



Woolworths Food Group

Sector: Retail

Region: Based in Australia, product sold in Australia and New Zealand

[Woolworths](#) is Australia's largest supermarket chain. The claim analysed in this case study is made on the Yellowfin Tuna in Oil can, sold in 2017-2018.

The claim states that "This tuna is caught by pole and line making it more sustainable and dolphin friendly" and underneath there is a Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) logo and an identification number.



Tuna caught by 'pole and line' is generally accepted to be environmentally preferable because it is 'selective', so only the type of fish being 'targeted' is caught. It is also non-impactful to the surrounding environment (no nets dragging along the seafloor, for example) and young/undersized/non target fish can be returned to the water unharmed.

Mindset

Life Cycle Thinking: Woolworths focuses on the raw material extraction phase of the yellowfin tuna.

Hotspots Analysis: The concept of hotspot analysis has not been adopted in the claim development.

Mainstreaming sustainability: Woolworths has formal policies and procedures around the sourcing of tuna for canned tuna products. This policy specifically dictates the sourcing of tuna caught via pole and line. These policies support the 2020 Woolworth's Corporate Responsibility Strategy in which the company commits to "sourcing all of our fish and seafood from independently verified or third party certified sources".

Principle 1: Reliability



The claim is third-party verified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). Woolworths' main supplier and every entity in the supply chain must have MSC chain of custody certification. This information is included in the product specification and assists Woolworths in verifying that the tuna contained in the cans is truly pole and line caught.

The comprehensiveness and rigour of the MSC standard and MSC chain of custody standard strengthen the reliability of the claim. In terms of the written claim, the assessment is considered completed according to the product meeting the MSC principles.

The use of pole and line fishing methods and the obtaining of MSC certification addresses a significant aspect of the product's environmental sustainability and exceeds the regulatory requirements of the production countries and consumption countries.

Principle 3: Clarity



The claim is directly on the package itself; it is clear and unambiguous that the claim only relates to that one product. The use of "This Tuna" means that no other tuna is subject to the claim being made. The visual of the tuna shows it pursuing a single line with a hook on it, which is congruent with the pole and line fishing method and provides a clear, explanatory image for consumers. This image together with the explicatory sentence communicates the boundaries of the claim in a clear and explicit manner.

The main challenge lies in the use of the word "sustainable", which means different things to different people. There might be a segment of consumers who would expect pole and line to be the only method for catching fish, as it is the most widely known definition of 'fishing'.

Principle 2: Relevance



Tuna caught by 'pole and line' is generally accepted to be environmentally preferable because it is 'selective' (only the type of fish being 'targeted' are caught), non-impactful to the surrounding environment (no nets dragging along the seafloor, for example) and young/undersized/non target fish can be returned to the water unharmed. These are significant aspects for the environmental sustainability of the product.



Principle 4: Transparency



A consumer can take the chain of custody code shown on the top of the can (e.g. MSC-C-53285) and search for it on the MSC website to find the name of the supplier and to confirm that the supplier is accredited to process yellowfin tuna.

The developer of the claim and provider of evidence is published, and methods used for generation of the claim are also available, which allow the consumer to explore the product's MSC certification, and how MSC define sustainable seafood. The main challenge is the limited space on pack to inform consumers on how they can learn more about the claim.



This picture shows how the claim is displayed on-pack.

Principle 5: Accessibility



The claim is clearly visible and easy to find in the moment of the purchase. The claim is close to the product and at the required time and location (i.e. on-pack).

The claim is easily found on pack, and the presence of the MSC logo gives assurance for informed consumers. Information is also available via the MSC website, listed on pack.

Principle 6: Three Dimensions of Sustainability



Environmental: The use of pole and line fishing method, which is more sustainable than alternative fishing methods.

The claim addresses mainly the environmental dimension, although Woolworths are currently exploring the incorporation of social issues with the suppliers, in line with the company's approach to [responsible sourcing](#).

Principle 7: Behaviour Change and Longer Term Impact



Part of the company's current corporate strategy is to source more responsibly and raise awareness of sustainably sourced products. However, the main challenges lie in the strategic monitoring of changes in the behaviour of consumers.

There is potential to monitor changes in purchasing behaviour via the Woolworth's loyalty program which collects information on purchases made in store or online. Woolworths has a members-only customer group called "The Bunch" which is a community dedicated to tasting, testing and talking about their products, which could be further used to communicate about sustainability.

Principle 8: Multi-Channel and Innovative Approach



The claim is communicated on-pack via words, images and an MSC eco-label that is recognised by a growing number of Australian consumers. Also, social media platforms are places where customers regularly engage with the company.

There is a lot of potential to further communicate the claim using fun and lighthearted consumer engagement.



Principle 9: Collaboration

This claim was developed in collaboration with the MSC.



Joint communication channels with partners are employed in order to best communicate the sustainability attributes of the product through social media. For instance, Woolworths has partnered with [WWF Australia](#) to further improve sustainable fisheries and seafood sourcing.



WWF-Australia
27 November 2018

We're very excited to announce our sustainable seafood partnership with Woolworths!

WWF-Australia will assess Woolworths' Own Brand of seafood, making it easier for customers to choose the sustainable seafood option. Read more here: <https://wwfau.org/2Rfgm7f>



Example of a post published by WWF-Australia on Facebook.

Principle 10: Comparability

This principle states that product comparisons should be used only where it really helps the consumer to make sustainable choices. In this claim, Woolworths opted for not addressing this aspect.

