good news is that Sealords have signed a WWF agreement to reduce non-tuna bycatch in their products to 1% by 2015 (although they've left the door open to sell fish caught with FADs if they can). It has taken a lot of hard work by dedicated campaigners to get to this point including NZSFC working with Greenpeace to make change.

It's hard to believe Sealord has a wholehearted approach to sustainable fishing. Companies like Sealord continue to deny that fishing on FADs has serious bycatch problems with tragic effects on our fish stocks.

Buying Sealord tuna is an endorsement of what they do and playing a part in the demise of yellowfin tuna. It's as simple as buying a brand like Pams that is caught sustainably now and telling your friends and family to do the same.

Sealord need to know we're not stupid, we're not blind consumers, but people who care about our oceans and will take action to protect and preserve them hitting them where it hurts - in their pockets.

Help us continue the fight to rebuild stocks by making an annual \$20 contribution to LegaSea on our website [www.legasea.co.nz](http://www.legasea.co.nz), or for more information please email us at [info@legasea.co.nz](mailto:info@legasea.co.nz), like our Facebook page or give us a call on 0800 LEGASEA (534 273).