

Farmed Tilapia

Sustainability Snapshot



Product Description

Fresh and frozen food products composed primarily of tilapia produced in aquaculture. It does not include shelf-stable tilapia, wild-caught tilapia, shellfish, or prepared foods.

Mission

The mission of The Sustainability Consortium (TSC) is to improve the sustainability of products when they are made, purchased, and used, with a focus on manufacturers and the retail buyers who decide what products to carry in stores. The information in this document is drawn from our detailed research on known and potential social and environmental impacts across product life cycles. TSC acknowledges that other issues exist, but we have included here those that are most relevant to the decision making of retail buying teams and manufacturers. The topics are listed alphabetically for ease of reading; the order does not represent prioritization or other criteria.



Animals

Animal Welfare

Poor aquaculture operations, management, and processing procedures can lead to higher rates of deformities, disease, injuries, and stress in fish. Aquaculture operations should implement best practices and certifications for animal welfare to avoid these problems.



Managing the Supply Chain

Biodiversity

Potential biodiversity impacts occur throughout the aquaculture process. Fish may escape from aquaculture operations, disrupting local fisheries through mating and spreading of diseases. Aquaculture operations should use certifications and focus on native species to avoid biodiversity impacts and the risk of introducing non-native species.

Climate and Energy

Aquaculture operations should use certifications and integrated management to reduce greenhouse gas releases from ponds, electricity, and fuel that can pollute the air and water. Distributors should implement programs, practices, and technologies to reduce fuel impacts and optimize the transportation routes used to distribute their products.

Pollution

Chemicals and antibiotics used on fish farms can have negative effects on the local environment, animals and plants and lead to increased antibiotic resistance and poor health in workers. Aquaculture operations can avoid or limit the use of antibiotics to prevent disease and implement practices to manage water quality.

Supply Chain Transparency

Addressing many of the environmental and social challenges within an aquaculture supply chain requires cooperation among companies at different stages of the supply chain. Manufacturers should determine the locations of aquaculture operations that produce their supply and engage in initiatives that improve transparency, communication, and data sharing. Suppliers can work together to address common issues, such as energy use, water availability and quality, chemical use, worker health and safety, and labor rights.



Use of Resources

Food Waste

Fish that are not stored and handled properly after harvesting can spoil or be damaged. Care should be taken to avoid spoilage from harvest to sale. Trimmings and spills at processing facilities are a waste of resources and food. Manufacturers should use efficient equipment, and food leftovers should be used for other purposes, such as donations to food banks, use as animal feed, or use for energy recovery.

Water

Aquaculture operations for farmed fish can use a significant amount of water and contribute to freshwater depletion, which is especially problematic in water-stressed regions. Aquaculture operators should implement best practices to optimize, measure, and track the efficiency of freshwater use, and preserve water quality by monitoring the water effluent discharged from their facilities.



Workers and Communities

Community Rights

Aquaculture operations may cause conflicts with other users over access to land, water, and fishing grounds. Suppliers should consult with communities about their operations and avoid restricting community access to fishing grounds.

Forced or Child Labor

In some areas, there is a risk of forced or child labor, characterized by actions such as trafficking, withholding wages or documents, and restricting workers to the work site. Manufacturers should determine if and where forced or child labor occurs, and work with supply chain partners and experts to address these issues, to ensure all workers have fair working conditions.

Workers

Aquaculture workers, especially women and migrants, may face unfair pay, discrimination, and limited freedoms. They may also be exposed to dust, chemicals, or other industrial hazards. Aquaculture operators should implement programs that protect labor rights and ensure the health and safety of their workers.