

**Biodiversity and Conservation**

**(BC06)**

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| **Fact Sheet BC06: SEAFOOD CONSUMPTION AND SOUVENIR PURCHASING** | |
| **Overview** | |
| *Objective* | The over-harvesting of marine resources for seafood or as ornamental souvenirs poses a serious threat to the health of near-shore and coral environments. There is great potential for short-term monetary gain through the sale of popular seafood such as fish or lobsters, as well as ornamental souvenirs, including corals, turtle shells and other reef-dwelling organisms. As a result of consumer demand, many species are now harvested from coral reefs and other marine habitats in an unsustainable manner. Removal of key components of an ecosystem leads to cascading changes that are often not visible until serious environmental degradation begins to occur. Compounded by other existing environmental problems, over-con-sumption can negatively impact the health and marketability of the same natural areas that attract and support tourists in the first place.  Tourists are often unaware that a seemingly harmless purchase of a seafood dish or marine ornamental souvenir can have serious negative consequences for the environment. Tour opera-tors and marine recreation providers have a unique opportunity to influence the choices tourists make by practicing and promoting low-im pact, non-consumptive activities. Additionally, opera-tors can provide information to tourists on where they acquire seafood and what types of local species – whether for sale as seafood or souvenirs – are threatened, endangered or otherwise protected by law and thus should be avoided. |
| *Action* | * EDUCATE TOURISTS TO BE INFORMED CONSUMERS. Provide information to clients about the sensitive nature of coral reef ecosystems, including which species in a given region should not be consumed as seafood or purchased as souvenirs because they are rare, threatened or endangered. * SUPPORT ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES PRACTICES. If you serve seafood cuisine, do not choose fish that are threatened or endangered. Instead, support suppliers that harvest non-threatened or endangered fish and other species in an ecologically sustainable manner. Provide tourists with this information, in order to promote sustainable fisheries. * AVOID SELLING OR PURCHASING MARINE ORNAMENTAL SOUVENIRS. Inform tourists how they can help prevent the removal of key components of marine ecosystems for short-term gain by avoiding the purchase of marine ornamental souvenirs. |
| *Key Challenges* | * Convince the tourists * Find alternatives for souvenirs * Use alternatives to threatened species to be served in the restaurants |
| *Regulatory Aspects* | * Law 4 for 1994 of environment * Law 102 for 1983 for protected areas |
| **Process** | |
| *Complexity* | Moderate |
| *Equipment & Material* | brochures, leaflets, signs, videos and awareness materials |
| *Human Resources* | Hotel trained staff |
| **Considerations** | |
| *Disadvantages* | None |
| **Impact** | |
| *Environmental* | * LOSS OF KEY ECOSYSTEM SPECIES. Over-harvesting of particular species that play a vital role in the ecosystem can lead to numerous environmental changes. For example, when too many carnivorous fish such as grouper and sharks are harvested, it triggers the survival of sick, deformed and unhealthy individuals that will eventually affect the species as a whole, creating a ripple effect of negative changes throughout the ecosystem. * REDUCTION IN MARINE BIODIVERSITY. The over-harvesting of ornamental objects, such as corals, aquarium animals and shells, negatively impacts overall near-shore marine health and diversity and diminishes the attractiveness of an area to visitors. Some species, such are protected under international agreements and their introduction to most countries is illegal. * INCREASE IN ILLEGAL AND DESTRUCTIVE FISHING. Driven by the potential for short-term financial gain, many fishers will turn to destructive fishing methods to harvest popular seafood or ornamental species. In reef systems, this often includes nets that damage reef structure. * FEWER FISH. The popularity of seafood species such as groupers and snappers has already led to severe declines in these types of fish. Further consumption will likely lead to the listing of several of these species as endangered, threatening the survival of the species and limiting their availability for food and sport. |
| *Employment Opportunities* | yes |