

## Seafood Industry Lobbying Threatens Policies to Protect Oceans

Policies on marine protected areas, restrictions on bottom trawling and aquaculture regulation face the most opposition

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- Analysis of the 30 largest companies in the global seafood industry reveals that only one of the companies supports science-aligned biodiversity policy <sup>[1]</sup>, with many companies actively opposing key areas of legislation.
- The report reveals clear contradictions between the generally supportive public messaging from the industry on biodiversity and the largely oppositional advocacy behind the scenes.
- Overall, North American seafood companies are found to be more oppositional to biodiversity policy than those in the EU and Asia, with **Pacific Seafood** (US) and **Cooke** (Canada) showing the most oppositional advocacy.
- The three most obstructive seafood industry associations identified in the report are **West Coast Seafood Processors Association** (US), the **National Fisheries Institute** (US) and **Europêche** (EU).

*New InfluenceMap analysis* of the biodiversity policy engagement of the 30 largest seafood companies, including **Cargill** and **Mitsubishi Corporation**, and the 8 most influential representative industry associations in the sector reveals how major players are significantly prolonging damage to ocean ecosystems. The research finds that time and time again these actors have advocated against policies that would address the myriad biodiversity challenges faced by our oceans, engaging particularly over the last five years to fight against marine protected areas in the US, oppose restrictions on bottom trawling in the EU, and weaken aquaculture regulations in Norway and Canada.

The report finds that of the 30 companies assessed, only one company, **Bolton Group** (Italy), demonstrates policy engagement that supports science-aligned biodiversity policy that would halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. 13 companies have advocated in a way that is partially aligned with this goal, and nine have engagement that is misaligned [2], meaning that their advocacy is either directly, or indirectly via actively engaged industry associations, weakening or delaying the implementation of policy that would tackle biodiversity loss.

The report highlights clear contradictions between the generally supportive public messaging on action to tackle biodiversity loss that we have seen for many years from the sector and the largely oppositional engagement InfluenceMap has tracked behind the scenes on specific policies — through direct meetings with policymakers and in responses to policy consultations. This high level of engagement is seen across policies impacting several drivers of biodiversity loss. These include regulations on aquaculture aimed at reducing pollution from facilities, managing the risks of invasive species and disease transmission, as well as policies targeting deforestation and overexploitation, which affect the availability of fish feed. Examples of this are particularly egregious for some of the most engaged companies, including **Cargill**, **Mowi**, and **Mitsubishi Corporation** - for example:

- **Mitsubishi Corporation (Japan)** recognizes in its Environmental Charter, the “critical importance of natural capital, including biodiversity” and “is committed to maintaining, protecting, and restoring it” but has advocated against regulations to address the impacts of aquaculture (fish farming). The company scores a D- under InfluenceMap’s assessment, indicating that overall, its advocacy is oppositional to science aligned biodiversity policy.
- **Mowi (Norway)** states in its 2023 annual report that “to reverse the rapid decline in biodiversity and restore natural ecosystems there is an urgent need to transform and change the way we use and manage nature today,” however it has also engaged heavily against fish farm regulations. The company scores a C- in InfluenceMap’s assessment, indicating mixed support for science-aligned biodiversity policy.
- **Cargill (US)** has stated that it is “actively shaping a future where critical ecosystems will be protected for generations to come; however, the company advocated to enable offshore aquaculture in US federal waters without clear environmental safeguards to prevent release of non-native species and pollution. The company scores a D in InfluenceMap’s assessment, indicating that overall, it advocates obstructively against biodiversity policy globally.

This advocacy threatens critical progress on national and regional biodiversity policy that would ensure timely meetings of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework’s 2030 targets - established at Biodiversity COP15 as a historical framework for reaching “the global vision of a world living in harmony with nature by 2050”.

Industry associations also appear to be actively involved in lobbying on biodiversity policy, claiming to reflect the views of the wider industry in their representations to policymakers. Analysis, of eight associations across five regions, shows a split between two groups that advocate positively, and the remaining associations that advocate oppositionally on a wide range of policy areas. The **North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group** and **SeaBOS** are the two most positive and have engaged particularly vocally against overfishing. No company assessed has transparently reported on how the advocacy of their industry associations is supporting (or contradicting) the goal of protecting ocean biodiversity.

The three most active and oppositional industry associations identified by the report are the **West Coast Seafood Processors Association (US)**, the **National Fisheries Institute (US)** and **Europêche (EU)**.

- **Europêche has opposed marine protected areas, the protection of endangered species and restrictions on bottom trawling.** For example, in a meeting with the director general of DG MARE the association described the EU's "30x30" goal under the Global Biodiversity Framework as an "unrealistic and very harmful objective". In a consultation response to the EU's proposed phase out of bottom trawling, it stated that "Bottom trawling is the only viable way to catch many key species".
- **West Coast Seafood Processors Association has engaged against the protection for endangered species, restrictions on bottom trawling, updated fishing quotas that would account for environmental factors, and marine protected areas.** For example, evidence in the report reveals the association advocated to weaken the proposed critical habitat designation of the humpback whale and opposed legislation that would restrict areas where bottom trawling is allowed.
- **National Fisheries Institute has opposed marine protected areas, restrictions on bottom trawling and regulation to curb illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing as well as advocating to weaken fishing quotas.** For example, the association opposed legislation that would prevent pollution from fish farms, opposed the "30x30" target and engaged against legislation that would restrict areas where bottom trawling is allowed.

**Cameron Walsh, Biodiversity Analyst at InfluenceMap said:**

*"Negative advocacy from the seafood industry is hindering regulatory progress to address the decline of biodiversity in marine habitats, which continues at ever faster rates. Ironically, a catastrophic decline in fisheries, which scientists say could occur as early as 2050 without drastic regulatory change, would threaten the seafood industry itself most of all - leaving them unable to meet global demand and threatening the livelihoods of millions. Regulators and governments need to listen to the science above all if we are to safeguard fish stocks and marine biodiversity for future generations."*

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For press inquiries, please contact: Kitty Hatchley, Media Manager, InfluenceMap // Email: [kitty.hatchley@influencemap.org](mailto:kitty.hatchley@influencemap.org) // T: +44 7522953393

Notes to editors:

[1] Science-Aligned Biodiversity Policy is defined as the policy pathways highlighted by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) to deliver the [Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's](#) 4 overarching goals by 2050, addressing the key drivers of biodiversity loss and advancing the nature agenda. The LobbyMap methodology assesses the extent to which corporate entities support, or oppose, science-aligned biodiversity policy.

[2] The remaining seven companies have limited transparent direct and indirect engagement, and therefore InfluenceMap could not give them a score.

## About InfluenceMap

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