

# News release

GREENPEACE

## “Sustainable” fish from major consumer brands linked to Arctic destruction

**02 March 2016 (Toronto)** – Fishing fleets that supply major consumer brands are using destructive bottom trawlers in an area known as the ‘Arctic Galapagos’, according to a new Greenpeace investigation.

Researchers used satellite data and field work to track the increasing number of trawlers operating in areas of the Northern Barents Sea in the Norwegian Arctic, an ‘ecologically significant’ area according to scientists that is a high priority for protection. The region, which includes the Svalbard archipelago, is home to vulnerable species including deep water coral reefs, bowhead whales and Greenland sharks.

“Climate change is opening up previously ice-covered areas of the Arctic, leaving them vulnerable to industrial exploitation for the very first time,” said Greenpeace Arctic campaigner Alex Speers-Roesch. “Some corporations see this as a business opportunity, but we think it is imperative to protect this fragile ecosystem before it’s too late. We cannot destroy a marine environment that we are only just beginning to understand.”

The research links these fishing fleets to the suppliers of major European brands such as Birdseye, Findus and Iglo, and popular Canadian frozen fish brand High Liner, sold in major supermarkets across the country. Many of these brands and companies have public commitments to source sustainable seafood, and Greenpeace believes they are well positioned to push for Arctic protection.

“Some of the world’s biggest seafood brands are unwittingly buying cod from this vulnerable area. We’re asking them to get tough with their suppliers to ensure the northern part of the Barents Sea is off limits to giant fishing trawlers,” said Speers-Roesch. “Canadian companies selling fish from this region should be on high alert to ensure their supply chains are not mixed up in threatening fragile Arctic ecosystems.”

Bottom trawling is a highly destructive fishing method, which is already responsible for damaging up to half of Norway's cold water corals reefs. At least 70% of all the Atlantic cod that ends up in supermarkets around the world is from the Barents Sea. Greenpeace says that any company buying cod from the Barents Sea risks having their supply chain tainted with Arctic destruction.

"Bottom trawling is one of the most destructive methods of fishing," said Callum Roberts, a marine conservation biologist who was shown an early copy of the report. "Over the last 200 years it has converted once rich and complex seabed habitats to endless expanses of shifting sands and mud. Areas of the Arctic protected by sea ice represent one of the last pristine refuges from trawling and need urgent protection to prevent them from suffering the same fate."

Greenpeace is calling on fishing companies to stop fishing in the northern Barents Sea and the waters around Svalbard, and for retailers, food brands and processors to no longer use suppliers that engage in destructive fishing in these waters. Greenpeace is also calling on the Norwegian government to protect the sensitive area in the northern Barents Sea and the waters around Svalbard.

"Norway takes great pride in its environmental credentials, but is doing nothing to stop an ecological crime unfolding on its own doorstep," said Frida Bengtsson, an Arctic campaigner with Greenpeace Nordic. "The Norwegian government should put as much effort into protecting this part of the Barents Sea as it invests in protecting rainforests in other countries."

Greenpeace has turned its attention to the fishing industry after running a high profile campaign against oil drilling in the Arctic Ocean. Last year the organization celebrated after Shell abandoned a \$6 billion oil exploration project in the Alaskan Arctic, following a series of mishaps and widespread public opposition.

- 30 -

**For more information:**

Report

[http://www.greenpeace.org/canada/Global/canada/report/2016/03/gp\\_ARC\\_FRONTIERS\\_A4\\_EN  
G.pdf](http://www.greenpeace.org/canada/Global/canada/report/2016/03/gp_ARC_FRONTIERS_A4_EN_G.pdf)

## Media Brief

<http://www.greenpeace.org/canada/Global/canada/pr/2016/03/Media-Briefing-Destructive-fisheries-A-New-Threat-in-The-Arctic.pdf>

Photos from the North Atlantic Seafood Forum Conference where the investigation was handed over to the Norwegian fisheries minister: [http://photo.greenpeace.org/collection/27MZIFJ6XR9\\_X](http://photo.greenpeace.org/collection/27MZIFJ6XR9_X)

Wildlife and Nature photos:

<http://photo.greenpeace.org/collection/27MZIFJ6I9CJP>

### For media interviews:

**In Canada (English):** Alex Speers-Roesch, Arctic Campaigner, Greenpeace Canada, 416-807-4955, [alex.speers.roesch@greenpeace.org](mailto:alex.speers.roesch@greenpeace.org)

**In Canada (French):** Marie Moucary, Conseillère en communication, Greenpeace Canada 438-993-6127, [marie.moucary@greenpeace.org](mailto:marie.moucary@greenpeace.org)

**In Norway (English):** Christina Koll, Communications Coordinator, Greenpeace Nordic, +45 28109021, [ckoll@greenpeace.org](mailto:ckoll@greenpeace.org)

Interview requests for Professor Roberts, please contact:

**Greenpeace International media enquiries:** +31 20 718 2470

[pressdesk.int@greenpeace.org](mailto:pressdesk.int@greenpeace.org)

### Notes to editors

Separately, today Greenpeace is present at a meeting of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) taking place in Gothenburg, Sweden. Representatives from the OSPAR-countries are considering long term protection for the Arctic region: <https://greenpeace.smugmug.com/Artico/OSPARGothenburg/OSPARGOTHEMBURG/>