



Fishing for a future



Harriet and Primo Humphreys with their daughter Lauren at home in Mamre, a fishing community near Cape Town. Primo is a quality assurance controller aboard the *Harvest Lindiwe*, a hake trawler. The South African Cape Hake fishery supports communities within a 60 kilometre radius of the *Lindiwe's* home port of Saldanha.

How certification protects fish stocks and sustains fishing communities

Primo Humphreys has been a fisherman for 22 years. During that time he has come to know and love the rich waters off the Cape coast of South Africa. Primo went to sea at the age of 17, following his fisherman father – and hopes to beat his record of 27 years in the trade.

Primo's wife, Harriet, and four daughters are dependent on his income. They live in Mamre, half way between Cape Town and the west coast port of Saldanha, home base of the *Harvest Lindiwe* – a hake trawler owned by Sea Harvest Corporation.

While Primo wouldn't want to swap life at sea for anything, he says jobs on land are scarce and it would be difficult to find other work. As well as Saldanha, fishing largely sustains the communities of

Mamre, Darling, Hopefield and Vredenburg – all within a 60km radius of the harbour. South African fisheries (based mainly in the Western Cape) support 27,850 jobs in fishing and processing. Of these, about 10,000 are involved with hake, according to official figures.

Primo says it is an industry that offers good career opportunities. Since he started working for Sea Harvest 18 years ago, he has done courses in food technology and was recently promoted to quality controller in the on-board factory. This is where several hundred tonnes of hake are filleted, frozen and packaged on every trip, ready for sale to companies, such as Unilever.

The *Harvest Lindiwe* is one of many ships owned by different companies that have

permission to trawl in the South African Cape Hake fishery. A fishery is a designated area controlled by the government in which companies are licensed to fish.

Primo and his fellow crew members are concerned about the sustainability of fishing stocks. "No fish, no income," they say. Currently the catches are good. They trawl between 300 and 700 metres below the surface to target hake, which characteristically inhabits these deep sea levels. The normal catch rate per trawl is about nine tonnes, preferably achieved within a period of two hours to prevent bruising and ensure best quality and freshness.

Primo explains that in winter they fish in the cold waters off the west coast and in summer off the east coast.

This is partly dictated by the weather, but it also gives the fish time to breed and grow.

"I think we fish in a good way. We use large-mesh nets so we don't catch the young fish and there's only a very small percentage of by-catch (unwanted species).

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"When companies buy fish, I think they should support standards on fish size and the equipment used so that stocks are protected," he says.

Unknown to him, that was Unilever's intention in 1996 when it started discussions with conservation group WWF on how to assure long-term sustainability of global fish stocks and the integrity of the marine ecosystem. As one of the world's largest whitefish buyers, Unilever recognised the need to take the initiative and work with others to make fishing more sustainable and, of course, to secure its fish supplies for the future.

The partnership with the WWF led to the formation of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). The organisation runs an independent certification programme. It has developed a Standard for sustainable fisheries and accredits independent certifiers, who assess fisheries against this Standard.



Unilever is one of the world's largest buyers of whitefish, used in its European frozen fish business. Fish is a valuable source of nutrition and the company's frozen fish brands – *Iglo*, *Birds Eye* and *Findus* (Italy) – help Unilever fulfil its mission to add vitality to life. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) label (bottom right) on fish products confirms that the fish have been caught in sustainably managed fisheries.

The principles and criteria that make up the Standard are based on the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. They were agreed after extensive engagement with scientists, fisheries experts, environmental organisations and those with strong interests in preserving fish stocks. Fisheries that meet the Standard may use the MSC logo on their products. Companies such as Unilever who buy fish from certified suppliers may use the logo on their retail packs.

"Certification completes the link from fishermen to consumers, allowing us to include on-pack information – in the form of a well-



A large mesh size allows small fish to escape the trawl.

recognised, reputable logo – that allows consumers to demonstrate to suppliers that sustainable fishing counts," says Unilever chairman Antony Burgmans.

The South African Cape Hake fishery gained certification in April 2004. Denis Handley, Sea Harvest's customer services director, says the Cape Hake fishery was already well managed and only small adjustments had to be made to achieve certification.

It was not always so. In the 1970s, there was what Handley calls "an international free-for-all in our waters", yielding an annual harvest well in excess of 300,000 tonnes. This caused a sharp decline in hake stocks.

The South African government, with industry support, took action and set up a 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone in which no one could fish without the relevant authorisation. It also insisted on a larger mesh size for nets. Since then the fishery has been controlled by means of allocating quotas to companies within a conservative Total Allowable Catch (TAC), limitations on the number of vessels and certain closed areas that are off limits.

Yearly quotas have remained stable, or increased, between 1977 and 2001 because stock levels have been healthy as a direct result of good fisheries management. Since 2002 the TAC has been reduced slightly (by 1.7%) in response to the latest scientific research and to ensure sustainability.

Handley says it is in the interest of all the companies with hake fishing quotas to ensure that stocks are sustainable, to minimise by-catch and to ensure the environment is protected. "It makes good business sense."

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Being certified means that additional markets open up worldwide. "We'll see the benefit in the long-term," he says.

At the fishery's request, the certification process began in August 2002 with a pre-assessment by London-based certifying agency Moody Marine. Its director, Dr Andrew Hough, confirms

that the Cape Hake fishery was well managed and did not have to do anything dramatically different to become eligible for certification.

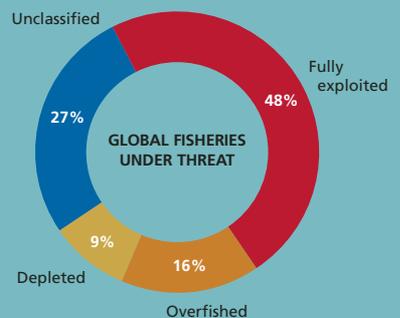
"There were a number of areas in which the performance of the fishery was slightly below the required standard and these were identified as 'Conditions of Certification'. The fishery was allocated timescales to meet the conditions and is in the process of doing so," says Hough.

The fishery was awarded a certificate valid for five years. A "surveillance audit" is carried out every year to ensure that the conditions of certification are being met. The South African Deep Sea Trawl Industry Association monitors compliance with the Standard.

For *Primo*, *Harvest Lindiwe's* guardian of quality – just as for the entire crew of 75 – sustainable fishing means so much more than the prized MSC label on their product. For them, their families and their communities, sustainability is their future.



South African hake *Merluccius capensis*



Global fisheries under threat
Fish stocks worldwide are in serious decline: 48% are fully exploited, 16% overfished, and 9% depleted, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).



Cape gannets escort the hake trawler *Harvest Lindiwe* as it heads back to its home port of Saldanha, near Cape Town, South Africa.

Unilever believes that one of the best and most sustainable ways it can help to address global social and environmental concerns is through the very business of doing business in a socially aware and responsible manner.

This is one in a series of occasional articles called **Global Challenges – Local Actions** that looks at how Unilever companies are tackling global social and environmental concerns by working in partnership with local, national and international agencies, governments, business organisations and NGOs.

If you would like to know more about Unilever's social and environmental activities, please visit www.unilever.com/ourvalues/environmentandsociety. There you will find copies of our latest social and environmental reports and copies of previous articles in this series. Subjects of other articles include:

Global Challenges – Local Actions

- Micronutrient deficiency in Africa
- River pollution in Indonesia
- Diarrhoeal diseases in Asia
- Climate change/refrigeration in Europe
- Rural micro-entrepreneurs in India

We would like to hear from you. If you have any questions about this publication or any other aspect of Unilever's environmental and social policies, please contact: csrcomment@unilever.com

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Working in partnership with WWF

In 1996, Unilever started to work with the conservation organisation WWF to establish the now independent certification organisation – the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). Unilever and WWF had different motives but shared a common purpose: the need to ensure the long-term sustainability of global fish stocks and the integrity of the marine ecosystem.

The two partners each brought wide-ranging skills, knowledge and networks to support the formation of the MSC. WWF had already pioneered a similar approach with the Forest Stewardship Council.

Although the MSC now operates independently from the founding partners, both Unilever and WWF clearly have a large stake in the successful implementation of the certification programme among fisheries around the world.

More about the MSC: www.msc.org



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